

BRIDGE

September 2019



*For the United Reformed Churches in
Bewcastle, Brampton, Carlisle*

*Part of the
Cumbria URC Missional Partnership*

Contacts and Sunday Service Pattern

THE MINISTER

The Revd Nick Mark
156 Lowry Hill Road
CARLISLE
CA3 0ER

Telephone: 01228 526162
Email: nmark@keme.co.uk

THE KNOWE CHURCH

BEWCASTLE

Services: 1.45pm on the first Sunday in the month
Contact: Mrs Doreen Telford
Telephone: 016977 48248

BRAMPTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

13 MAIN STREET
BRAMPTON

Services: 9.30am on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month
Contact: Mrs Barbara Laird
Telephone: 016977 2376

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

WEST WALLS
CARLISLE
CA3 8UF

www.urccarlisle.org

Services: 11.00am every Sunday
Contact: Mrs Rosalind Fearon
Telephone: 016973 44892
Email: rosrayfearon@talktalk.net

When there is a fifth Sunday in the month
the Service is for the three Churches
Usually at 11.00am at St George's
(Check our Three Churches Services list)

From the Minister

Dear Friends,

1st September marks a change in the URC Churches in Cumbria because the old system of pastorates is being replaced by one URC Missional Partnership for the whole County. The Elders and congregations of the URC churches in North Cumbria have actively supported this change by encouraging the Church centrally to rethink how we pay for Stipendiary Ministry so that the cost of Stipendiary ministry is more fairly distributed among each member of every congregation. Not only that the idea of the Missional Partnership is to release ministers to spend more time in ministry and less time on administration which should benefit Church members.

Those two points pale into insignificance though if we look at the main aim of the Missional partnership and that is summed up well if we look at the Gospel reading from Luke 15 verses 1-10 for Sunday 15th September which is Jesus telling two parables of loss. The first of the Shepherd going in search of his lost sheep. The second about the woman who cleans her house from top to bottom until she finds a lost coin. The overriding aim of the Missional Partnership is noticing the missing and taking risks to restore God's community.

The Missional Partnership in Cumbria will aim to encourage each church through its own local mission community to really grasp the nettle of *God For All* and that is reach out to the lost in a way we have not done before. Quite understandably as churches have got smaller they have tended to go into a survival mode which means mission tends to drop down the list of priorities. Yet without mission the church loses both purpose and the opportunity to grow. If as we all have expressed a wish to do we join our local mission community we won't be doing mission on a small scale but in a much more effective way because we will not just have more people involved but by working with other denominations we can share skills and above all encourage each other.

Already Churches are beginning to see the fruits of the co-operation between denominations in the way that new concepts of mission are being shared through combined training for lay people as well as ordained. I still hear the mantra that all mission is about is going round knocking on doors. That style of mission is years old and has been replaced by much more user friendly ways of encouraging people to meet those outside our immediate circle.

A classic opportunity for what I would call soft mission is to invite friends to the various events staged by our Churches for harvest over the coming weeks. Harvest is a time when all humanity can reflect on how we need to see the bigger picture and not just take for granted the annual harvest. Humanity is beginning to realise how precious the harvest is and how we need to start appreciating what God provides rather than by acting in a cavalier way that really threatens harvests and the livelihoods of those striving to produce them.

With every blessing
Nick Mark

Letter from Revd Sarah Moore

Dear friends,

This letter is let you know that I have received a call from the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland to serve as their Transition Champion and will be concluding my ministry in Cumbria at the end of December 2019 and moving to Scotland in January 2020.

I am conscious that this news will come as something of a surprise for many people connected with churches, URC and beyond, across the county. In the last few weeks and months it feels like many people have been asking how long I have left in the role, and that the only answer that I have been able to offer until now is that the post will end in February 2022 but that I did not envisage staying in Cumbria until that final point. I had not expected to be moving

to a new ministry at this stage and it came as something of a surprise earlier this year to be invited by the URC Moderators' meeting to look at this role.

I was invited to consider this move and was offered the post out of the work being done in Cumbria within God for All and the success of the ecumenical covenant between the United Reformed Church and our friends in the Diocese, District and Salvation Army in Cumbria and the positive relationships with friends in other churches in the county. My new role is to work with congregations and ministers across Scotland to grow competent and confident leaders and to help congregations find new ways to look outwards and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their communities. There are also promising although very early signs of denominations across Scotland wishing to work more closely together in this task. I am excited about this new challenge, particularly the opportunity to work more closely again with local churches and the people who belong to and serve them.

I continue to be passionate about the vision contained within God for All. I believe as strongly as I ever did that this is God's call to the churches of Cumbria. Churches everywhere are called to be committed and faithful in God's mission, to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to invite others to join with them. We live in an age where it is not easy to be a Christian person where it feels that we are swimming against a tide of mostly indifference with waves of hostility. But at the same time there are people who are curious who wonder about the questions of life and about God and want to know more. Here we are trying to grow a missional mindset and to find ways to meet with people in ways that work for them. We are honest that the life of the Church in the years to come will be different to how it has been in the past. God's call, as I have been sharply reminded this year, is ever onwards.

Lastly I owe the churches of Cumbria of all denominations, and all of the colleagues I have worked with here, and the many friends I have made, a huge debt of gratitude. This ministry among you has

been amazing and awesome, and I have loved many more minutes of it than not. I have seen God in new ways in Cumbria, and been challenged to consider the Gospel and churches and communities and everything else in ways that I had never before imagined. I have learned so much. But we are not quite finished together yet! I will be very much present and with you until the end of the year. I am excited about working with Bishop Emma and others on the God for All Vision Refresh. I look forward to welcoming a new Methodist District Chair to the county in a few weeks time. Looking onwards, I look forward to hearing all your news and the amazing things that I have no doubt that God has in store for God's people here! My prayers are with and for you for the future.

Yours in Christ

Sarah

From the Churches

Bewcastle

Our Service on the 1st of September at 1.45pm will be led by our Area President Reverend Sarah Moore. The month sees us having a second service because it is that joyous time of year when we celebrate harvest at 1.45pm on Sunday the 15th of September. This will be followed by a traditional tea at Roadhead Hall to which our friends from Brampton and St George's are cordially invited.



Elders, following the Special meeting on 12th August at St George's for all Elders from the four churches Nick currently serves, will be meeting to prepare a Profile to enable the Synod Pastoral Committee to assist the New Missional Partnership for Cumbria to

begin a search for a new Minister who, whilst not having the same responsibilities as Nick does, will have some oversight over the four churches after he retires. Thanks go to Marilyn for representing the Church on the 12th of August.

The 12th August meeting was also very useful in giving insights to Elders on leading worship which will come in useful as the style of ministry changes.

Our October Service will take place on Sunday 6th October and will be led by Rev Nick Mark..

Nick Mark

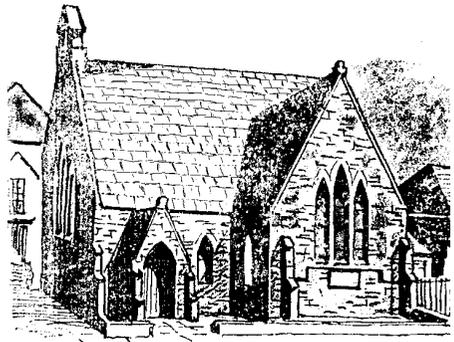
Brampton

Services at Brampton URC in September

Our quarterly Communion service on 8th September at 9.30am will be led by the Revd Nick Mark. Our service on 22nd September at 9.30am will also be led by the Revd Nick Mark.

Harvest Service at The Knowe

This will take place on Sunday 15th September at 1.45pm followed by a Harvest Tea, the service will be led by the Revd Nick Mark. Please contact Barbara about any transport requirements.



Three Churches Group Service at St George's

This will take place on 29th September at 11am. This service will be led by the Revd John Millard. Again, for any transport requirements please contact Barbara.

Fundraising

On 31st July our coffee morning in church, with raffle, raised £108. Thanks to all who contributed in any way.

News of the Fellowship

It was good to hear from Mabel Irving at the coffee morning that she is feeling fine again.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

We remember those who are not so well, those who are sad or anxious and those not able to get out and about so easily.

Brampton Duty Rotas for September

Stewarding: John Salton

Flowers: Barbara Laird

Dates in September for your Diary

8th 9.30am Communion Service (Brampton URC)

25th 9.30am Coffee Morning in Brampton Church

29th 11.00am Three Churches Group Service St George's

Shirley Brown

Carlisle

St George's Services

Sept 1st 11.00am (Rosalind Fearon)

Sept 8th 11.00am Communion (NM)

Sept 15th 11.00am (Revd Iain Mackenzie)

Sept 22nd 11.00am Harvest Festival (NM)

Sept 29th 11.00am Three Churches Service (Revd John Millard)

Oct 6th 11.00am (Revd Sarah Moore)

Readers

Sept 1st Elizabeth Mackenzie

Sept 8th Marjorie Lawson

Sept 15th Will Lindsay

Sept 22nd Olive Cronie

Sept 29th Vacant

Oct 6th Tony Wiseman

Communion Duty

Sept 8th

Preparation

Marjorie Lawson

Serving

Will Lindsay
Ian Moonie

Duty Rota

Sept 1st
Sept 8th
Sept 15th
Sept 22nd
Sept 29th
Oct 6th

Elder

Olive Cronie
Marjorie Lawson
Ian Moonie
Will Landsay
Tony Wiseman
Trevor Irwin

Steward

Deborah Usher
Kathleen Harris
Valerie Barlow
Pamela Martin
Jessie Overs
Deborah Usher

Flowers

Sept 1st
Sept 8th
Sept 15th
Sept 22nd
Sept 29th
Oct 6th

Valerie Barlow
Vacant
Will & Marian Lindsay
Harvest
Jean Frizell & Deborah Usher
Vacant

Saturday Coffee Morning

Sept 7th
Sept 14th
Sept 21st
Sept 28th

Oct 5th

Jessie & Michael Overs
Rosalind Fearon & Kathy Craig
Kathleen Harris & Moira Wales
Samaritan's Purse
(Operation Christmas Child)
TBA

From St George's Secretary

News of Members and friends

We offer our warmest congratulations to Iain who will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination in September. It is very kind of Elizabeth and Iain to invite us all to share in the celebration.

My sister-in-law June is still in hospital and is making good progress. Also our son William has recovered from his fall, though he is walking rather slowly.

We remember in our thoughts and prayers all those in our fellowship who are facing challenges associated with illness or loneliness or advancing years. We do not forget you.

Elders' meeting with Revd Sarah Moore

Most of you will be aware of the significant changes that are taking place within North West Synod with the formation of a single missional partnership for Cumbria and the retirement of our minister Revd Nick Mark next February. To help prepare elders for the future Sarah gave the elders some guidance on leading worship and also asked us to complete a short profile for our church to complete. This will enable the Synod to declare a total of three ministerial opportunities for Cumbria to go to the Moderators' meeting in October.

From 1st September Nick becomes minister along with his colleagues of twelve churches in the Missional partnership but with special oversight of the four churches he serves now! St George's, Brampton and Bewcastle elders are preparing a profile for each church to be submitted by 15th September so that we stand a chance of getting some new ministers when the National Moderators deliberate at their next meeting. The new Ministers who will be leaving college next summer start looking at profiles from October onwards.

Heart of the City Mission Community

Pre-launch Social and Quiz 6.30pm 6th September in the Tithe Barn. This is an important milestone in our endeavours to form a city centre mission community. Many people have been working on this for a long time, and it will be encouraging if as many of us as possible can be there. Some of us already know a lot of people in the other churches, but this event will be a good opportunity to get to know them better.

Christian Aid Quiz Night

20th September 7.30pm Tithe Barn

Cumbria Pride

There will be a celebration in Carlisle on Saturday 28th September. At our church meeting it was decided that St George's will display Gay Pride flags in our windows to demonstrate our support for the LGBT community.

Rosalind Fearon

The Guild

As from 2nd September 2019, 'The Guild' will replace 'The Women's Guild', in the hope that we may recruit gentlemen.

It is also likely that some ladies from the Border Kirk may be joining us: we are shortly to meet with them.

2nd September at 2.00 pm

Margaret Jones speaking about her time in nursing

7th October at 2.00 pm

John Metcalfe - Alan Bennett Readings

4th November at 2.00 pm

Andy Auld (Citizens' Advice Bureau). A talk on "SCAMS"

9th December at 2.00 pm

A Christmas Concert by the U3A Choir, when all are welcome.

A small charge will be made and the proceeds will go to the Great North Air Ambulance

Elizabeth Mackenzie

Social and Fund-Raising

Our Harvest Festival Service will be held on Sunday 22nd September and we are going to arrange a Soup & Sandwich Lunch following that Service. It will be similar to the lunch held earlier this year when most members stayed after the Service and enjoyed food and fellowship together. A list will be available nearer the time to indicate if you will be staying for the lunch.

One other date for your diary: On Friday 25th October at 7.00pm we will be entertained by the Brampton Reivers and Dukes Jam. Tickets at £5 to include refreshments will be available nearer the time. You will remember that this group gave us a most enjoyable evening at the end of last year. We hope the event will be well supported by members and friends and it will be open to our neighbouring churches.

Valerie Barlow

David Rowan Bewley - Obituary

On the 9th of May 1924 at George Street Maternity home Carlisle Mr and Mrs Bewley senior were blessed with the birth of a second child David Rowan Bewley. It made up the set quite well because David had an older sister Mary better known as Maime who predeceased him in 1976.

After a conventional schooling like so many of his generation David at the age of 14 found himself on the job market at not an easy time economically. However he found work as a plasterer but realised this was not his true calling and volunteered as a dispatch rider with the Fire Brigade just before the second World War. Once he attained 18 years of age David decided to serve his country and joined the Royal Air Force. It turned out to be an interesting experience as a Clerical Officer starting in Newquay and moving to John O'Groats and then France following D-Day and through Holland and ending his service in Berlin.

David was to meet the love of his life, Maureen, through attending church. Both Maureen and David were enthusiastic members of Charlotte Street Church and after a long courtship of between 4 and 5 years they were married there on the 5th of March 1955. Maureen is clear that the long courtship was for financial reasons and none other! Maureen and David were blessed with two children, Janet and Andrew. Since then the family has increased with Janet marrying Derek and Andrew marrying Mary. This was to be followed by two grandchildren, Sarah and Oliver. It almost goes without saying that family have been of immense importance to both David and Maureen. David was an excellent Husband and a caring Father and Grandfather. Family have been of immense importance in ensuring David and Maureen have been able to stay in their lovely home during David's long illness.

After leaving the RAF David joined Simpsons the joiners and Maureen, with her classic wit, reminded me that not only has he made hundreds of coffins but attended an equal number of funerals.

David was friendly with Kenneth Paine who invited him to work at Manders the wallpaper wholesalers and David became manager there. Sometimes we have to see humour through sorrow and it seemed ironic that the Coroner in issuing David's Certificate for the funeral decided that Ship Manager was a better title. It is a long time since any kind of boat reached the canal wharf near the hospital! The family home for 46 years was in Aglionby until Maureen and David's move nearer to the City Centre.

What about the real person though? David was not just to me but to many others a true gentleman. He was gentle, kind, and a really good listener. Before folk think that I might be thinking of something else in saying David was a good listener I am referring to his love of classical music. He was fortunate to be married to a talented singer and he genuinely enjoyed going along to listen to Maureen perform in the choirs she participated in.

Maureen reminded me that one of David's many talents was his love of gardening and it has always been a joy when visiting them to see a garden of colour. He was also something of a cactus specialist in his day. Another hobby was that of Philately. He particularly focussed on collecting stamps from both The UK and Germany.

David was no slouch in the field of education because, although he left school young, he has always had an interest in history and has always enjoyed reading history books and history novels.

One of the many things that impressed me most about David was his calm approach to life, his immense sense of humour and his satisfaction with life. David and Maureen made a great team and, contrary to what many might suspect, they made decisions together.

David and Maureen have both had a strong Christian faith and contributed very much to the life first of Charlotte Street and later of course to St George's when Charlotte Street closed.

Quiet though David might seem to have been, he had a really strong sense of determination to do the right thing by everyone.

In their twilight years, as we often refer to that period of life, I know how much the congregation have admired the resilience of David and Maureen in the face of adversity. They have been the victims of not one but two of the City floods but carried on life as normal when others might have despaired.

Our passage at the funeral from Ecclesiastes 3 seemed appropriate because David quietly accepted the life God decreed for him without complaint and made the best of it and in the process touched many other lives. His tolerance of his gradual decline drew much respect and admiration. He wasn't Prime Minister or a Managing Director of a PLC but he made a difference to many lives in ways that perhaps only now we are beginning to appreciate. His was truly a life to be celebrated.

The retiring collection after the funeral went to something which not only affected David, but for which David and Maureen have worked for over the years, namely the British Heart Foundation.

Nick Mark

Thank You

My family and I wish to thank Nick and the members of St George's for the love and consideration shown to us all during David's frailty over the past 18 months. You have all helped us cope with sadness so well. We all felt so much care and support from all the people here.

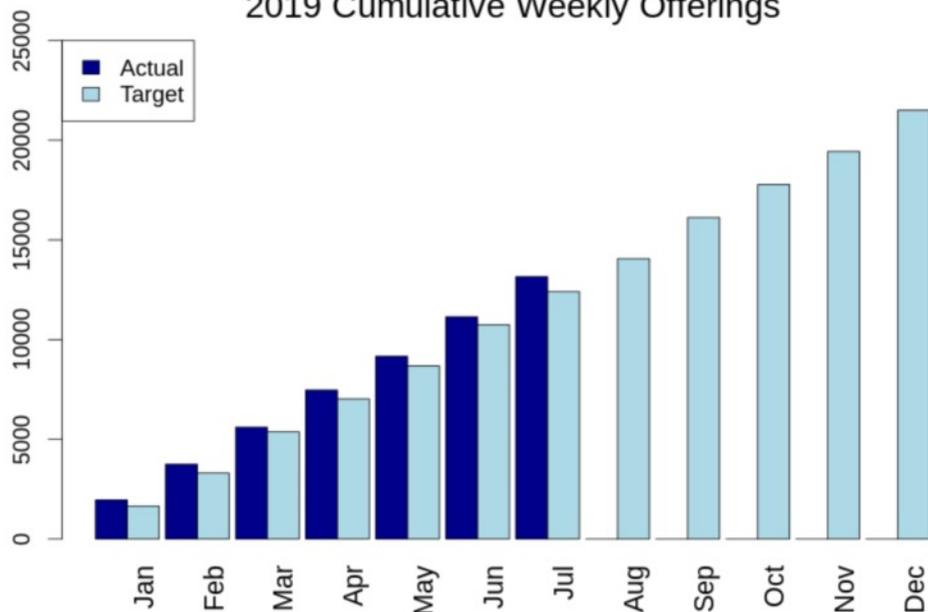
Maureen

St George's Autumn Gift Day

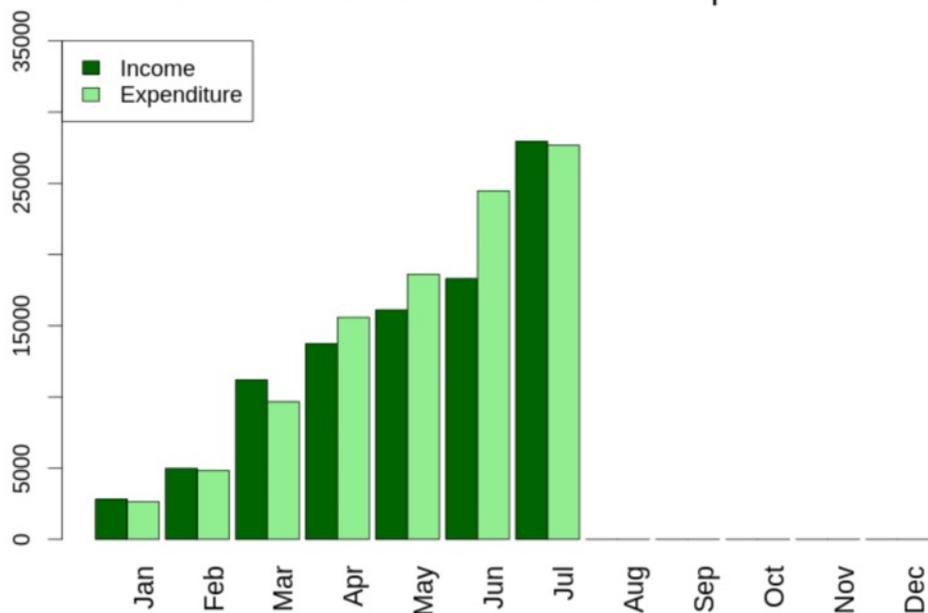
On Sunday 29th September, St George's Autumn Gift Day will take place. It is very much hoped Members may once again feel able to support this event and, if so, envelopes are enclosed for contributions. If those Members who are registered under the Gift Aid Scheme could donate by cheque, this would be most helpful.

Pamela Martin (*Gift Aid Secretary*)

St. George's URC Carlisle 2019 Cumulative Weekly Offerings



2019 Cumulative Total Income / Expenditure



JAMAICA (*Part two*)

A three hour drive took us on our next long trip through jungle. The roads again were a mixture of city streets, some littered with pot holes to make a mockery of Carlisle's, road-making stretches another menace to tyres and springs, a small section of toll-paying motorway then mostly narrow roads, potholed too and barely room enough to pass oncoming traffic, very sharp bends sometimes almost semi circular, all of which a severe test of driving for even the most competent of motorists.

We arrived at the Appleton Rum Estate in time for a cool drink before the organised tour. The sun was really hot out of doors and we appreciated the coolness indoors as we crossed into each section.

We had a taste of sugar cane and a sample of the liquid obtained by grinding the cane between two millstones. The actual processes to produce the many different types of rum were not included in the tour. The site of the whole business has the most ideal conditions possible, set in a valley surrounded by mountains, the right soil, water flowing over limestone, exactly the right kind of weather and altogether ensuring that this Jamaican Rum is the best in all the world!

Next was a visit to the 'tasting' room with three different blends for us to sample, told about their flavours, looks and aromas - and finally each of us was presented with a token collectible of a special blend which is never going to be repeated. (I wonder if I should offer it on Ebay!)

After a delicious lunch in their cafe, we faced the return journey with the same hazards and the added extra of rain from the latest thunderstorm. I was thankful to reach the outskirts of Kingston.

Next day was Sunday. I was determined to attend a Jamaican worship Service and after some research chose the Webster Memorial United Church, like our own union, comprising Presbyterian, Congregational and Churches of Christ. The roll is over 1500 and although it is a huge building, there are two morning

services at 7.15 and 9.45am each having hundreds attending. I chose the first hoping to meet the fellowship after the worship but we sang the last hymn as the next people were arriving so no coffee. The morning service was a most uplifting and enjoyable experience, I was escorted by a long term member, now retired but still attending many of the weekly activities. The hymns well known, just as popular there as in St. George's, the service very traditional in form but a very different presentation and I was never aware of time passing. The attached church-funded Early Childhood Centre was present with special blessings for the various groups, re-dedication of the members of staff and a reggae song from a group of the children.

Two raised screens at either side of the central front showed all that was going on, including sweeps of the various parts where members were (no chance of 'nodding off').

I have left a copy of the leaflet for that day to show how many activities are held by the church, how many people are on their Praying List, anniversaries remembered, etc. During the worship people were greeted for birthdays and visitors were asked to announce themselves and were welcomed.

It was a novel experience to see the queues of people waiting to enter and we had to clear the building fairly quickly after the 'Amen'. It was also amazing to see how many cars had managed to squeeze into the large parking area and I did not envy those trying to leave!

The afternoon was spent at Port Royal, the capital of Jamaica until about a third of the city disappeared in an earthquake in 1692 and many lives were lost. We spent some time in the old cemetery where most of the tombstones were concrete posts with a number on. I expect there is a register of names, if known, in the city records unless they were lost in the tsunami or earthquake. Many of those whose tombstone were titled had died of yellow fever, mostly on ships and brought ashore for burial.

We arrived home just in time to escape the latest thunderstorm, this one lasting till long into the night. As there had been such a prolonged drought, no-one was complaining. Little did I think I would be reliving the same conditions here now.

Does the name Bob Marley strike a chord? My only memory of him is 'If I had a hammer', by no means his best known but one of the protest songs I learned in my African days. He is probably Jamaica's favourite son and a visit to the Museum is a must for all who arrive in Kingston. As well as being a VERY well known and popular singer he was a great figure in the Peace Movement, helping to reconcile the factions in Jamaica in the troubled infighting after independence. An attempted assassination forced him to move to London for part of his life and his many songs and albums have earned worldwide recognition.

His home is now a protected National Heritage Site; it has been restored and refurbished, containing posters and displays of the many platinum discs of his recordings. The small room of his recording studio, where he started all his productions and sales is also on view and a film tells his life story. Like so many brilliant poets and musicians he died at an early age, 36 years, of skin cancer. The list of his awards, medals and certificates from around the world, including the conferred Order of Merit by his government and the Peace Medal by the UN, make impressive reading.

Another day, another trip through the mountainous jungle regions. Not far from home the rain began, sometimes torrential, causing little waterfalls in the mini ravines down through the forests, sometimes more gentle showers enabling us to see the changes, trees giving way to shrubs and grasses by the roadsides, then back to dense forest with no apparent roads or paths yet still these spacious mansions appear, solitary, secluded in the forest - there must be roadways to reach them.

On this journey we passed through little 'villages' of houses, large and small, some more like shacks, some stalls, one-room buildings

serving as shops, covered with advertisements and brightly coloured paint. There were also hotels and larger stores and everywhere were people, on bikes, in cars, lorries, buses and on foot, a blend of colour and noise.

At last, half way up a mountainside and in the middle of a former sugar cane estate, we arrived at our destination, a special surprise for me, to stay in one of the Big Houses, now the Tamarind Hotel but we were the only guests.

It was truly a wonderful example of its kind, that we see only in films, spacious rooms, parquet floors, high ceilings, staircase wide enough for the most extravagant crinoline, a gallery-like landing with several en suite guest rooms opening off it, each with its own part of the verandah running around the whole building.

The owner, an English gentleman, had purchased it as a ruined, burnt out shell and rebuilt and restored it to its former glory over a number of years, purchasing original and in some cases replica furniture and furnishings locally in antique shops and back in the UK, transporting by ship and road to make this dream come true.

He had also acquired 13,000 acres and grows pineapples, bananas, breadfruit and breeds chickens, keeps bees for honey all of which provides a livelihood with the 'occasional' guest, although he has special groups from Kingston. It is also a bird sanctuary and we dined on the lower verandah, facing a glorious sunset, now the rain had stopped at last and regaled with stories of our host's life over the past thirty years. No flies, mosquitoes or other insects; after the birds had finished their evening chorus and the cicadas had ended their 'din' it was so calm and peaceful, a fitting end to the day.

Next morning I watched from my balcony dozens of tiny iridescent humming-birds collecting nectar from the flowering shrubs and trees smothering the wilder side of the House. Soon it was time for breakfast on the verandah in brilliant sunshine; we had fresh fruit, toast with house marmalade and honey and it was time to be on our way to the last of our visits.

Our journey was more easily navigated under a cloudless sky and we arrived at Blue Harbour within the hour. This was the home of Sir Noel Coward after the war, where his friends came to stay until 1973 when he died. His estate is now owned by the daughter of his lawyer and is a guest house but also open to visitors. It is set on a hillside by the seaside with wonderful views looking out to sea at the front and from the back to his other property some distance away and much further up the mountainside. 'Firefly' is smaller but still a spacious residence that he had had built with only one bedroom so that he could get time to work undisturbed by his many guests (at Blue Harbour). Here were his desk, some of his paintings, his photography and some of his writing. It was not as well kept as Blue Harbour but the grounds were beautiful, with a statue of him sitting on a summer seat overlooking the bay (and his other home) far below. His grave is a few steps further down the hillside, the whole set in a wide sweep of lawn in immaculate condition.

The journey back to Kingston was spoiled by another burst of torrential rain, slackening just as we reached the outskirts and stopping just as we did.

This was a wonderful trip, thanks to my nephew for the invitation to visit and for his kindness in planning and escorting me to so many of the island's attractions.

Olive Cronie

October 'Bridge' Preparation

Claiming date for Articles: Sunday 15th September

Contact editor or email to: *deeptrey@btinternet.com*

Printing in week from: Monday 23rd September

By: Kathleen & John Harris

Jesus-shaped Church: Combating Survivalism

NW Synod's Mission & Discipleship Team

Lawrence, Dave, Darren & Daleen

"A thin place was for the early church a place where desperation, fear, worries, the real emotional baggage of discipleship were shared."

(June 2019)

Dave writes

Have you heard the term, 'thin place'? It's used to describe a place where heaven and earth are closer than tissue paper; a place where the divine can be felt.

Iona has been describes as a thin place. I found a thin place where, inexplicably, I felt a deep sense of being close to God. I was only 22, working in a homeless hostel overnight, and at 4am, amongst all the snoring and farting of 30 men of the road in various states of drunkenness, I found an inexplicable sense of peace and joy.

That sense of experiencing the divine as I made porridge and tidied up the beds did not last long.

I left the basement and went upstairs to church where, during the service, I realised that here, in this place of worship, I did not feel as close to God as I had a few hours earlier. That experience stayed with me and has directed many of my discipleship choices since.

If there can be thin places where you feel close to God, then the opposite may be true: there are also "thick places" - places where God does not seem to be so close. We need to take seriously the call to make our churches "thinner places".



The disciples discovered a thin place in Jerusalem, at the scruffy end of town in an unassuming room. That room, described in John chapter 20, became for the followers of Jesus a thin place. Why? What made it a place where God in Jesus was experienced?

The disciples were huddled together behind closed doors because they were scared, afraid and desperate. They desperately needed one another, so they came together, even though it was dangerous to do so.

A thick place is where the church meets only to socialise. A thin place was for the early church a place where desperation, fear, worries - the real emotional baggage of discipleship - were shared. A thin place is where there is intention and purpose. The disciples met in that room for a purpose and Jesus sends his disciples out with a continued shared purpose, so that they can experience the thinness that comes only with faithful service.

A thin place is where the hot breath of the Spirit is so felt on our necks that it makes the hairs tingle. A thick place is where there is no expectation that the mystery of God will break in.

The disciples went back to that room in Jerusalem, taking Thomas with them. But they soon realised that thinness is not so much a place as it is an attitude and set of behaviours. They discovered, as the song says, that it's not only the weather you take with you: it's the thinness, too!

Daleen writes

I had a similar experience of a “thin place”, as Dave. I remember, before I was in the role of Missional Discipleship Mentor, I attended one of the Roadshows. We were asked to share where we experienced a Jesus-shaped church. The first thing that jumped into my mind was when I worked at the Darwen Asylum seeker and Refugee Drop-in -Centre. For me, that was definitely a “thin place”. Reflecting on it I realised a “thin place” is often a place of vulnerability, a place of survival, a place where you cannot for sure know what the future will hold, a place that you have to hold on to hope.

John 20:21-22 reads: Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

This verse also reminds me of the events in Acts 2, Pentecost. I think initially the disciples gathered in the room because they felt vulnerable, they were scared, felt hopeless without the guidance of their Lord and didn't know if they would be able to survive. They huddled up and made their world smaller. However, in this "holy huddle" they started to pray and the Holy Spirit turned up in a spectacular way.

Maybe we feel in NW Synod that we are in vulnerable place, a place of survival and we don't know what the future will hold. Just maybe this can become our "thin place" that can become a Pentecost moment. I was privileged to experienced such a 'thin place" this past week while gathering alongside Lay Preachers from the East Partnership in Lancashire while we prayed and lit a candle for each church in the Partnership, for the Lancashire Area, the NW Synod and for the appointment of the new moderator. In thirty minutes the room was transformed into a 'thin place" by prayer, we experienced the Holy Spirit and we were filled with peace.



Darren writes

Recently I was at Charlestown URC (part of the Albion Fellowship) for the Carpenters Arms - a remarkable ministry to homeless, destitute and lonely people in the Ashton-under-Lyne area. One of the volunteers shared with me how in many ways it felt as much, if not more, like church than the Sunday gatherings she attends. I watched as the volunteers served with love and grace those who came in and then sat, listened to and chatted with the variety of people.

There was a deep sense of God's presence and I fully understood what that volunteer meant. It was definitely a 'thin' place.

As the Spirit filled the friends of Jesus at Pentecost they were moved out of the Upper Room into the streets around. Sharing good news of hope, of love, of life, of resurrection with the rich diversity of people gathering for the festival. The disciples had a new confidence, a sense of purpose and a willingness to go where and to whom the Spirit led them.

The new Jesus-shaped community started to meet in homes eating together, praying together, exploring the scriptures, reflecting on Jesus teachings and caring for one another, especially the poor, as they pooled their resources giving generously to the work of the kingdom of God.

I've been so encouraged to hear of the churches that are starting up, or exploring the possibility for, new 'life' groups meeting to pray, to study the Word and to support one another. Our young people along with Leo Roberts are leading the way on this with the Gathered Youth Groups. When done well these opportunities keep us open to the move of the Holy Spirit and when that happens the sky's the limit! God moves us into new things, refreshes and re-energizes us for the old things, transforms our activities, our worship, our relationships.



Most importantly it provides the framework and the tools that enable and empower each one of us to be good news ministers to the people of our wider communities who are not aware of a loving God, who feel unloved and devalued, who are struggling to make ends meet, who are longing for a welcome and hospitality.

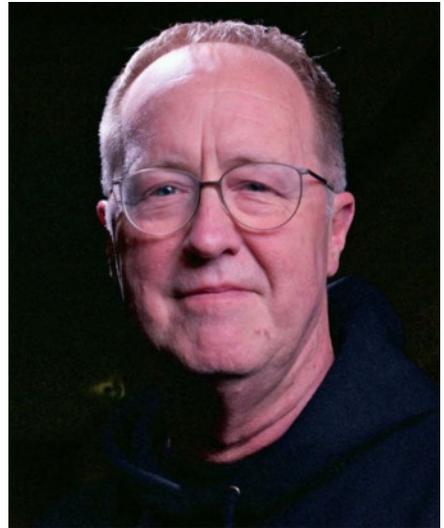
Into our weariness at keeping things going, our frustrations at the lack of resources and the slowness of change Jesus whispers ‘Come, let me give you rest’; ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ Ask God today for the space to meet him in a ‘thin’ place and that you might be encouraged and re-energized by the glimpses of his kingdom at work around you.

Lawrence writes

What is the difference between church as a feel-good venue for “warm fuzzies” and church as the sort of “thin place” that Dave is advocating? The answer is surely, “transformation”. Spending time in thin places – in God’s presence – changes us. It gives us the nourishment, courage, joy and peace that shapes us to become more like Jesus and to make Jesus-shaped differences to the lives and communities of which we’re a part.

Warm fuzzies are great when we’re feeling discouraged, desperate and under siege. They help us to survive in hostile, scary circumstances that we can’t change. I imagine that’s how the disciples were feeling as they huddled in that room. It’s what they needed, and why they had gone there. They could get as far as imagining that they’d somehow get enough of what they needed to survive; they couldn’t imagine that their world could change. And then the risen Jesus shows up ...

That’s the world-changer! Jesus is literally the tangible presence of a new world – one that doesn’t operate according to the normal rules. What makes it a world-changer is that the disciples discover that, as companions of Jesus, they are part of this new world of resurrection.



This is why they can unlock the doors and face the very things that have shut them away in terror. It's what transforms them into world-changers and martyrs.

That is what our church services ought to be like: places where we gather deliberately so we can become more faithful disciples. It's where we're able to share the things that make following Jesus so difficult and scary. It's where we can be honest about our failures, fears, betrayals and reluctance - because we all have them and we all want to do better and differently.

That's when Jesus shows up to remind us that the world has changed: it belongs to God. He reminds us of all the resources God has, and all the gifts the Spirit has given us in one another. And then he calls us to leave the room and follow him into the world that he is busy transforming into the Kingdom of God. And we discover that somehow, we're up for it! Because that's what happens when we hang around in thin places ...

Commitment for Life

Prayer Partners - September

We give thanks, O Lord for:

- Christian Aid partners in Bangladesh offering emergency and long-term development.
- The Small Tea Growers Group in Berajot.
- Shimi's tea business and her plans for the future.
- Shimi's family now able to celebrate together.
- Her children who will be able to go on to higher education.
- Asiya's strength through difficult times.
- Her beautiful productive garden.
- Her life changed by tea saplings.
- Contributions to Commitment for Life that gave Asiya that chance to prove herself.



Services in the Three Churches

The Knowe Church, Bewcastle

Sept	1st	1.45pm	(Revd Sarah Moore)
Sept	15th	1.45pm	Harvest Festival Service (NM)
Sept	29th	11.00am	Three Churches Service at St George's
Oct	6th	1.45pm	(NM)

Brampton URC, Main Street, Brampton

Sept	8th	9.30am	Communion (NM)
Sept	22nd	9.30am	(NM)
Sept	29th	11.00am	Three Churches Service at St George's

St George's URC, West Walls, Carlisle

Sept	1st	11.00am	(Rosalind Fearon)
Sept	8th	11.00am	Communion (NM)
Sept	15th	11.00am	(Revd Iain Mackenzie)
Sept	22nd	11.00am	Harvest Festival (NM)
Sept	29th	11.00am	Three Churches Service (Rev John Millard)
Oct	6th	11.00am	(Revd Sarah Moore)

Dates for your Diary

September

2nd	2.00pm	St George's 'The Guild' Margaret Jones - Her time in nursing
6th	6.30pm	Pre-launch Social at Tithe Barn (see page 10)
15th	1.45pm	Harvest Festival Service at Bewcastle
16th	2.30pm	Service at Croftfield Care Home
17th	2.00pm	Dementia Tea Service at St George's
20th	7.30pm	Quiz Night for Christian Aid at Tithe Barn
22nd	11.00am	Harvest Service at St George's followed by Soup & Sandwich Lunch
25th	9.30am	Coffee Morning at Brampton URC

October

7th	2.00pm	St George's 'The Guild' John Metcalfe - Alan Bennett readings
25th	7.00pm	Brampton Reivers & Dukes Jam (see page 11)



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Musical Director Dr Stephen Cobb

Special Guest: Philip Cobb

Principal Trumpet London Symphony Orchestra

Saturday 26th October 2019

Concert at 7.00pm



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