

# THE REVIEW

MAY 2021



*A beautiful, colourful, Bluebell wood.*

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

**Church Website: [www.durhamurc.org.uk](http://www.durhamurc.org.uk)**



## ***Dear Friends,***

How easy it is to bless the Lord when all is going well, while the sun is shining, restrictions easing, families and friends reuniting. On the other hand, it takes real guts to praise God when suffering illness or infirmity or isolation; more so when it's those we love who are incapacitated or in pain.

Glib, clichéd answers—no matter how well meaning—can never explain the inexplicable or excuse the inexcusable. Answers are, in any case, not enough if they do not lead to peace. “I am leaving you with a gift,” said Jesus, “peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.” (John 14.27)

Life can be good for some, and yet they never know peace even in prosperity; tragedies may abound for others, and yet they enjoy peace that passes all understanding. Those at peace with themselves and their surroundings make a greater impression than those always on the search for something that will forever elude them. Peace does not mean grudging acceptance, falsely grinning and bearing the worst, or disengaging from the world around us to avoid being hurt by it. The way of Jesus is actively concerned with all aspects of life, relating honestly with God and each other, and not accepting the worst but working towards the best. But even when the fiercest storms rage all around us, peace is still to be found.

Peace is discovered in that smallest of gaps between an event and our response. If we look for it, we find it—and when we do, we find it easier to say, as does the prophet Habakkuk, “Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, *still I will rejoice in the Lord!* I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.” (3:17-19)

Our lives may not get any easier; our resources may be depleted and our future barren. Yet still we can choose to rejoice in the saving peace of God and then tread upon and make progress through even the hardest of situations. So often Jesus greeted people with the words ‘peace be with you; do not be afraid’ and it is this peace which assures our steps and fills our cup to overflow with joy. I know from my own experience that seeking peace is reward enough; it is answered prayer, even when others remain pending.

Church life, also, is never easy. There's always something happening within our communities and buildings! But we can, in our being together, model lives of peace—where nothing can take away our joy in the Lord who guides our steps.

Regards,

Marcus





## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY AND CHURCH NEWS

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**Ministerial Services** – Revd. Marcus Hargis is contactable in the following ways:-

Phone: 0776 949 2629 and 0191 366 4930 (messages can be left on either).

Email: [marcushargis@outlook.com](mailto:marcushargis@outlook.com) For routine pastoral matters, please first approach your Elder.

**Time of Sunday Services – 10.45 a.m.**

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**COPY DATE FOR THE JUNE REVIEW IS – SUNDAY 23rd MAY 2021.**

**Please be aware when submitting articles that our Church Magazine goes on the website and is available for anyone anywhere in the world to read.**

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**Sunday 16th May 2021 at 10.45 a.m. – From this date -**

Services lasting 40 minutes will resume in the Church.

Our Minister, Reverend Marcus Hargis, will preach.

As before, numbers will have to be limited to allow for adequate spacing between members. It will also still be necessary to book in through Val Hodgson –

by email if possible [valhodgson2159@gmail.com](mailto:valhodgson2159@gmail.com)

or telephone – 07418027266 by the preceding Thursday.

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### Another fundraiser coming soon .....



Many of our fundraising successes have involved good company and excellent food, with the added advantage of creating long lasting happy memories.

With this in mind John and Hillian, who might otherwise have been organising an afternoon tea, are offering weekly online articles entitled **From our Lockdown Kitchen.**

These articles will provide memories connected to the making and eating of delicious food and include the recipes for us all to try and perhaps make for future fundraising events.

They hope to start sending out articles before the end of this month, so sign up now by sending an email to [johncdurell@gmail.com](mailto:johncdurell@gmail.com).

All donations for access to the weekly articles will go to our nominated charities of St. Cuthbert's Hospice and Christian Aid.

Details of how to make these donations to follow.....



### Christian Aid Week 2021

For over 75 years, Christian Aid has been active in the world's poorest communities. Working with local partner organisations, Christian Aid has tackled poverty and injustice. Much has been achieved, but there is still so much to do. In recent years, Climate Change has brought additional challenges and now the Coronavirus Pandemic is putting further pressure on poor countries with limited infrastructure.

Every year, Christian Aid Week (10 - 16 May 2021) provides an important opportunity to focus on Christian Aid and raise money to support its work. Usually we would hold a Christian Aid lunch at Church and do house-to-house collections. Because of the pandemic, we can't do either of those things - but we can still give to Christian Aid!

Please do consider making a donation this Christian Aid Week. One way to do that is by using the 'e-envelope' I've set up. All you need to do is click on this: [e-envelope | Christian Aid Week](#) and follow the instructions to donate by credit or debit card. Or you can go to the Christian Aid website and donate there [UK charity fighting global poverty - Christian Aid](#)

Or, if you would prefer to send a cheque, please let me know (phone me on 077 6581 6749) and I'll advise on how best to do that.

With best wishes this Christian Aid Week

**Fred Robinson**  
Church CA Organiser



“Then the righteous will answer him, '**LORD, when did we see you hungry** and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'”

**[Matthew 25 37-38]**



## EDITOR'S LETTER

### DEAR READERS,

One of the effects of lockdown on Les and myself has been that we feel we have slowed down in many ways and we are making a conscious effort to go for walks to keep our mobility going. We have also found it hard to motivate ourselves and are trying not to fall into the “manyana” outlook! This would be easy to do when the highlight of the week has been a shopping trip to Tesco or picking up lunch from our son Mick’s hot food van! I am rather partial to a Sweet Chilli Chicken, bacon and cheese Tortilla and Les loves the slow cooked Roast Beef in thick gravy on a bun – delicious!

We mentally promise ourselves that we will contact friends by telephone or email but sometimes it can take us a week or more to get round to it, so if you are one of the people we should have contacted more regularly – apologies!

Les has read vast numbers of books, as have I, and I have struggled to complete jigsaws, particularly when the image on the box top is not always to scale or true to colour.

A sign of aging for me has been the newly acquired habit of lacing up my walking shoes more easily by placing my foot on the bottom step of the stairs so I don’t have to bend quite so far! What energy saving things do you employ? My late father-in-law, after he was widowed, took to placing tea towels and sheets and pillowcases under his seat cushion and pressing them that way – ingenuous! Luckily I have always liked ironing, although I sometimes do it while sitting down and watching T.V.

Les cannot understand how I can be reading a book in the same room where he is watching T.V. and is further confused when I can often tell him what the programme is about! We differ also in that I can miss the start of a film but often pick it up whereas he will only watch it if he can see it from the very beginning. What strange quirks do you have?

We both felt sorry for Her Majesty the Queen at the funeral of her husband, Prince Philip, when she was sat alone and wearing a face mask. She has earned our utmost respect over the years.

I hope you have been enjoying the amazing good weather we have had recently. I managed to get stuff into the garden wheelie bin ready for collection but a lot still remains to be done in the area of weeding and tidying up – hopefully I will be able to keep motivating myself in that direction! I was dismayed to see that my garden ornament of a mare and foal lying down together has been ravaged by the frosts and great pieces of the sculpture have fallen off. I am fighting a losing battle with huge leafed ivy which is invading the back garden from the adjoining lane but I will keep hacking it down before it kills everything off.

One of the things we have missed, in addition to seeing friends and family, during lockdown, has been the chance to travel around and go on holiday. Hopefully we will not have to go back into lockdown and our wanderlust can be satisfied later in the year. We also look forward to a family wedding which had to be postponed last year due to lockdown.

My thanks to anyone who has contributed to this month’s Review and, please, keep on sending your articles in to me - it is very much appreciated.

**Lucille Thomson**

The next issue of The Review will be published on **Sunday 6th June 2021**.  
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 23rd May 2021**.



**Notes from Elders' Meeting on Wednesday 7th April 2021**  
**(held on ZOOM on line)**

The Elders were joined for the first part of the meeting by Ali Lee and Steve Wakefield from the Waddington Resource Centre. Sandy (Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming everybody, particularly our guests. He then read from Colossians 3, from verse 12 onwards, and followed with prayer.

Ali Lee and Steve Wakefield were each given the opportunity to speak about the Waddington Street Centre and the challenges which have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Pre COVID, they were supporting about 170 vulnerable adults and were open 6 days a week. When face to face contact was not allowed, they had to adapt and offer telephone support and zoom sessions instead. When they have been able to open, social distancing has had an impact on the amount of people they could physically accommodate within the Resource Centre itself, thus they have been extremely grateful for the use of our building and the additional space that afforded them. Even so, the number of clients they have capacity for, has greatly reduced. Both Ali and Steve commented on how beautiful our sanctuary is, something we sometimes take for granted. They really value their history and ties with our church, as do we. It is hard to believe that in November they will be celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Elders asked how we might support the Resource Centre going forward. Certainly, at the moment, they are hugely thankful for the use of our building and the additional scope that provides. Following a short time for questions and answers, Ali and Steve left the meeting, and the normal Elders' session began.

1. Apologies for Absence - Ruth Cranfield
2. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 3 March 2021 were accepted as a true record; to be signed and filed when appropriate.
3. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 3 March 2021
  - a) Recipes – This fundraising initiative suggested by John and Hillian Durrell was discussed, and Janet Thornborrow will liaise with them regarding how we might progress this.
  - b) Commitment for Life – Kath Ogilvie had been tasked with writing to cancel our association with this initiative. However, when Kath looked at it more closely and following a discussion with Fred Robinson, she felt it would be a shame to do so and felt that we can at least support this initiative by upholding in prayer the work they are doing.
  - c) Date for Elders induction – It was agreed this would take place on 16 May 2021, hopefully in church.
  - d) DBS checks for Sandy Ogilvie, Janet Sarsfield and David Thornborrow have been completed.
  - e) ECO Church – Helen updated the Elders on a meeting held on 16 March 2021 by the working party looking at ECO Church accreditation.
  - f) Narcotics letting – Janet Sarsfield informed the Elders that the Narcotics Group, who had asked about potentially booking our church, have decided not to meet at present.
  - g) Group Ministry – Sandy has sent a letter to the Moderator expressing our concern at the decision to withdraw the 0.5 ministry vacancy within the group and the impact this will have on Marcus. All churches in our grouping have agreed, however, that we should apply for a Synod Pioneer Youth Worker. This is a part-time post to help facilitate youth work within the group.
4. District Reports
 

Reports were given with those mentioned to be remembered in prayer.

## 5. Church Opening

Many in our congregation are keen to see the church open as soon as is practicable. It was agreed that we should aim to re-open on 16 May 2021 with the same social distancing arrangements in place as before.

## 6. Future Zoom Services

As we consider re-opening church it has been highlighted that some of our congregation, who might not be able to attend church physically, have enjoyed being able to access our services via Zoom and that if these cease completely, they will be greatly missed.

We would like to be able to link our normal church services with Zoom. The logistics of doing this were discussed. It was noted that this would not be available immediately.

## 7. Safeguarding - A potential safeguarding issue was discussed.

## 8. Correspondence

The Moderator has sent an Easter card and an accompanying letter to the church. Yvonne will send the letter to Lucille Thomson for inclusion in the next edition of our magazine.

Ron Todd is our representative in Durham Churches Together and he has written to Sandy regarding our annual subscription to this organisation. A minimum donation of £30 was suggested for the year. The Elders agreed to send £50.

A letter from David Woods and Jim Jackson has been received, stating that they have checked our annual accounts, and all is in order. Michèle Woods, our treasurer, was complimented for her competence. We are extremely grateful to Michèle for all her hard work and record our thanks to her and to David and Jim too.

## 9. AOB

Doris mentioned that there had been a discussion about the possibility of publishing a book containing Ruth Crofton's Thoughts and Prayers, which she has been faithfully producing on a weekly basis during the pandemic. They have been so appreciated during this time and it would be wonderful to do this, not least, as a historical record of this last, quite unique year. If Ruth would like to self-publish then the Elders agreed that the church would underwrite the costs.

## 10. Arrangements for the next Elders' Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 7 p.m.; Kathleen Clasper will chair, and Janet will take the minutes.

The meeting closed with saying 'The Grace' to each other.

## Of Life and Love

"Where there is love there is life." *Mahatma Gandhi*

"One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life. That word is love." *Sophocles*

"To love another person is to see the Face of God." *Victor Hugo*

"Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead."  
*Oscar Wilde*

*From Christ Church, Lumley Parish Magazine via Ian Watt to Bethel URC, from their magazine.*  
[We are grateful to Bethel URC for allowing the use of articles from their magazine. Editor]



### 3... 2... 1... John

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#### PART THREE: THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD<sup>1</sup>

*“It’s gone viral<sup>2</sup> and spread like wildfire, the deception of the deceivers. Another letter? No, this time a circular to remind them all.”<sup>3</sup>*

Everything culminates in 1 John: the two other letters, and arguably the Gospel of John itself. All may or may not have been written by the same hand, but the Gospel certainly did inform the original Johannine community and the letters pick up on the same language and theology. It could also be said that *everything leads to us and that we continue the community of Christ in our time and place.*

The letters introduce and build on the twin themes of truth as connection and love in practice. From what is said by John the Elder against the rogue element, we can deduce that the others were divisive and separatist, harsh and self-righteous, claiming to be right when they were wrong, and denying the humanity of Jesus. 3 John introduces the issue and the Elder sends an envoy to fact-find as well as encourage people in the faith. 2 John reveals that the problem was spreading as people listened to deceptive teachers. But these letters seem not to have reached those who most needed to be told, so 1 John is sent. It is not addressed to anyone in particular and reads more like a general reminder of principals: truth and love.

One of the key themes is that of *κοινωνία, koinonia*: that of fellowship, partnership, hospitality, community, communion. John starts (in 3 John) by encouraging hospitality, in contrast with Diotrephes and his people who didn’t practice the same fellowship; in 2 John he urges his readers not to assist the rival community and thus risk partnership in their evil work (2 John 2:11); and then 1 John lays out why this the issue was of central importance. The meaning of *koinonia* in this latter letter appears to denote a personal relationship (with the author or God in Christ) and includes the idea of commitment to a common task.

That task was (and is) to love in practice, in communion with each other. In doing so, followers would be ‘walking in the light’ but those who continued to hate fellow believers showed that they are ‘still walking in darkness’ (1 John 2:10,11). The task also included ‘living in God’, living their lives as Jesus did (1 John 2:6). The love of God in Christ is broader than just being nice to people. John the Elder makes the point that: “We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.” (1 John 3:16)

The rogue community was probably as nice as any Christian community, at least to those within their own ranks. But in refusing hospitality (3 John) they were shutting their ears to voices from outside.

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<sup>1</sup> The titles of each essay in this series are taken from published writings of early-20<sup>th</sup> Century English playwright Ashley Dukes (who happens to be one of my great-uncles). However, in each case the name of the play and the theme of each article complement each other. These are not random choices, but they are playful...

<sup>2</sup> Okay, John the Elder definitely would not have said it this way! But if he were speaking in today’s vernacular, maybe he would have?

<sup>3</sup> My sources for scholarship and background material are: Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2020; C. Clifton Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. XII, Abingdon Press, 1998; and Robert M. Price, *The Sitz-im-Leben of Third John: A New Reconstruction*, *EvQ* 61(1989): 114,19. Accessed online on 20/1/21 from [https://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art\\_thirdjohn.htm](https://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art_thirdjohn.htm). What I have written, however, represent my own views unless stated otherwise.



Travelling preachers relied on an understanding of board-and-lodging given and received in order to communicate the message widely. Cutting off that avenue, as the others had done, shows that their minds were closed and their love was not truly Christian.

We can also surmise that the rogue element had an inflated view of their sinlessness, leading to arrogance. Maybe because they accepted that Jesus had atoned for sin, they seemed to have done away with the need for confession of sin: “If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” (1 John 1:8). From what we are told, we can picture a religious community that thought it was righteous and yet which continued practices which were anything but loving. Maybe deep down they knew this and so feared God’s judgment (4:16-21). Instead, “love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.” (1 John 4: 18)

I sense there was some real hurt behind the writings of John the Elder. Later on, it is said that those who hate brother or sister are murderers (1 John 3:14) and likened to Cain. The author may well be alluding to when Jesus said that those who are angry with their fellow believers will be subject to the same judgment as those who commit murder. (Matthew 5:21-24) John had picked up on a trait of these rogue believers which was not of God, that of a seeming lack of introspection and humility on the part of the rogue community. I think that the target of the Elder’s criticism thought themselves Christian, knew the love command as well as anyone, and in their own way practiced that love. However, the others may well have been arrogant and angry folk (they might have said ‘passionate in standing up for the truth’ as they saw it) as well as self-righteous (or in their minds, simply ‘right’). As such, they may have seen merit in their divisiveness and lack of love.

Accordingly, I think John the Elder uses terms that they themselves would have used—truth, sin, fellowship, love, Christ—and reminds the rogues of what he, an eye-witness to the earthly life of Jesus, witnessed and learned directly. John re-centres truth as connection and love as relational. By re-establishing the importance of incarnation—that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as a person—he is making the point that connection with and love for God are expressed in how we relate to each other now, and not just in religious practices however well-meaning. God’s love was made known to us through Jesus and it is his example that we should want to follow.

There are so many more points that could be made from the three letters of John. That said, I haven’t set out to write a commentary but a reminder that love is not something to take for granted. Maybe the rogues were not all that bad, but simply unwilling to admit that there was room for improvement. As such, there are many Christians worldwide today who John the Elder would want to be writing to—and we too could err in that way also. Instead, *true love means constantly re-examining ourselves and our churches’ practices to make sure that they are indeed truly loving*. Our salvation through the gift of Christ can lead some to think that they’re all right when they’re wrong. Our certainty can be an idol that might take God’s place in our hearts.

John the Elder says in conclusion: “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). In one sense, this seems to introduce a theme of idolatry which is not touched on in any of the three letters of John. On the other hand, this one line sums up the issue that John the Elder was dealing with: warning against anything that takes God’s place in us—whether church leadership and the will to power; or division and the need to be right; or exclusiveness and the desire to close minds to voices that challenge us. May we indeed keep ourselves from these idols. Amen. **Marcus**

## Wensleydale Wandering – by Angus and Jan Robson

Now that we are permitted, we decided to return to the Yorkshire Dales for the first time in over a year. It was a great forecast and it seemed like a good idea to do a walk we had already done, but in the opposite direction. It was still bitterly cold, but sunny, when we arrived at Hawes after a very scenic drive from Durham.



As we put on our boots at Hawes visitor centre, the crows were busily and noisily nest building in the nearby trees.

Leaving Hawes and heading for Burtsett, we soon found ourselves in the peace and quiet of the open countryside. There were sheep and lambs in most fields and as always, lambs are so cute.



Further uphill we stopped for a lunch break at the Cam High Road and we sat on a grassy bank and listened to the haunting calls of the many Curlews and watched the amazing aerobatics of the Lapwings. A few cyclists and walkers passed by, most saying hello to us. A couple of cyclists were obviously struggling on the gravel track, but they tried to look as if they were

enjoying it. After a brief stop in Bainbridge we crossed the river Ure at Yorebridge passing through Bowbridge and its waterfall to climb steeply to join Skelgill Lane.

Heading west along the lane we passed through tiny little hamlets and farms with stone-built houses and met locals on tractors or out walking and most smiled and waved as we passed. At one point there was a bridge over a tiny beck, and in among the stones and twigs near the beck was a Primrose plant, standing out from the background. We have been in the Dales at this time of the year before and have seen lots of wildflowers with huge banks of Primroses, but this year very few plants were in bloom.





## 11.

After another couple of miles we stopped for another break, sitting on a grassy shelf, with a view right across Wensleydale towards Hawes. We also saw a couple of hares boxing and one of them settled down beside some rabbits. For anyone who is not sure of the difference between hares and rabbits, here it is below. At one point we noticed a tiny lamb with its leg stuck between the bars of a gate, so we freed it and it set off to look for its mother.



Walking westwards we passed Sedbusk and Simonstone Hall then down a very steep path to Hardaw. From there, a path crosses the riverside fields to Hawes. There was still a lot of evidence of the flood damage done the previous year, with flattened field walls and flood debris in trees.



Back at the car park, a lady drove in and asked if we had seen her hen. She said it was called Peggy and it was time Peggy was back at home. She set off walking shouting “yoohoo, Peggy” until she disappeared out of sight.

[Thank you, Angus and Jan, for sharing this walk and the lovely photographs with us. Editor]

Here are some visual treats ...





*A letter from David Herbert, Moderator,  
The United Reformed Church Northern Synod ...*

Dear friends,

We are an Easter people, called to journey in hope, trusting in God's promises and gifted with that peace which transcends our immediate circumstances, rooted in the knowledge that ultimately love prevails.

Our experience is - the more profound and impenetrable the darkness the more beautiful, mesmerizing and welcome Christ's light appears. It is a light history has taught us, and Scripture assures us, that will never be overcome (John 1:5).

Ours is not a hope rooted in blind optimism, but in the experience of God's love when we are in the throes of pain, anguish and despair. This is because God has entered into our suffering, and is alongside us, hanging on a wooden cross, and this same cross to become the symbol at the heart of our faith. The suffering God.

And this same God of love brings an eternal hope as the dawn rays first penetrated Christ's empty tomb on the first Easter morning with the stone rolled back and God's love let loose and unrestrained by time and place across the cosmos into eternity. Good Friday superseded by Easter Sunday (Romans 15:13).

I share this familiar message of Easter hope along with a sense of profound thanksgiving for the life of the United Reformed Church across the North East. Our congregations have proved more fleet of foot, more resilient, more outward looking and more creative by God's grace, than any of us I suspect realized we could ever be. I sense what may have taken ten years to come about has been telescoped into one year.

I shared at our most recent synod meeting how that first lockdown a year ago suddenly dampened the surface noise of being Church: that usual busy-ness rooted in familiar traditions, routines and rotas. We were instantly in a position to listen to things differently, without the usual distractions and confusing overlay of extraneous noises (Psalm 46:10). An unexpected journey into an inner wilderness and silence, an unsought, unplanned, and unwanted retreat, an internal exile. As time went by, we became more aware of an inner hunger for spiritual sustenance to pull us through. Advent and Lent packs have been snaffled up eagerly. Online Morning Prayer has meant so much to so many.

Meanwhile, across congregations and the synod, God's Holy Spirit has stirred up innovative responses and a fresh energy to maintain those ever more vital foodbanks, more intentional and deliberate pastoral care within congregations for many who felt isolation, vulnerability, the pain of separation, and fear, most starkly. And as IT and social media platforms became new conduits of fellowship, prayer and praise, we have remained mindful that many among us are for many different reasons in danger of being left behind, and have tried to remain as inclusive as possible of people across our congregations whether they had certain devices and skills or not.

So this card and letter comes with my prayers of thanksgiving to God for all who have enabled the Church to continue to work and witness, worship and serve, as living stones, despite the fact our buildings have been closed so much of the time (1 Peter 2:5). My prayers of thanksgiving to God also for demonstrating through such practical love that the Church is not the building, but the people: a phrase often shared in the past but with a fresh significance and understanding in the present.



And this card and letter is also a heartfelt thank you to all who have steadfastly ensured Church life has continued and flourished whether serving among local congregations or serving across Northern Synod as part of the Synod Team.

We all hope through the continued vaccination programme it will not be much longer before we emerge into the new normal, in the knowledge that the same mission awaits us as before, demanding our whole-of-life discipleship. May the good news of Jesus Christ, alive and active in the world today, lead us forward into the challenges we will face as we work through the consequences of the pandemic in the coming years. My prayer is not only for renewal and healing within the Church (there are situations which have brought the vulnerability of some congregations to the fore), but that we may also share that same healing in Christ with others beyond the Church as we seek to serve God through the life of our local communities.

Thank you for being an inspired and inspiring Easter people throughout one of the most difficult years in living memory: walking the way, living the life of Jesus today.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Easter blessings

*David Herbert*

David  
Moderator

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#### ROTAS ... SUNDAYS 2021 ...

Date	Elders	Door Duty
<b>May</b> 16th	Mrs. J. Thornborrow Mrs. H. Cockburn	Mrs. V. Hodgson
23rd	Mrs. J. Sarsfield Mr. D. Shirer	Mr. M. Reay
30th	Mr. S. Ogilvie Mr. R. Phua	Mrs. D. Jackson
<b>June</b> 6th	Mrs. K. Ogilvie Mrs. Y. Melville	Mrs. W. Surtees
13th	Mrs. D. Jackson. Mrs. V. Hodgson	Miss B. Tinsley
20th	Mrs. K. Clasper Mr. R. Todd	Mr. & Mrs. L. Thomson
27th	Mrs. H. Cockburn Mrs. J. Thornborrow	Mrs. K. Clasper

Please arrange your own replacement if unable to carry out your duty on the given date.

“God gave us two eyes, two ears, but only one mouth for a reason:  
so that we can look and listen twice as much as we speak”

This quote, which picks up and runs with the words of Greek philosopher Epictetus, is a rule I try to follow in all manner of ways. Of course, many of us have less than perfect vision and I for one, in common with some, have a degree of deafness. That said, and realities aside, we have generally twice as much capacity for vision and hearing as we do for talking--though an excess of caffeine can send my one-and-only into overdrive. More philosophically, I think it important, creative, and effective to communicate not just orally but visually.

*“Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if you must.”*

This phrase, attributed to Francis of Assisi though probably a paraphrase of his advice to let our actions do the talking, also applies to imagery. What we see ‘talks’ to us as loudly as what we hear. It’s a fact that advertising creatives know well. For example, show a black horse running unsaddled through scenery and it just has to be an advert for a certain bank. The visual clues have meaning which is memorable.

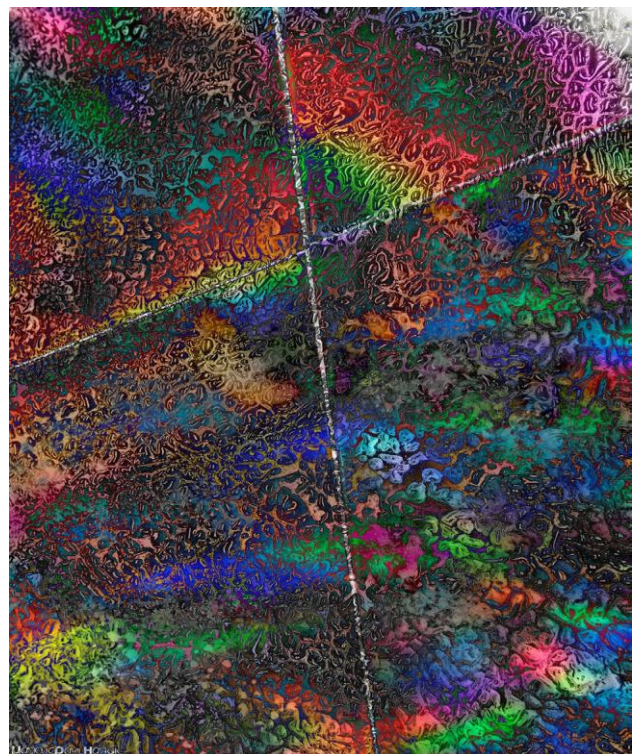


When it comes to artistic communication, the signs are more subtle--unlike product promotion where the point has to be clear for us to recognise (and buy) what’s on sale. With fine art, and with faith, the goal is to invite the viewer on a journey to discover meaning for themselves in the symbols and signs that the artist uses.

Sometimes a particular viewpoint comes through strongly. Aided by the artist’s description and background, we might understand clearly what is being communicated to us. At other times, and perhaps as a deliberate choice by the creator, a range of possible meanings can be inferred from what we see. In that case, the discovery is in thinking for ourselves.

For years, I didn’t ‘get’ Jackson Pollock. I thought his work, of paint squirted apparently randomly onto large sheets of paper, was a waste of time. However, I hadn’t actually seen an actual Pollock painting until a trip to Tate Modern some years back. At that point I ‘got’ the profound point, which is that in the creator’s playfulness can be seen what the mind’s eye lets us see.

I suspect that some of the reaction against modern art is because people are not prepared to think deeply,





profoundly, creatively about whatever it is that is seen. And it doesn't necessarily have to be viewed in an art gallery either: the process of exploring our response to the images we see applies to whatever we look at (or imagine). Perhaps the difference is in how we approach our viewing: something regarded as art will be different from that viewed as utilitarian, even if it's the same thing. As "the heavens proclaim the glory of God; the skies display his craftsmanship", should not everything be seen as the art of God?

Jesus invites us to consider our responses: to him ("who do you say I am"); to others we meet



("love your neighbour"); and to God ("who is over all, in all, and living through all.") Our communication doesn't need to be obvious and is actually ignored if too predictable: just as one glance at two yellow arches on a red background means we know what to expect, and I for one 'switch off'. Instead, life and faith is engaged and enjoyed if there is intrigue; if it's not obvious; if it asks questions; if the journey matters more than the destination.

We have two ears, two eyes and one mouth so that we can listen and look twice as much as we speak. In doing so, we can understand more about ourselves, our contributions to this life, and our place on God's canvas. Imagery that gets us to think about our thinking goes some way towards pointing out to us how God speaks to us today. The emotion of a beautiful sunrise; the humour of a person's expression; the joy of colour, form, pattern, and playfulness. The Lord God made them all.

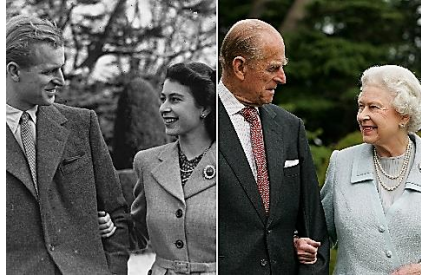


**Revd Marcus Paul Hargis**

ministers  
with the Durham and Gateshead Group



## The Call of Duty



Perhaps inevitably, this week's thoughts are influenced by the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh,

Often referred to in the past couple of days is his strong sense of duty, his putting aside of his own career in total commitment to supporting and working with the Queen. It showed in great and small ways: I remember watching them descending from the carriage that took them to the opening of Parliament at a time when neither were well, and the way in which he was alert, watching the Queen, a hand ready to steady her if she stumbled.

Duty. It's a strange word that can have a negative connotation – 'You're only doing this because you think it's your duty.' And duty does have a tough side; there are tasks we'd rather not be doing but feel it's our duty to do, and we go reluctantly: I suspect that all but the saints among us feel that way sometimes, and I'm sure the Royal Family does too. but we – and they - go.

The positive aspect of duty refers to our duty to care for those about us, or at least to have a concern for them. Jesus called us along this pathway of caring for our neighbour, (Luke 10: 27) but there is a subtlety to it that we need to note. We are called to care for others, not dominate them with our ideas of what they need. I love the quote from C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, "She's the sort of woman who lives for others and you can tell the others by their hunted expression." Prince Philip's tremendous legacy of The Duke of Edinburgh Award is the antithesis of this, a scheme whereby young people can find their own strengths, learn to cope with difficulty and to get along with others, not through compulsion but because they want to. Then there is his work with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) a manifestation of care for the whole of creation and of the faith he and we bring to all our tasks.

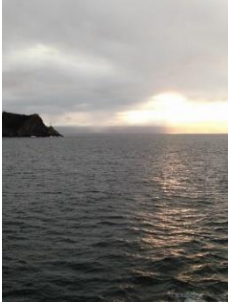
Commitment, that quality of seeing a task through, even when things go wrong and people nigger at you. Not easy. Even that person profoundly committed to the task, St Paul, got frustrated on occasion, as when he lost his cool with Corinthian criticism, "Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles? Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?" (1 Corinthians 9:3-11) He sounds tired and fed up.

Maybe there's something in knowing yourself and thinking through what really matters. Working and praying through what our faith may require us to commit to, and what our faith teaches us about being fully ourselves. I think in this regard, Prince Philip is a good model, because he seems to have found things that mattered to him, personally, and to work with and on them, alongside the duty tasks. Finding what gives us strength and doing it makes the duty side of life that bit easier to cope with.

We give thanks for a life well lived, one that has affected very many lives and will, I suspect, continue to do so. May we be guided as we carry out the duties laid upon us to find the joy and release that God also wills for us.



I had the privilege of shaking hands with the Queen and Prince Philip in 2012, at an event in Buckingham Palace to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens, to which people with a connection through academia or the arts (I was there through the Dickens Fellowship) were invited. Rather more deservedly, I was presented to Princess Anne years ago at an AGM of the Save the Children Fund of which she is President, for my part in re-establishing a branch of SCF in Amble. I am no Royalist (a definite Cromwellian!) but on both these occasions I was impressed and touched by the presence and commitment of these very gracious people.



Whether a life is lived well in the public eye,  
or quietly just you, where you are, that life is valuable.

“Dear God, be good to me.  
The sea is so wide and my boat is so small.”

*Breton Fisherman's Prayer*

### **A Prayer**

Living God, who holds all within your eternal care,  
we rejoice in that same care which offers to each the strength to be the people you need us to be,  
the people we long to be.  
We rejoice too in knowing Jesus, who gave his life to the uttermost to bring healing and peace  
and ultimately, new, eternal life so that death, our final unknown, need no longer be feared.  
We praise and thank you for your love mediated through the lives of people great and small,  
those no longer present with us upon earth, and who we remember with joy . . .  
and those who, today, enrich the lives of others in ways great and small . . .  
Help us reflect upon all that can be achieved through an acceptance of the duties laid upon each of us in our several lives, duties that can sometimes feel very onerous, but which, with the help of your Holy Spirit, can become life-affirming for us and for others.

At this time of national mourning, we pray for all who mourn loved ones who have died,  
and those who mourn loved ones who are missing or separated because of quarrels,  
misunderstandings, or for no apparent reason. We pray healing. We pray peace.

As the national focus falls upon the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme,  
we pray for young people everywhere, and especially those who are facing obstacles to progress, whatever these may be; those who have little or no confidence in themselves or those who have potential to give much to the world, but lack the backing of influential adults.  
We pray your guiding, encouraging Spirit to bring both confidence and a sense of reality,  
that they may find their own true pathway, and in that pathway, a true joy.

We pray for ourselves that, encouraged by the example of those who have gone before us  
and for the sake of those who follow on,  
we may accept gladly those tasks that you need us to fulfil  
for the growth of your Kingdom of justice and peace.  
We ask it in the name of Jesus who gave his life that all may have life in all its fullness.  
Amen

*Blessings, Ruth*

*[From Thoughts and Prayer for 18th April 2021 by Revd Ruth Crofton – copyright - used with her permission.]*



### *A Favourite Hymn ...*

I am writing this on 20th March – the first day of Spring. The sun is shining, there are daffodils, hyacinths and crocuses out in the garden. I have seen two bumblebees and a Red Admiral butterfly, and the sky is blue! That reminds me of a favourite hymn of mine which we used to sing in Primary School. I wonder if anyone knows it?

*Glad that I live am I, that the sky is blue. Glad for the country lanes and the fall of dew.  
After the sun, the rain. After the rain the sun. This is our way of Life, till our work be done.  
All that we need to do, be we low or high, Is to see that we grow nearer the sky.*

**Barbara Tinsley**

[This article was too late for the April Review but is still relevant. Editor]



### **WHAT DID YOU DO DURING LOCKDOWN?**

I wonder how many of the congregation have been as productive during lockdown as Anne Cramb who made a beautiful quilt which was to feature in Landscape magazine? When I asked Anne about her quilt she said,

“I thought that my quilting days were over, but this kept me motivated during the first lockdown, quite a lot of hand stitching but also used the sewing machine. It started off to be a cushion and ended up as a quilt! Hope you like it. Anne”

Anne wrote further:

“The magazine is called Landscape, not a Quilting one but has a Readers’ page where they show all sorts of amazing crafts that people have made so I thought I would offer them my quilt, and it was such a surprise to be told it would be in the April edition. It certainly kept me focused during the first lockdown.  
Best wishes, Anne”

[From Bethel URC Magazine – February and April 2021]

**BE EVER MINDFUL .....** That the next hour isn’t promised:  
**YESTERDAY IS HISTORY.....** We cannot change that which has already taken place.  
**TOMORROW IS A MYSTERY.....** We do not know what the next hour holds in store.  
**TODAY IS A GIFT.....** That is why we call it **THE PRESENT.**  
Maybe we should read this every morning before getting out of bed!

“...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

*Lord, my blessings come from you.  
Remind me that they taste better when they are shared.*

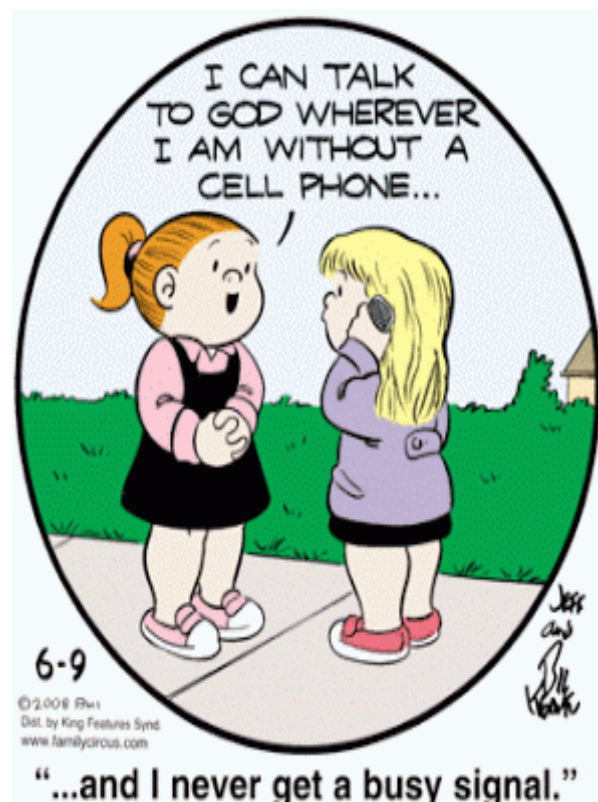
**And Finally ...** (Thanks to Jill Lee and Bethel URC April 2021 Magazine)

*Homographs are words of like spelling but with more than one meaning. A homograph that is also pronounced differently is a heteronym. You think English is easy? I think a retired English teacher was bored ...*

The bandage was \*wound\* around the \*wound\*.  
 The farm was used to \*produce produce\*.  
 The dump was so full that it had to \*refuse\* more \*refuse\*.  
 He could \*lead\* if he would get the \*lead\* out.  
 The soldier decided to \*desert\* his dessert in the \*desert\*.  
 Since there is no time like the \*present\*, he thought it was time to \*present\* the \*present\*.  
 I did not \*object\* to the \*object\*.  
 The insurance was \*invalid\* for the \*invalid\*.  
 There was a \*row\* among the oarsmen about how to \*row\*.  
 They were too \*close\* to the door to \*close\* it.  
 The buck \*does\* funny things, when the \*does\*, are present.  
 To help with planting, the farmer taught his \*sow\* to \*sow\*.  
 The \*wind\* was too strong to \*wind\* the sail.  
 Upon seeing the \*tear\* in the painting I shed a \*tear\*.  
 I had to \*subject\* the \*subject\* to a series of tests.

How can I \*intimate\* this to my most \*intimate\* friend?

English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in a pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat. We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.







## SHOW ME THE GLORY ROAD

*Is this the road to Glory?  
Is this the Glory road?  
Let's take the road to Glory,  
Show me the Glory road.*

From Carpenter to Rabbi,  
The Lord Jesus He was changed,  
Over all the Holy Land,  
He with His disciples ranged.

Preaching to the people,  
By touching He did heal,  
Living with His disciples,  
Until that fateful meal.

Then came the Crucifixion,  
And the Resurrection Day,  
Jesus bids us follow Him now,  
Walking daily in His way.



[L. Thomson – first verse is a refrain.]

