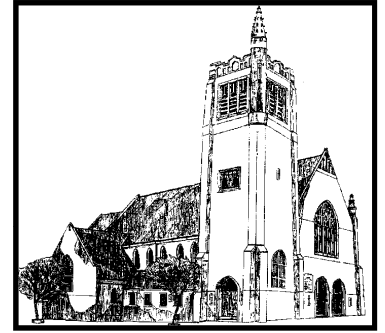




The
United
Reformed
Church

Newsletter of St. George's URC Hartlepool Re-opening Special



**The one you've been waiting for
Details for re-opening– see inside**

Everything you need to know

News of People

Aileen had a scan on Thursday(6th May) and continues with a new round of chemotherapy this week. She is finding it very tiring. We keep her and Frank in our prayers and all the other members of our church family who are not in the best of health.



On a happier note we have two special events coming up this summer:

Margaret and Paul Humberston will celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on July 25th and
Moyra and John Mudd will celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on August 7th
Early congratulations!

Church re-opening

All being well, the church will re-open for worship on the 23rd May. This is Pentecost and a most appropriate day to move forward.

Obviously, worship and preachers are still in the sorting out stage, as are all the rotas etc. which has always been there each week for us to know what we're doing. Let's look at this as an adventure into the new unknown. Worship has had to be different and may well continue to be different in many ways. But we are not worshipping in the way the early church did, not even as we did when I joined St George's 40 years ago.

However, the first two weeks are no great shock. Worship is being led by Brian and the Worship Team (that popular well-known group!) - for the rest of the list, see the back page.

Reading Rotas and Steward Rotas will be produced in due course so watch this space.

This Newsletter is obviously early to give people information they need so there won't be one at the end of May. The next scheduled one will be at the end of July but here may be another interim one if needed.

Just for a laugh!

Mrs. Thomas, of this church, wishes to thank all those members who so kindly assisted in the death of her husband.

The regular Monday night choir practice of this church will be held on Tuesday night, instead of Friday night

The story is told of a former Bishop of Exeter who was renowned for his bad memory. On one occasion he was travelling by train to a certain part of his diocese. Before he reached his destination, the ticket collector appeared, demanding to see all tickets.

The Bishop groped his way through his pockets, even inside his purple cassock and out, but no ticket could be found.

Finally, the ticket collector said "That's all right Bishop, we all know you're an honest man. It doesn't matter"

"Oh, indeed it does!" replied the Bishop "Without that ticket, I don't know where to get off this train!"

Information concerning reopening for worship

People will be met at the door and reminded to maintain social distancing if more than one person is waiting to come in to the building.

Once inside the building, face coverings must be worn at all times, unless you are exempt.

Everybody who enters the building will have their temperature checked electronically (this will not be recorded). If a high reading is given the person will be asked to leave the building and return home.

The QR Code for Track and Trace, will be displayed just inside the doors for those who have the NHS app on their smart phone. Those without the app will have to sign in on a paper register.

A one way system will be in place inside the church. It will be across the front of the church, and up the centre aisle when entering. Stewards will show people to their seats whilst ensuring that social distancing is maintained. Please do not be upset if you are not able to sit where you would normally. We would ask that you only sit with those from your own household or support bubble. You will also be asked to remain in your seat at all times. At the close of worship please leave the pews via the side aisles and exit via the kitchen door. Please do not stop to talk to others on the way out.

All hymn books and bibles will be removed from the church. The words of the hymns and lessons will be displayed on the screen at the front of the church. If you wish to bring your own hymn book or bible with you to the service, you must take it away with you again at the end of the service.

There will not be a paper order of service produced at this time. The information that would normally have gone on it will be displayed on the screens in the church.

The offertory plates will not be passed amongst the congregations. Instead plates will be placed at various points within the building for your use.

Singing is not allowed under the current COVID restrictions.

The only toilet that will be in use during worship is the disabled toilet in the hall area. If you use this facility, you will find wipes which are for you to use to clean the toilet seat, the flush, and the sink taps once you are finished. Paper towels are available to dry your hands. All used wipes and paper towels must be placed in the bins provided.

I realise that these restrictions may take a bit of getting used to. It will make for a very different experience of worship, but I hope that they do not have to be in place for too long.

In the meantime, I hope that we can all abide by the rules, which are there to keep us all safe.

Margaret



Commitment for Life works in partnership with Christian Aid in Zimbabwe. Our programmes put people at the centre. Faith is crucial to our programmes, along with that values of openness and sharing. We are committed to amplifying the voices of the poorest people. Our work focuses on Matabeleland, and is also linked to action at a national level.

MEET THE COUNTRY TEAM

TAFADZA MUROPA

Social and Economic Justice Lead

Pic: Christian Aid

Tafadzwa leads the Social and Economic Justice Thematic Unit. She plays a leading role in mainstreaming gender in Zimbabwe as well as fundraising and implementing projects in gender equality, transparency and accountability, human rights and peacebuilding. She has worked with local and international organisations in Eastern and Southern Africa for over 16 years.

Tafadzwa has a BA Degree in Economic History and Philosophy with University of Zimbabwe, has received post graduate short course training in public policy, human rights, gender equality, project management and macroeconomic policy with local, regional and international institutions. She is currently completing her dissertation in a Master's in Public Policy and Governance with Africa University, Zimbabwe.



Our best chance of ending this pandemic is to ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments. But pharmaceutical monopolies and patents threaten everyone as no-one is safe until everyone is safe.

People from around the world are calling for a #PeoplesVaccine – freely available to everyone, everywhere. Learn more here

<https://peoplesvaccine.org>

Without people like Tafadza, *Commitment for Life* could not begin to be effective in our work for justice in Zimbabwe. We are grateful to her and the rest of the team!

I have a copy of Frank Skinner's *Comedian's Prayer Book*. If anybody would like to borrow it, you are welcome. I found it an interesting read and food for thought.

Chris

Filling a Vacuum

No, not a vacuum flask! I'm sure you all know the hazards in doing that. And sorry, I can't illustrate the other kind of vacuum, for obvious reasons . . .

The saying goes that nature abhors a vacuum, and if we look at the disciples met together between the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost, we find them acting out that very adage.

Acts 1: 12-26. Returning to Jerusalem they gathered themselves together in "the room upstairs where they were staying." (v. 13) and got their heads together. Here they were, told to wait for the promise of the Father, but you know how it is – you have to do *something*, and they didn't know how long they'd have to wait anyway. Yes, they were praying, but surely there was something else . . . and perhaps inevitably it was Peter who stood up and suggested what that something could be. Drawing on Scripture, he argued that they should choose someone from among those who had been with Jesus from the beginning to take the place of Judas. They had no idea how the future was going to pan out, but they did know about the past: Jesus had called twelve of them so the logical thing was to make that number back up, and they went about it in a time-honoured way. Two names were put forward, they all prayed and then drew lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias.

Good planning for the future, you could say, but look what they were actually doing - trying to plan the future *on the basis of how the past had been*. Twelve disciples then, twelve disciples now. And what about poor Matthias, who I'm sure was a perfectly nice man, devoted to Jesus? From this point on we hear nothing more of him. On the other hand, we hear a great deal about the man God was going to choose in his own time – Saul of Tarsus – and in fact we are largely here because he accepted his calling.

Now the question, if you haven't guessed it already. As the Church restarts in a serious way, will we be like the disciples and try to force a pattern that pertained before the Pandemic struck?

I pose the question because we have moved through a completely new experience over the past year, which has affected us all. People we haven't seen since before the first Lockdown look different, sometimes older (well, we are!). We have learned new skills and let go of others. Maybe our priorities have changed; I know of several people who have revised their thinking on possessions and spending, others who find the natural world more significant. I'm sure you know of other changes there have been.

I think there's an important pattern in Acts to watch out for in our own life. The temptation to run ahead of God is massive and, like the disciples, those ideas we have can seem the absolutely right thing to do. But modern psychology warns us against making big decisions after a life-changing or traumatic event and this last year-and-a-bit has certainly been life-changing and in some cases even traumatic, so perhaps we should beware of that urge to *do something quickly*.

Doing nothing is allowed! We need spaces to think, to pray.

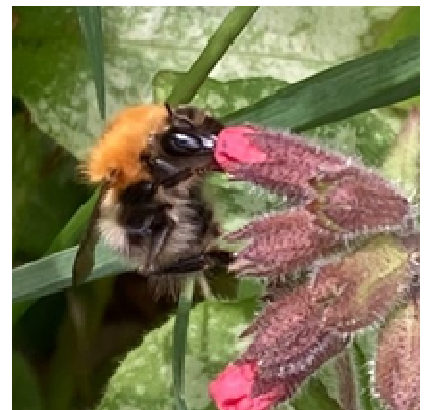
Centuries ago, if there was a big decision to be made in the life of the nation, a national fast was declared to give people time to fast and pray in advance of the decision. Could it be that in the Church we need to allow time out to be together again and to pray, alone or with others, in an open, quiet, seeking way before we try to fit everything back together exactly as it was or try to turn everything on its head?

One of the new things I've just done is upgrade my mobile phone, and the quality of the camera is striking.

This is a Common Carder Bee feeding on Lungwort, and the detail certainly couldn't have been captured on my previous phone, good though it was.

Perhaps what we all need is a new lens through which to view the world more clearly as it now is, in our own lives and in the Church.

Rev Ruth Crofton



Church Officers

MINISTER– vacancy
 CHURCH SECRETARY
 Mrs M Humberston 25 Belmont Gdns
 TS26 9LS tel 425847
 CHURCH TREASURER
 Mrs Sandra Twist, 17, Granville Ave
 tel 273447
 FREEWILL OFFERING TREASURER—TBA
 HALL BOOKINGS STEWARD-TBA

**Preachers****May**

23rd Brian Carter and the Worship Team
 30th Brian Carter and the Worship Team

June

6th Daily Devotions Sunday Service led by Margaret Humberston
 13th Chris Eddowes
 20th TBC
 27th Rev Val Towler

July

4th Chris Eddowes
 11th Brian Carter and the Worship Team
 18th Chris Eddowes
 25th Andy Lie (Synod Ecumenical Officer)

August

1st Maranny Jones
 8th John Drew

All services will start at the usual time of 10.30am, but in line with COVID restrictions will only last between 30 and 45 minutes.



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