

Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone



April 2021

MINISTER'S LETTER

During February, when I took the first month of my sabbatical, I was pleased to be able to catch up with some reading and get through some of the books I'd accumulated but never got round to starting. One of the books I read was the autobiography of world champion heavyweight boxer Tyson Fury. If I'm being honest I'm not really a fan of boxing nor do I follow it as a sport, but I enjoyed reading this book as it is beautifully, and at times brutally, honest. He speaks with clarity and sincerity about his mental health struggles, his suicidal thoughts, his struggles with addiction (alcohol and drug), and his struggle with overeating as he weighed up to 28 stone. Many had written his career off believing his problems had got the best of him and that he'd never box at a top level again. Yet, he confounded the critics and pundits, and returned to become world heavyweight champion beating the previously unbeaten Deontay Wilder for his belt.

Why am I beginning a letter for our Easter edition of Signpost telling you about a boxer? 'Where's the relevance?' you may well ask. Well Tyson is also honest about his return and about what got him through his problems and back to the top; he speaks of the support he received from his family and team around him, but also of his own determination that was sustained by his faith in God and in Jesus Christ as 'my personal Lord and Saviour'. He speaks about the importance of prayer and bible reading in his daily living, and about how prayer was regularly part of his team's routine. Tyson Fury believes he would not have got back without the power, love and grace of God at work in his life.

Tyson's is a story of redemption, second chances and transformation. I'd even go so far as to say that his is a story of resurrection, and about how the power of promise of resurrection is always working in our world. Resurrection is about more than the promise of life after death; it is also about how God is working by the Spirit to bring about 'life in all its fullness' here and now through the transformation, or resurrection, of our world and lives towards mirroring the glory and likeness of Christ. And resurrection isn't just God's work – it's ours too!

I recently read again the seven phrases Jesus said from the cross, one of these was 'I'm thirsty'. As I read it I suddenly made a connection, or rather the Spirit prompted the connection, with

the 'Parable of the Sheep and the Goats' from Matthew 25:31-46. Verses 37-40 say:

*"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.'"

When we are involved in actions that mirror the love and way of Jesus then we are participating in something of resurrection. When we speak words that build up, encourage, heal, confront injustice, or build peace in the way that Jesus did, then we are pointing to Jesus and participating in something of resurrection. When we are seeking to earnestly follow the way of Jesus choosing to put His ways above our own then we are participating in something of resurrection. Where do you see resurrection power at work in your life? In what ways are you sharing it with the world?

Happy Easter.

Jona



A PRAYER FOR PALM SUNDAY

From our Brigade Chaplain, Revd Leigh Maydew

Jesus, when you entered Jerusalem on the donkey the people cheered with joy.

Help us to rejoice that we are able to come to know you.

Help us to celebrate the fact that you journey into our lives today, just as you journeyed into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

Help us, Lord, to make sure that our cheering continues, and does not stop like the cheering did that first Easter.

Help us to continue our journey with you in all that we do.

Amen.





WHERE ON EARTH IS VANUATU?

This was my reaction when I received a copy of this year's World Day of Prayer booklet, which said on the cover 'Prepared by the Christian Women of **Vanuatu**'.

Inside I read that **Vanuatu** is a cluster of 80 islands in the Pacific, 1000m east of Australia. The tiny and very beautiful islands together cover only the length of the British Isles and the population is only 300,000. **Vanuatu**, I read, is in the tropical cyclone zone and was devastated in 2015 and again in 2020 when even

cyclone-adapted coconut trees were destroyed. It is a very poor country with tourism its only industry.

I first attended the annual Women's World Day of Prayer (WDP) service at my church in London in 1968, continued to attend at our church in Reading (1971 to 1981) and then here in Ponteland for many years. It's always on the first Friday in March.

There was an optional evening service I attended when I was working or looking after small children. But here in Ponteland we have settled for an afternoon service with a lovely tea afterwards. We go in rotation to St. Mary's C of E, St. Matthew's RC, the URC and the Methodist Church. When my step-mother was alive near Cambridge we knew we were following the same service at the same time and it brought us together in a very special way.

The WDP was instituted in the USA in the 19th century by women to support women's involvement in mission at home and overseas. It is now a worldwide ecumenical movement of Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action. In 1928 Grace Forgan, a Scotswoman, heard about the WDP and it was instituted in Britain from 1930. The Second World War was a time of growth for the WDP as women were drawn together in prayer and fellowship.

By 2021 there are 170 countries taking part. Every year the service is developed and produced by a different country and this year it was from **Vanuatu**. Collections taken at the services enable grants to many projects eg Feed the Minds, Care for Alba-

nia, Jericho Road Project, Quakers EAPPI project, CRESS in Sudan, Mpongwe's People, Tearfund in Zimbabwe.

This Covid year there could be no WDP service in any Ponteland church. So I read the **Vanuatu** service in the booklet.

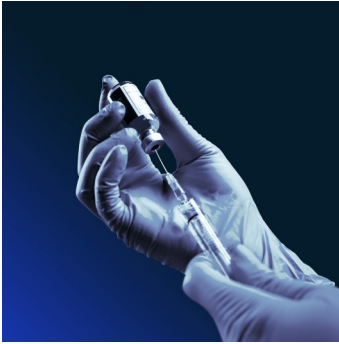
Then I watched it on Youtube and I was very moved. It was wonderful to see these stunning islands instead of just reading about them. And it was heart-melting to meet the beautiful women whose stories were in the booklet. Listening to them face to face was very emotional. Rhetoh told us that her family could only afford to educate their oldest son and not their other eight children. But through the help and encouragement of her church she gained enough skills to make and sell things at market and earns enough to care for her husband and three children. Mothy told us she was a stepchild in a very poor and overcrowded house. She was put out to sleep rough and find food on the streets. The first time she experienced love was from a group of Christians. Jacklynda left her rural home to work in tourism in Port Vila, the capital. But she has no skills and no job and now lives rough on the edge of the town. She prays that young people like her can find jobs in their rural villages. I prayed that she too will find a way forward.

The service included short home-filmed contributions from women and children from many countries. It was overwhelming to be joined in the love and fellowship of God in this way.

People of different locations, races, colours, ages, backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles together in the Holy Spirit. The choirs of Vanuatu didn't sing the songs printed in our booklets, but ones clearly more dear to them and some specially written.

It would be wonderful if future WDP services in Ponteland could be led on screens from the country in focus where we could actually meet the people and see the country like this year. Lock-down is teaching us a lot about better uses of technology. I commend next year's WDP service to you all... put the first Friday in March in your diaries now! Whatever form it takes it will be a spiritual high point where you will be challenged yet bathed together in love. And by the way, WDP is no longer attended by just women.... anyone at all is warmly welcome, even men!

Ann Cooper



JABS AND MY NEIGHBOUR

Anyone studying to be a Worship Leader or Local Preacher is required to build the skill of “Theological Reflection” – considering where God is in our daily living. This skill is needed if our worship is to be relevant. The technical term is “Contextual Worship” – worship of and for our context, our time. Many people prefer this term to “Contemporary Wor-

ship” with its undertone of modern songs and a large degree of informality. “Contextual Worship” can be of any style.

I felt that our morning services prior to lockdown were contextual, although the style varied depending on what the preacher thought would work best given the theme of the particular morning. Our circuit on-line services have certainly been contextual. (I am completing this piece on Friday March 26; last Sunday’s service on lamenting was a great example of contextual!!) Contextual worship requires the worship leader (where involved) and preacher to try to have every element of the service relate to our world. The modern style of the on-line services (a style for the time of covid) has worked wonderfully, with rich and appropriate variety. I also suspect that most of the at-home congregation watches very informally – I know we do.

One challenge with contextual worship is that sometimes it is necessary to touch on sensitive subjects where people may have different views. Take, for instance, vaccinations. We probably all understand that “We are not safe until everyone is safe”. We also understand that the development of the covid vaccines has been accomplished in miraculous time. We probably realise that producing enough vaccine for the whole world cannot be done overnight. But few of us really appreciate the complexity of producing a vaccine on a large scale, so the producers are sure that every single drop is as effective and as safe as possible. Any vaccine involves materials which are either derived from natural sources or mimic naturally-occurring chemicals. They are not, themselves, natural – if they were, they would likely be harmful. The vaccine tricks our immune system into thinking that it is being infected – in this case by covid. The active part of

the vaccine – the part that plays the trick on our body – has to be exactly right all of the time. It has to be consistently pure to keep the risk of side-effects as low in number and as minor in effect as possible. There is also the need to keep the vaccine in good condition until a dose is jabbed into our arm. The recipe for the vaccine solution will often contain preservatives. In the case of the BioNtec/Pfizer vaccine, this is a miniscule amount of a fatty material that coats the vaccine chemical. It is currently only available from a factory in Yorkshire. Without it, the vaccine would not be stable even at the very low temperatures needed to keep it in good condition. Oh, and the glass bottles and the syringes which are about all we actually see of the vaccine. These are in short supply – especially the bottles – and new production lines are having to be built.

So, “Who is neighbour to us as we roll up our sleeve to accept the jab?” as Luke might write. It is an extremely long list including many who are no longer alive but on whose earlier research the vaccine technology was created, to say nothing of the original inventors of glass – likely in the Middle East at least 3^{1/2} millennia before the time of Jesus. Even the list of the living is very long with a rich diversity of race, colour, creed and skills.

How are we to do likewise, as Jesus commanded the lawyer who asked the original question? How can we be neighbour to the world? One way is to be patient as we, hopefully, move out of lockdown. Another is to accept the jab when offered. But we also must insist that everyone can have the jab asap. How to achieve the asap bit? Here we will likely find differing viewpoints among us. Scripture gives us no definitive answer and politicians have no choice but to look after their own people first – do they? (Though the time and energy spent this past week certainly horrifies me.) I find the action of the Samaritan in paying for the care of the injured man and moving on with his own life to be a reasonable indication that we do not need to be martyrs to the cause. You may have a different view. That is why theological reflection is important for all of us. Often there are no definitive answers, yet we must seek God's will.

Peter Hindle

FAMILIES

Some families are big, some are small, but no matter what size it's the same for them all.

Families are fathers that frown and say "We didn't do things like that in my day! That shirt's rather bright that skirt's far too tight now tell me again where you are going tonight".

Families are mothers who flap and fuss, "Hurry up or you will miss the school bus. Straighten your tie – tidy up your hair, are you sure those big earrings are what you can wear?".

Families are brothers that joke and tease and when you're not looking give you a squeeze. They think they are much bigger and better than you and far more important in all they do.

Families are sisters who share all your things your bedroom, your records, your bracelets and rings. They use all your perfume and ladder your tights, then keep you awake playing music at night.

But God's family's a unit where we all belong. He supports us in trouble when things have gone wrong. He shares in our gladness and sadness and fears. He loves us and cares for us throughout all our years.

Sarah Diplock (aged 13)

via Joan Harrison



THE OPEN DOOR

MISSING OPEN DOOR? - FEELING LONELY?

How about joining our small friendly group, meeting on Zoom, on alternate Mondays from 2.00 - 3.30pm?

We are starting a new study on Monday April 12th, looking at the book of Job. A book that some of us feel we aren't too familiar with.

Rosemary Gray and Isobel Hindle will lead our sessions.

For further info and the shared Zoom link please contact me.

Chris Cogan

FIGHTING THE CORONAVIRUS PART 3

We have reported in previous issues that we are volunteers at the RVI on the Oxford/Zeneca trials. We informed you that Kathleen, as part of the Trial, had received two doses of the Oxford Vaccine. Iain during the trial received a placebo but has the benefit of the meningitis vaccine and now has received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

During the last month we have been encouraged in this Country by the success of the Vaccination programme. However we recognise that this is a world problem so we are concerned over the lack of attention in getting the vaccination programme under way in many parts of the World. During this period there are conflicting reports as to the effectiveness of certain vaccines including the one in which we are involved.

It is satisfactory that our Trial continues to the end of October. The information that will be obtained from our blood tests will be fed into the statistics. This enables the measurement of how the extent of our immune systems have been enhanced by the vaccines. So it is good that we have had ongoing involvement and become part of the evidence that is produced and that these are credible vaccines.

The weekly monitoring by ourselves is by way of the swab tests which we carry out on a Tuesday. Submitting swab tests accompanied by a registered form which includes a personal trial that we are not Robots. Recently the company registration form was changed to accommodate a more precise format for the Royal Mail. As a consequence the Swab registration number could not be fed into the Tablet so everything ground to a halt. We contacted the RVI who in turn contacted the Oxford Centre to ask them to sort out the problem. As we were waiting for the return call Kathleen perused her own path and discovered the error - thanks to the Software training over the years from Andy. We were pleased to see the next week that the registration form was amended based on Kathleen's input!

On a Tuesday we now have a routine of going to the Priority Post Box and treating ourselves to a different pie from Davidson's - so Test Day Tuesday is also pie day.

Happy Easter to you all.

Iain and Kathleen Farquhar

THE FISHERMAN'S LAMENT

My Dad was a local preacher and also a fisherman, using a fly to catch a trout was his enduring passion. Hung on a wall in our house a pokerwork etching on wood, although not the vernacular version below:



THE FISHERMAN'S LAMENT

Sometimes ower arly,
Sometimes too late,
Sometimes nee watter,
Sometimes a spate
Sometimes ower dirty
Sometimes ower clear,
There's aalways summat wrang
When I'm fishing here.

From the outset in 1928 until 1939, he was chosen as a member of the English team for the annual fly-fishing competition on Loch Leven, in Fife, against Scotland at first; later Wales and Ireland joined in. The year he was captain he sent this "advice" to each of his team:

Lord, suffer me to catch a fish,
So big, that even I,
In speaking of it afterwards,
Would have no need to lie.

John Waddell

AN ALPHABET

In the days before the second world war.....the writer..... a skinny child, was prone to acidosis and caught any ailment that was going. Possibly, I caught whatever was going, mainly in the wintertime. Anyway, our house had no central heating [nobody had then] and it was no end of a comfort to have a fire in the bedroom and watch the flickering flames from my bed. In the evenings my Dad would usually read me a story from one of his old *Boys' Own* Annuals. I particularly liked the adventures of Piet, a South African lad, set around the time of the Boer War of 1899-1902.¹

Perhaps at that time also, but certainly in later years he'd try and teach us all our alphabet. I often wished I could remember it all. Other people **must** have heard it. Only when a Letter to the Editor of the Telegraph appeared in January 2000 was I able to quote it in full.

It went:

*"A for 'orses, B for mutton, C for th 'ighlanders, D for dumb,
E for brick, F for vessence, G'f of Police, H cheer for the winner,
I for n'apple, J for oranges, K for tunnel, L for leather, M for size,
N for eggs, O for the wings of a dove, P for temper, Q for fish,
R for mo', S for you, T for two, U for me, V for La France,
W for a bob, X for breakfast, Y for husband, Z for breezes."
alternatives*

John Waddell

¹ We have, some place, a glass tumbler engraved "*The Relief of Mafeking*".



OMINOUS PROPHECIES

We left Miletus on one of those Spring mornings when winds are light and the sun building in strength. The brightness of the day contrasted sharply with the sad farewell we'd been given as we left the brothers and sisters on the quayside in tears. With a favourable westerly

breeze in our sail we set off south through the islands on the start of our journey to Jerusalem.

Cos was reached on the evening of the first day and Rhodes on the second. I had told my companions that I was eager to see one of the Wonders of the World, the Colossus at the harbour entrance, only to be teased unmercifully by my companions about that hope: the towering statue had fallen in an earthquake two and a half centuries ago! I thought I'd done some travelling, but my bit was very small compared with Paul's incessant travelling.

I managed to get him to tell me some tales of his adventures, though he was reluctant to say very much. Apparently he had experienced shipwreck more than once and even survived a long immersion in the ocean. My admiration for this much older man grew as I learnt more about him and everyone confirmed how dangerous was his present undertaking. I admit that I'm starting to worry about myself now!

We sailed from Rhodes to Patara, still using these small coasting vessels, but seeking something more substantial for the open water run south and eastward to Syria. All new to me, and now both exciting and worrying, remembering all those plots already evaded. Now we were bound for the very centre of opposition to the Gospel and none of us could offer any sort of protection to our leader. I did learn that Paul had family in Jerusalem, a fact that later proved providential.

At Patara we found what we needed in the form of a substantial trading vessel with capacity not only for a considerable mixed cargo but also for passenger accommodation for all nine of us; she was to sail directly to Syria.

It was a voyage of about five hundred miles before us, bypass-

ing Crete, which we glimpsed on the horizon but made no land-fall. The long voyage was uneventful and it was a relief to reach Tyre where, we were told, it would take a week to unload the cargo before the vessel sailed the short distance down the coast to its home port of Ptolemais. We used that week well, getting our land legs (you walk swaying like a sailor when you've been out at sea for a while) and finding disciples of Christ Jesus in the port.

They were eager to hear our news and to tell us of their work among the faithful and the interested. However these brethren were convinced that Paul's mission was going to be one of extreme danger to him and said that this was most certainly a warning from the Spirit. "Don't go!" they urged him. "Stay and work here and up to Antioch, but avoid Jerusalem! Write more letters but keep out of the mouth of the lion!" But Paul was unmoved, being determined to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost and celebrate the birth of the Church with the believers there. He had all the collected money for the poor to deliver and would do it in person. He was no more willing to avoid confrontation with the Sanhedrin than the Lord Jesus had been a generation earlier.

So after the cargo had been discharged, we sailed with the vessel in ballast the short run coast-wise to her home port and spent another day with the believers there. Paul never willingly missed a chance to strengthen a congregation and remind them of the world-wide fellowship of believers and their mutual love and care.

Our journeying from now on was on land, down the coastal road to Caesarea. Here we found a thriving church amongst whom was the Deacon and evangelist Philip. He had a tale to tell of the Spirit's power, power that had ordered him down the desert road towards Gaza and how he was guided to speak to an Ethiopian statesman, open the sacred scriptures to him and bring him to conversion and baptism. Now he was working in the local church, greatly helped by his four daughters, all mighty preachers. What a wonderful story he had to tell and to show! We spent a week in Caesarea.

Acts Ch 21

John M Gill

“THE LAND AND THE MIND” A BOOK BY JESSICA KILBURN



'The Land is Yours' by Thomas Hennell — one of many watercolours capturing a way of farming that was being superseded by mechanisation

Thomas Hennell is one of that generation of painters born in 1903 whose collective achievements are such an adornment of modern British art. Among his contemporaries are Edward Bawden, Richard Eurich, John Piper, Eric Ravilious and Graham Sutherland. Some of these have been over-praised (Sutherland's reputation was unhelpfully inflated for many years, then suffered a crash), others under-rated, such as Eurich. In the current mood of reassessment, careers and deeds are being looked at again, and Hennell has benefited accordingly. Jessica Kilburn's hefty book is very tangible evidence of this.

Alan Kilburn



Jessica Kilburn

MARJORIE SCARLETT

Passed away 24th February 2021



Captain Scarlett leads her troops forward

Her family would like to say thank you to the Methodist Church, in particular the ladies who attended the evening Sunday services and the lovely ladies who gave Mum a lift down to the Church or back from the Church depending on the weather. And in winter dark evenings.

During covid in particular Nancy Blaylock and Judith Orton and Kath Wallace rang her regularly to check on her as did others too, Mum contacted them too. Although Mum's memory was getting worse near to the end.

Ann would like to thank Liz Emmerson: when the weather allowed she would go for a walk with Mum most days which Mum really appreciated as we her family didn't like her to go walking on her own because of her partial sightedness and more recently her double vision.

Thank you.

Ann Lynch

STARGAZING

She melts between lunar phases
Forever turning over pages
Her colours ebb and flow;
A cycle of relentless change.

She's the star of every show
And the crowd are on their tiptoes
But my feet are flat on the ground
I don't need a closer look.

I already know who she is
I've memorised the images
She draws across the night sky
I know she'll always sound like home.

She's the angel in my dream
The starry night when I want to 'scream'.

Genna Ling (19)
friend of Rosie Brown

TOGETHER FOR THE JOURNEY

(A Rondeau)

So come with me, eternal friend.
Death has its sting, but's not the end.
Within my heart I know you're there,
Precious memories ours to share.
On unceasing love we depend.

Walk with me, to our journey's end.
Within my soul I can't pretend,
You live in life we'll always share.
So come with me...

Among our loved ones life we spend
Broken hearts, together we mend.
Catch the wind like kites in the air.
Remember me and say a prayer,
Signals of love you'll always send.
So come with me....

Rosemary Gray

WHAT A DIFFERENCE AN HOUR MAKES!

Now that British Summer Time is here, it is just amazing how our lovely light evenings and longer days make our thoughts and energies turn to gardening and walking and outings.

April is a glorious month – often showery but the Spring flowers are such a joy and buds on trees and shrubs dormant for the long winter months, are just showing life and getting ready to explode into tiny leaf.

The name of April is derived from the Greek word for opening and this is just what the feeling is – freedom after long dark winter months with shorter days of light. Also this year we shall feel even more liberated as lockdown regulations are gradually eased.

Days of note –

April 1st All Fools' Day

April 23rd St George's Day

April 24th St Mark's Eve

This year Easter is at the beginning of April and an outdoor Easter service is planned for Sunday 4th April. Places are limited and so booking is recommended. The cover this month features St Lawrence Church which is one of the most complete Norman Churches in Northumberland. A strange window in the vestry has three narrow slits through which it is thought an anchorite walled up for life in the inner chamber would be able to communicate with the outside world.

Warkworth town lies about a mile inland from Amble on the river Coquet and first historical records date from 737. Its magnificent castle occupies a carefully chosen position overlooking the town whilst enjoying magnificent views of the Coquet and the countryside. The Percys owned it for many years and in 1750 Alnwick Castle became their main residence. Now it is under the care of English Heritage and is well worth a visit.

Another delightful point of interest is the Hermitage which dates between 1330 and 1340. It is situated about half a mile along the river Coquet to the west of the town. It stands on the north bank of the river and is only accessible by a small ferry. The remarkable little chantry cut out of solid rock is unique in England. Near the landing point is a building about 18ft square which is believed to be the kitchen of the Chantry Priest who lived here in



the 15th century. Here a flight of 17 stone steps leads up to the Hermitage. The three rooms are known as the chapel, the confessional and the dormitory. A further flight of steps leads up the cliff to what would have been the hermit's garden but all is covered in a tangle of weeds. The Hermitage is also managed by English Heritage and the ferry operates only on limited days so availability is worth checking.

The main street of Warkworth hides some surprises. There are one or two openings between the houses, just a passage, allowing livestock to move from pasture to pasture and on the other side the houses open on to a lovely walk between the backs of the property and the long strip of land, the "burbages" – one strip owned by each house and to this day the layout is exactly as the originals from Norman times.

There is much to see and do in Warkworth so that a visit makes a really lovely away-day.

If you manage a visit in Spring the mound on which the castle stands is absolutely covered with daffodils and is a sight in itself to make your visit a pleasure.

Jean Tweedie

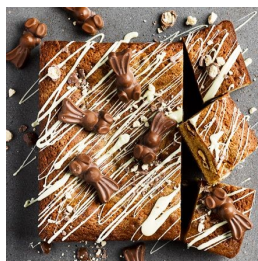


When I read this recipe I was not sure what blondies were so I investigated. Basically they are brownies that are vanilla flavoured rather than chocolate. This recipe is made with malted milk drink powder and as I used Ovaltine (other brands are available) they still taste chocolatey.

Judith

Easter Blondies

180g/6oz melted butter
180g /6oz light brown sugar
3 medium eggs
200g/7oz plain flour
75g/2oz malted milk drink powder
1 tsp baking powder
102g bag Maltesers
Malteser bunnies to decorate (optional)
50g/2oz white chocolate to decorate (optional)



Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan.
Butter and base line a 20cm x 20cm brownie tin.
Mix the melted butter with the sugar, beat until smooth.
Beat in the eggs.
Add the flour, baking powder and milk powder. Stir until just combined.
Fold in the Maltesers.
Spoon the mixture into the tin.
Bake for 30 mins until firm to the touch, cooked around the outside but still wobbly in the middle.
Resist the temptation to eat the blondies straight away. Put the tin into the fridge for 2 hours. Once set decorate with the Malteser bunnies and drizzle with melted white chocolate. Cut into squares.

(Lovely cake but remember to buy extra Maltesers as they get eaten during the baking! Ed)

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2021



Fairtrade Fortnight looked and felt very different this year, no Big Brews and no standing outside supermarkets encouraging people to add Fairtrade items to their shopping trolleys. However, there was much activity online and I even managed a trip to Palestine.....virtually of course!

The event was organised by Zaytoun, a social enterprise founded to support Palestinian farmers through fair trade. We were introduced to Haj Rafeeq Hussein, an olive farmer from the West Bank village of Ti'innik. He spoke about the challenges he faces, farming in an area susceptible to climate change, but also in an area under Israeli occupation. Although the trees grown are varieties which are rain-fed and well adapted to Palestine's climate, the rains now come erratically and last year there was a prolonged dry spell. Keeping the trees adequately irrigated is a challenge anyway, but this is exacerbated by policies which divert water from farmland to new (and under international law, illegal) Israeli settlements, and which refuse Palestinians permission for new water cisterns or wells. Farmers need access to their land and trees all year round so they can quickly respond to climate change patterns. This can be difficult or impossible under occupation, because farmers and their lands have been cut off by the Separation Barrier. The siting of gates in the wall often means a lengthy detour to gain access. Palestinians may need additional permits to do so and often such permits are only given to one family member, restricting who can actually farm the land. Haj Rafeeq spoke of having had 6 dunums of his land confiscated whilst the village of Ti'innik had lost 2000 to make way for a new settlement (1 dunum = 0.247 acre.)

Within this context, the benefits of fair trade were clear. The guarantee of a market and the security of a fair price for products mean that farmers can afford to devote more of their time to their crops. Haj Rafeeq used to have to drive a truck to supplement his income, now he can concentrate on farming alone. He is therefore able to respond swiftly to the disruption of climate

change (like unseasonal rains, winds or heat) by acting to protect his crops. He has sufficient income to hire additional workers to feed the trees and to mulch around them to conserve water near the roots. If necessary he can afford to buy additional water from the local council. The Fairtrade cooperative of which he is a member shares knowledge and experience of practices that mitigate climate change impacts. Haj Rafeeq now has an awareness of alternatives to using chemicals on the land and enough money to be able to use more environmentally friendly practices. As a result, he sees a real difference in the quality and the taste of his products which enables them to compete on the international market. In addition, the farmers have used their Fairtrade premium to invest in improvements in the village clinic and schools.

There is a very strong link between Palestinians and their land,



particularly their olive groves. At the age of 77 Haj Rafeeq loves to work his land and referred to his trees as like his sons, pointing out one as being 120 years old and having been tended by his ancestors before him. He was asked if his own sons and grandsons would be following in his footsteps. His reply was that they have to. It is up to the younger generations to continue the ancient farming heritage and to continue producing delicious food.

Why not try some Zaytoun products for yourself? Olive oil, almonds, dates and more can be found on Zaytoun's website <https://zaytoun.uk> or bought from Traidcraft, <https://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk> .

Bev

TRAIDCRAFT LIVE FAIR FOR LENT

This talk, given by Matt Oliver from Traidcraft, showcased forty Fairtrade stories and ideas. It was a whistle-stop tour of some things people might not know about Fairtrade. He started by reminding us of some of the topics associated with Fairtrade. For example: Fairtrade premiums: Payments without strings, available to producers to use in whatever way they decide will benefit their community. No discrimination: Eat Your Hat coffee is grown by members of Aprolma, a women's cooperative in Honduras, whose aim is to empower women through increased financial rewards. Transparency: Traidcraft publishes full cost breakdowns of its own-brand products on its website. These show who benefits and by how much from every sale.

The talk explained measures being taken to tackle the Climate Emergency. This is an important aspect of Fairtrade as the effects of climate change disproportionately affect people in developing countries where Fairtrade products are produced. Eating more plant-based products and reducing meat consumption means reduced greenhouse gas emissions and less global warming, helping producers in developing countries. Eating Fairtrade products does this and also provides resources which can be used to build resilience to the changing climate. Reducing plastic use means less oil use, less release of global warming gases and less damage to oceans and wildlife from plastic waste. Traidcraft are now using plant-based compostable product packaging, and also paper-based parcel tape. Organic farming practices, promoted by Traidcraft, help to conserve soil health for future years, allowing producers to continue to make a living. This is especially important in arid locations where there is often very limited topsoil depth.

A hot topic that was mentioned is Palm Oil. This is used in food and cleaning products and is associated with deforestation of Amazonian rain forests, often referred to as the "lungs of the earth". But not all palm oil is bad. Fair Palm oil is sourced from existing managed plantations and is used in Traidcraft biscuits. Another way to help support Fairtrade producers was the "90kg challenge" from Just Trading Scotland. This is a pack of 90 1kg bags of rice which groups can join together to buy, and either take their bag home, or maybe donate to a local food bank. Thank you for supporting the Fairtrade work within our Church!

GARDENING FOR APRIL 2021

The bookmaker Coral has cut the odds of spring snow to 2/1 and on Easter being the coldest on record to 2/1. With Good Friday on 2nd April it does not seem to be a good idea to plan to plant potatoes on Good Friday. With all the emphasis in the media continuing to be on Covid 19 it is good to get back to the most popular subject of conversation - "the weather". Met Office figures show we have had the coldest winter in the UK since 2012-13. The weather in March has been variable but our spring bulbs are giving us a wonderful show.



A tulip grower in the UK is producing 85 million tulips this year in his under-cover growing system – this was shown on Countryfile on Sunday. The other news concerns the voracious foreign caterpillar that severely damages box and box hedges – it is spreading much more slowly north now. However, Monty Don, the BBC gardener, living in Herefordshire has ripped out all his box hedges during the winter. The

worst pests we all continue to encounter are slugs, snails and vine weevil – the latter mainly in planters. Growers using glass-houses should take precautions to prevent red spider mite. Last month I said I would continue some thoughts on growing vegetables as many people had ventured into crops last year as we became "locked down" - things haven't changed much for me as I have been self-isolating for a year now. A gardener's pride and joy is to grow crops from seed. My father never had a greenhouse and he grew wonderful crops wherever we lived (I had six different homes before Margaret and I got married, not counting living away when in university). Gardening with the season means not sowing and planting until the soil is warming and the risk of frost has passed. After first having a greenhouse at Aberystwyth in 1975 I have used it to "cheat" on the weather by sowing seed earlier to get crops more advanced for planting out earlier and gaining time – this is particularly useful in the north where suitable soil temperatures and growing conditions are much later than further south. But you don't have to have a greenhouse to get ahead in the spring. Nurseries grow and garden centres buy in crops already growing strongly in strips and cells – beware they need "hardening off" - conditioning them to the outdoor conditions where they are to grow. The most suitable crops to buy

growing are brassicas (cabbage, cauliflower, Brussel's sprouts, broccoli etc), beans (broad, French, runner) peas, lettuce, leeks, courgettes and marrows. I start beetroot in cells, I have never seen any I would buy to plant out. I don't grow carrots because of the susceptibility to carrot root fly. Short term crops such as radish and spring onions can be sown direct into the ground. You can buy tomatoes and cucumbers to grow indoors. I have never had much success with melons in the north east but grew wonderful crops in the greenhouse at Aberystwyth in 1975 and 1976 – we moved to Ponteland in 1977 where there was nothing growing in the garden at 30 Callerton Court.

Many of the crops I have mentioned can also be grown in planters if you would like small quantities, if you would like particular crops and don't wish to dig up lawn or disturb your current garden borders or don't have any soil-covered area at all. The March issue of Which? Gardening lists the best suppliers of seed they tested – Real Seeds, King's Seeds and Chiltern Seeds rated highest. They list the best plug plant suppliers as Brookside Nursery and D T Brown.

Growing bags were tested last year and the Best Buys for 2021 are listed as Levington Tomorite Giant Tomato Planter with seaweed, Levington Original GrowBag, Miracle-Grow Performance Organic Fruit and Vegetable Organic Planter and Melcourt Sylva Grow Peat-Free Planter for Organic Growing. I buy growing bags and empty the contents into large pots for tomatoes and cucumbers. I have used Levington Tomorite for a number of years but due to ease of procurement I used growing bags stocked by Cowells last year and found the contents very good. You may find when you go into Garden Centres this year you are blinded by stocks of peat-free products and they may be only stocking last year's growing bags because they are based on peat. Only buy 2021 growing bags as old ones often stored outside will be stale and are less suitable for growing your crops. One last point – there are now many clematis strains and colours that are dwarfed in size and suitable for growing in planters. I have bought six from www.raymondevisionclematis.com. They have arrived as 18-month-old small plants in pots just started up into growth – I will report on progress!

Good Gardening in April and throughout the summer.

Syd Cowan

VILLAGE NEWS

Covid Vaccinations

Most of us know what a stalwart job our Health Centre is doing administering the vaccines. From 22nd March vaccinations are being given at Taylors Pharmacy between Mondays and Fridays. People can book their appointments online on the NHS website if aged 50 or over or are extremely clinically vulnerable, if you are an eligible frontline health or social care worker, have a learning disability or are a main carer for someone at high risk from coronavirus.

Coffee Van

Early in March a van was parking on the pavement near Lloyds bank, serving takeaway drinks. It did not have a street trading licence but has now made an application to Northumberland CC. Ponteland Town Council has now been consulted and their response is awaited.

Mobile Breast X-ray Unit

In normal circumstances this unit would have been in Ponteland December 2020 to January 2021. I have made enquires and the latest information is that it should visit Ponteland in June 2021.

Ponteland Library

According to the latest covid easing of restrictions, libraries are able to open on 12th April. I have spoken to a librarian at Northumberland CC and been told that the situation is under discussion. Hopefully our new library may be open on Tuesday 13th April. The librarian for our library only works here on Tuesdays and Fridays. Customers will be requested to limit any visits to 15 minutes and at present need to be prebooked. I was told (14th March) there was no information on NCC website. Hopefully things may be clearer by the time May Cornerstone is produced.

Northumberland Local Plan

The examination hearing was completed virtually in November 2020. The Planning Inspector has written to Northumberland CC, for more information visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/localplan .

Tree planting

More than 250 trees are being planted in Ponteland to replace those lost during the flood alleviation scheme. The Environment

Agency has joined forces with pupils and staff and Swinburne Horticultural Services to place some of the trees in a meadow at Ponteland Community Primary School. Some of the trees will be planted adjacent to the river.

Project Gigabit – government scheme to bring fast broadband to hard-to-reach areas

Northumberland will be one of the first areas to benefit from this project. I believe that parts of Darras Hall have problems.

“Happy Snapper” Easter Photographic Competition

Ponteland Rotary and Waitrose are organising a raffle and a photographic competition in order to raise money for good causes. The raffle will support a charity “Feeding Families”. The photographic competition will support Wansbeck Valley Food Bank. Information is available at Waitrose or on the Rotary Ponteland Facebook page.

Jennifer Hardy

EASTER CHICKENS AND RABBITS

Easter Chickens and Rabbits, each containing an Easter Egg - for sale.

St. Mary's Church is open during the week for private prayer. They are on display in the Church.

Kay Harper, contact 01661 824770, and a member of that Church, has made these delightful small gifts for children. Each chick or bunny costs £1. All money raised will be donated to the Children's Society.

Chris Cogan

THANK YOU

Sincere Thank you for the lovely, bright yellow plant for Mother's Day...very kind of you. I have it on the side table so that I can see it clearly.....and thanks too to the person who brought it. I wish I could have invited you in... but that isn't possible.... perhaps when restrictions are lifted we'll be able to see each other again.

Blessings to you all.

Noreen Green

FAMILY NEWS

Alison and Neil Maynard have celebrated their Silver Wedding anniversary.

Very Best Wishes to **Joan Arrowsmith** who celebrated her 90th Birthday at the end of February.

Dave Cogan is also celebrating a special birthday.

Please remember **Mike and Rosie Fleet** in your prayers. Mike is home after a spell in hospital.

Lilian Smith is home again.

Happy 50th birthday to **Matthew Cooper**.

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

Marian and Jim Falcus would like to thank everyone for their good wishes and cards on the occasion of their Diamond Anniversary. We hope that it is not too long before we can meet again. Marian would also like to add her thanks for the Mother's Day Primulas.

Jim Falcus

ECG ONLINE 2021

This event takes place on **Saturday 10th April**

It is an online event including Bible Study, All Age Worship and an Evening Worship Celebration. The event will have special guests throughout the day including **Ashley Cooper, Kathryn Stephens, All We Can** and many more.

It is FREE to attend and the event will be streamed on YouTube via the website www.ecgevent.org.uk

Outline Programme

- 11.00 am Bible Study with Matt Miofsky
- 11.45 am Questions and Answers Conversation with Special Guests
- 4.00 pm All Age Worship led by Swanbank Kids
- 7.00 pm ECG Live Celebration hosted by Ashley Cooper and Kathryn Stephens. Worship led by Leah Wattam from Cliff College. Preachers David Wilkinson and Lauren Brabbs and guests include Matt Miofsky.

Steve Small

Church Services
Look for YouTube on the
internet and search for
"Newcastle West Circuit".

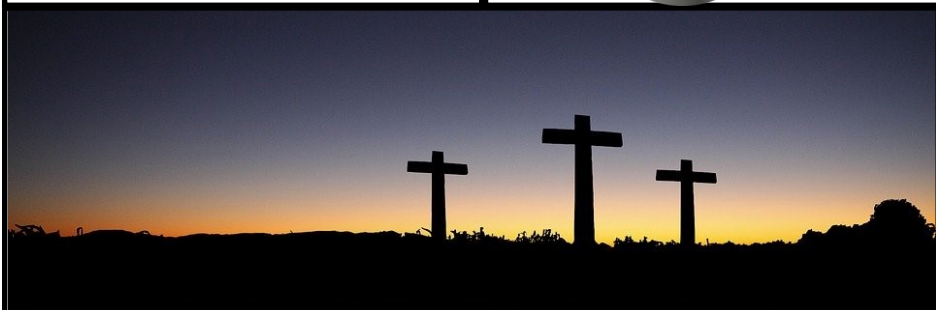


HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you need any practical help of any kind (e.g. shopping, collecting prescriptions etc.) then please contact Pete Cowey. If you wish to volunteer to run errands for others then please pass your details on to Pete. Email:

mrpetecowey@btinternet.com

Tel: 07771 857574



Easter 2021

Maundy Thursday 1st April
Good Friday 2nd April
Easter Sunday 4th April 11am in Garden
Easter Monday 5th April

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the May edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 23rd April 2021**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com . The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*