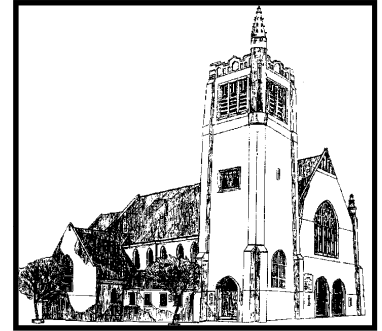




**Newsletter
of St. George's URC
Hartlepool**
Lockdown special
Feb –Mar 2021



Dear Friends

Happy New Year to you all

I hope you had a good Christmas and New year despite the challenges of not being able to gather with all your family in the ways you normally would. We were able to spend some time with our family and it was great to see just how much Jonah has grown and developed since we last saw him.

As we begin the New year there is a lot to look forward to. By now many of you will have had your Vaccine and before too long we should be able to think about getting out and about again. The United Reformed Church is still advising that churches to remain closed throughout this lockdown, and if we return the tiers of the past, we should remain closed until we are in Tier 2. I know this is difficult as we miss gathering together for worship and fellowship with our church family, but we want to keep everyone as safe as we possibly can.

I offer these words as we look back on 2020 and forward into 2021 – written by a colleague and friend, I think Andrew sums things up wonderfully well.

2020 a challenging year

Brexit

Coronavirus

Black lives matter

2020 an attentive year

Watching and waiting

watching and lamenting

watching and reaching out

2020 a life changing year

confusing twists and turns

passing through the 'Valley of the shadow of death'

reaching the point of no return

2020 a year of the Lord

God is around us

God is with us

God is in us

BUT

2021 an unknown year

God is the past

God is the present

God is the future

and he still cares for us all

Go well

Sue

News of People

Sadly, Ann Lewis died quite suddenly in mid-January after a long period of ill health. We send our love and sympathy to her family at this difficult time.

As some of you will already be aware, Aileen was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the beginning of January. We remember her and Frank in our prayers as she goes through various tests so that a treatment programme can be tailored to her needs.

Bill and Janet still need our prayers as they struggle with the effects of Bill's mobility problems.

Dick still has mobility problems and due to the COVID regulations in the care home is not presently able to spend any time with Margaret. However, she has settled more and feels happier in the home. We remember them both in our prayers.

Ethel Wray died, who many of you remember used to come to St. George's with Eric Burrell, died in early January.

Those of you who are long-standing friends of the people at the Mission at Thornaby will be saddened by the death recently of Leila Watson. Leila and her husband, Alf, ran the Sunday School for many years when many of the local children came on Sunday mornings, even though they had no family contact with the church. They were always really interested in the service and loved the drink and biscuit afterwards. Leila also played the piano there for many years.

We send sympathy and love to family and friends of Ethel and Leila.

Safeguarding Training Courses

For the last few years the URC has used the Methodist Safeguarding Training, but has now developed its own version.

It is hoped that as many people as possible, and not just the Elders, will take the opportunity to learn more about safeguarding in our churches.

The Safeguarding Officer for our Synod has planned a series of ZOOM training sessions, the dates of which are given below.

Tuesday 23 February 2021	7pm to 9pm
Wednesday 3 March 2021	10am to 12pm
Monday 8 March 2021	1pm to 3pm
Thursday 18 March 2021	10am to 12pm

If you would like to sign up for some training can you please contact me: wendy.watson@urc-northernsynod.org

Project Africa.

.Project Africa.

The total for our Water Aid project at the end of December 2020 stood at £72.39.

We have sent £70.00 to the Water Aid Charity and the £2.39 that is left will be kept until we are back at Church and find out if anyone is willing to carry on 'Project Africa'.

Thank you again to all who have supported our various projects over the years.

Keep well and keep safe.

Wyn Parkinson.



Rita Jackson

Richard, Rosalind and family would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Rita's dear friends in the church for their love and sympathy shown in our recent time of sadness. We appreciate so much your phone calls, letters, cards and all those who came to give us their support at Stranton Crematorium on such a bitterly cold day. Special thanks to the minister, the Rev Sue Fender, for a lovely service

FROM YOUR TREASURER

I would like to thank all members and friends who have continued to pay their freewill offering either direct to the bank account or by cheque.

The freewill offering envelopes for this current year are with me and I will put them out in church as soon as possible. If it will help you to have your envelopes now please let me know and I will arrange for them to be delivered to you.

We have just passed the end of the financial year and I am pleased to say that I have received the following amounts:-

Christmas Jars	314.00
Christmas Giving (British Lung Foundation)	150.00
Commitment for Life	287.50

I am in the process of completing the annual accounts for 2020 and I need to stress that in 2021 we will have to look for fundraising events.

We are waiting to hear from our insurance brokers if our Insurance company will pay out under the loss of income claim in relation to Covid 19 following a Test Case at the Supreme Court by the Financial Conduct Authority on the interpretation of business interruption. The judgement is being analysed and we will be informed if we need to make a formal claim. An intention to claim was completed some months ago. I hope that we will hear favourably.

The draft budget for the group has been circulated to all treasurers and the amount payable by St. George's is £300.77 per calendar month compared to £303.70 in 2020.

Take care,

Sandra

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email|: sandra.twist@mail.com

From Bill and Janet– 4th Feb

Well we have made it !!. 60 years ago today Bill and I were married in Blairhill Church Coatbridge. The reception was in the Masonic Hall Newlands Street with a steak pie tea. The band was Geordie Telford(a neighbour) with accordion, fiddle and drums. It was a great night with family and friends doing their party pieces. My engagement ring cost us £34, a whole month's wages. Our wedding album was £8.10shillings for 12 photographs, Single photographs mounted were 3/6d (17p). The wedding licence was 7/6d so I think we have had our money's worth out of that. We have had lots of love, laughter, and fun not forgetting a few tears along the way but as the Minister said at our service "If the Lord doesn't build the house we labour in vain" and there is a lot of truth in that.

Thank you so much for your cards, your lovely messages and telephone calls. Bill has had a few bad days this week and these acts of love and concern has pepped us up.

Love and blessings,
Janet and Bill. xxx



60 years ago!

Ann Lewis

Ann was born in Frosterly in Weardale, the only daughter among three brothers, and, as the only girl was expected to help about the house. She had a hard life with her mother, but didn't hold it against her and looked after her when she was ill.

She left school and went straight into a job. She did many jobs including working at Ramar's in Crook, a clothing factory. She married Alan, the boy next door and had Colin and Alexis. They moved to Hartlepool when Alan got a job in the steelworks. The marriage didn't last and she later married William Lewis, known as Taffy. He wasn't the best of husbands but the good result of this marriage was Pauline. Later she met Michael and ran the Brus Café with him but he died suddenly in 1984, leaving Ann devastated but having to get on for the 3 children.

Ann worked hard to practically bring the 3 three children upon her own, having various jobs, but there was always a hot meal on the table. Pauline says they didn't have all they wanted, but they had everything they needed. Among her many jobs she worked at Ernie Nicholls Arcade in Seaton, Miers Avenue Bakery and Frank Sherry's fish shop in Seaton. Joyce said Ann began as an employee and became a friend. Even Pauline made some parties there!

Ann was loved by her family but also very much by her friends. She didn't have acquaintances, she had friends. Talking to people, these are some of the phrases they used: a real friend, somebody who was always there, you could tell her anything, she always helped, had a heart of gold and lit up a room.

In 1985, Ann finally chose a really nice man, Bill, and they were together until he died in 2011. He suffered with dementia in later life and Ann looked after him to the end, even though by this time, her health wasn't the best.

Even though Ann always worked hard: work, housework, cooking and decorating the house, she always took time to enjoy herself. When she was a young girl Ann's parents enjoyed old time dancing and this must have rubbed off on Ann because she was one of the founders of a line dancing club which met in various places, including Burbank St and Miers Avenue, and for which she was the treasurer for over 20 years. The books always balanced! She made many friends here and also at the Monday Afternoon Friendship Group which met in Wynyard Rd. She was a great organiser, sorting out trips and meals. If Ann organised, she did it thoroughly. She arranged a 90th birthday party for a line dancing member and as well as the food and venue, she also organised the Hartlepool Mail to come along and report on it.

Ann had never been abroad until she visited her brother in Australia, when she was 60. She didn't enjoy the flight from Teesside to Heathrow but on the long flight to Australia, she made friends with the man sitting next to her who sorted her when they changed in Singapore. Having got the bug, she then visited Canada, Cyprus, Tenerife and Madeira, among others.

When she went to live with Pauline when her health deteriorated, she would really enjoy watching football with Paul, her son in law. She played the piano quite well, but she didn't think so. Gracie, her granddaughter was always spending time with Ann and would ride shot gun on the mobility scooter when she went down town with Ann. She will really miss her as she always went to see Grandma when she came home from school.

Although she obviously couldn't mix with many people in the covid lockdowns, she still kept in touch with all her friends by phone, conversations always including lots of laughter. The song "Always look on the Bright Side of Life", which was at the beginning, sums Ann up, She did. Though this became more and more difficult as her health got worse and she lost her independence.

At the end, she was ready to go, though didn't want to leave her family. The comfort that we can have is that Ann is in no more pain. And while we still remember her, it is with a smile, and she will always be here with us *(from Ann's funeral)*

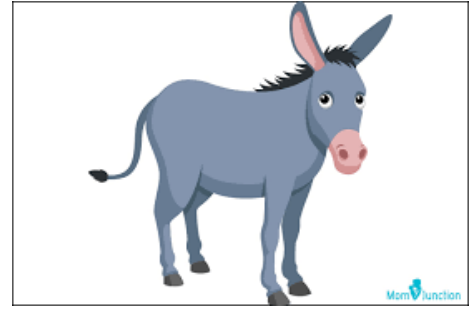
The Donkey

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!



MORAL:

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a steppingstone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up.

Remember the five simple rules to be happy:

1. Free your heart from hatred - Forgive.
2. Free your mind from worries - Most never happens.
3. Live simply and appreciate what you have.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less from people but more from yourself.

You have two choices... smile and close this page, or pass this along to someone else to share the lesson.

Created by William Besse

Nominations and AGM

At this time of year I usually seek nominations for Elders, this year is no exception. If you would like to nominate someone please speak to the person and then try to find somebody to second the nomination. Once you have done this, please send the details of your nomination with your name, and whoever has seconded the nomination, to me as soon as possible.

Last year we did not manage to have an AGM due to the COVID restrictions. Non of us expected to still be under those restrictions now. In light of this the URC has produced guidelines on how church meetings and the appointment and ordination of Elders can take place via Zoom. It is our intention to try and arrange for this to happen. If you have any comments to make, or you feel that this would not be appropriate for St George's please let me know.

Margaret





A family business – Tendani Masendu

A loan of just US\$200 dollars from her village bank gave Tendani Masendu the chance of security and confidence for her family's future. Like many in Masendu ward, Tendani is the head of the household, as her husband lives and works permanently in South Africa. With many children to look after, the irregular monies from her husband mean she needs extra income.

Through Christian Aid partner, Institute of Rural Technologies (IRT), Tendani trained in retailing and was given a loan to start a shop, selling clothes and other goods she bought in Botswana. She was determined to make this work, so was delighted to expand into the shop next door and increase her stock. At one point, she even sold car tyres.

"I used the loan to start selling second hand clothes. With 6 children, 1 orphan and 12 grandchildren, I needed the money. I bought small things at first and resold. My brother gave me a small space where I could sell children's books, salt and other things. I make enough money to pay for school fees and food."

Tendani is part of a village bank. Village banks started helping small businesses in 2008 with contributions from women. At that time, there was no money. The village bank started as a means of pooling money together for people to go to workshops. This changed when IRT, with funding from CA, started lending to the women's groups. The system is credit union style money lending with the village group having responsibility for the fund. They were taught how to identify good projects and monitor progress, so when people come to the committee with a proposal, they can decide if this is a worthwhile project. If approved by the group, then IRT will match fund the local offer and give appropriate training.

If someone defaults on a loan, they are taken to the traditional court. If they have not paid because their circumstances have changed and they are vulnerable, then the debt will be cancelled. If they have not paid because of lack of effort or they have used the money for other purposes, then they are asked to work off the amount owed in community service.

Today, Tendani employs two people and her standard of living has increased. Her daughter has received training in marketing and booking, so it can now be called a family business. "I feel I am free in life because I can feed myself. I am self-sufficient. I am not going to lose sleep thinking." What a wonderful testament to the work of IRT.

From the editor

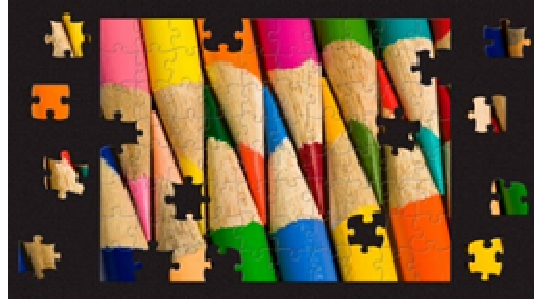
Sorry this edition is later than intended, but my computer decided it didn't want to save it and it disappeared! It's probably somewhere in a "cloud", never to be seen again.

I never thought that when the first "lock-down special" that I would still be doing them a year later. But to look on the bright side, just think how many trees we've saved! Hopefully, by the time I get to the next edition (March 30th), things may be looking up. Perhaps the light at the end of the tunnel might not be another oncoming train!

Many of us have had at least the first Covid vaccination, and the rest of us "oldies" will be done soon. I do hope that we might get back to church for Easter; I can't imagine having the church closed for 2 Easters running. Lent begins very soon. How about giving instead of giving up? Charities need help more than ever!

The Winter Of The Jig-Saw Puzzle

From Rev Ruth Crofton



Jigsaw puzzles have become the go-to activity for many in our confined-to-the-house state. Along with the regular jigsaw fans are new converts learning the obsessive nature of the hobby, the just seeking another piece before you go to bed, get the tea – anything! How many of you, I wonder, have already looked to see where the loose pieces in the above picture will fit?

For a moment, let's look at your life as a great jigsaw that you're building up with only little glimpses of what the picture might be, wondering how bits fit together and whether you've even got all the pieces you need. That happens with actual jigsaws when you're sure, sometimes, that you don't have the piece to fit in a particular space; it's only when the puzzle is almost completed that you find the elusive piece and wonder how you ever missed it. Bit like looking back on life!

We all have different ways of tackling jigsaw puzzles. Most, if not all, start by finding and fitting the edge pieces; we set the parameters of the picture early. Next, some folk sort through all the pieces to put them in different piles, by colour or shape while others, myself included, just dive straight in and work in a haphazard way, a bit like our approaches to life itself! Mostly we look for sections to work on – a brightly coloured bit, perhaps, or an obvious image and we build that up, perhaps noticing pieces that don't fit immediately, but are worth putting aside for later. Definitely like life, that – busy with the present, we are on the lookout for future possibilities.

But when we have a few sections built up, we might wonder how they connect because sometimes there seems no obvious way that they do. It's only as the puzzle progresses that we find the connecting parts and sometimes discover that the reason we've not been able to knit them together thus far is because we made a mistake somewhere. And when an actual jigsaw is broken – someone nudges the table or the cat leaps in the middle of it – it's in the rebuilding, (after a lot of muttering not to say swearing) that we find the error and how the sections fit together.

Imagine, then, your life-jigsaw coming along nicely, and then the Pandemic seizes a corner and shakes it so hard that a great section falls apart. That's how many of us feel: that our lives have been so shaken that the plans we had, the picture we had in mind for the future, is in pieces.

At some point we will rebuild, if we haven't already begun, and in the rebuilding we may well find things fitting together differently. We might find – have already found – that what we thought was important to our life actually isn't, that our values have changed and we see our life-picture with different eyes. We might find new, vibrant, connections, with people, with faith, with nature.

St. Paul, writing to encourage the Philippian Church (**Philippians 1: 20-27**) said, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer." Although he longed to be with Christ, he was happy to keep on putting together the pieces of his life that also helped build up the picture of the Philippians' lives, for as long as he was needed.

I'll end with suggesting you look at **Psalms 139:13-18** – "Your eyes beheld my unformed substance" - God has a whole picture of each of us and will help us fit the pieces together!

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**Stop press!**

The first, Zoom, Group Pastorate Committee meeting since December 2019 was held on 4th Feb.

At the conclusion of the meeting Rev Sue informed us that she has tendered her resignation, from our Group, to Revd Dave Herbert, our Synod Moderator.

We were informed that she will be leaving us at the end of April – mid May 2021 and will be taking charge of 5 Churches in Cambridge.

We will have to inform all our church members, of her decision, in the next Church Newsletter.

I thanked her, on behalf of the Group, for all that she had done for us and wished her God's speed in all her endeavours. Sue also informed us that the Moderator will be getting in touch shortly and I will keep you informed of the outcome.

God Bless and take care.
Brian.

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