

Ponteland Methodist Church

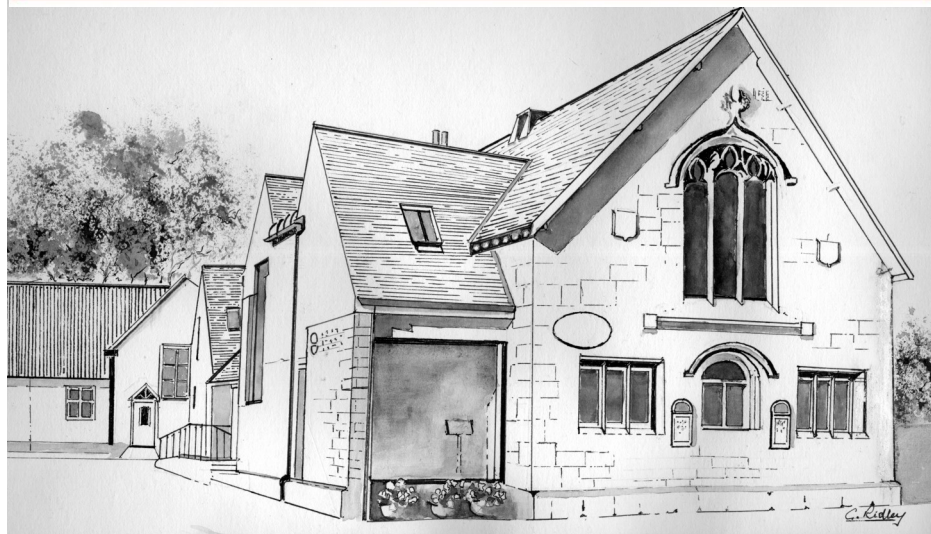
Cornerstone



St. Valentine

beheaded 269 a.d.

The proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist. Pope St. Gregory the Great



February 2020

REGULAR CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The regular weekly activities within the Church are outlined below.
There are phone numbers given to ring if you need further information.

SUNDAY

10.00am Morning Service and Sunday Club
6.30pm Evening Service
Holy Communion, morning and evening as announced

MONDAY

12.15pm Prayers
1.30pm Carpet Bowls
1.00pm Open Door
2.00pm Open Door Bible Study (2nd & 4th Monday)

TUESDAY

2.30pm Women's Fellowship (fortnightly)
5.45pm Boys' Brigade - Anchor Boys
7.00pm Boys' Brigade - Junior/Company sections

WEDNESDAY

5.45pm Girls' Brigade - Explorers (term time only)
6.00pm Girls' Brigade - Junior/Company sections

THURSDAY

9.30am Toddler Thursday (term time only)
7.30pm Women's Focus (fortnightly)
7.30pm Men's Forum (monthly)

FRIDAY

2.00pm Carpet Bowls

SATURDAY

9.30am Meanders (fortnightly, tel: 871844)
10.00am Mini-Meanders (monthly, tel: 821845)

For details of House groups phone Chris Cogan on 0191 271 2637

Minister: Rev Jona Sewell
61 Cheviot View, Ponteland, NE20 9BH. Tel: 822057
E-mail: revjsewell@gmail.com

Church website <http://www.ponteland-methodist-church.org.uk/>

MINISTER'S LETTER

February is upon us and with it comes Valentine's Day. If I'm honest I always find Valentine's Day a little bit of an oddity. It's the one day of the year when it seems we are expected to tell people that we love them. It's also the one day of the year when the expectation often seems towards perfection; the perfect date, the perfect night out, the perfect gift, the perfect proposal.

We know, if we're honest, that we shouldn't need a special day to tell someone that we love them, or to tell someone how precious or special they are. Also, experience tells us that love isn't always perfection. Sometimes love is difficult; sometimes love means standing by someone in the hard times; sometimes it means being there when someone is struggling. Often love means seeing past the blemishes and imperfections of our beloved; love can also mean forgiving when we are wronged.

Love is not perfect, it isn't always easy, and sometimes it is a choice rather than an emotion.

Yet, despite all that, love can also transform, build up, encourage, set free, excite, reassure, and bring a peace and inner security, amongst so many other things. There is a wonderful line in the musical 'Les Misérables', 'To love another person is to see the face of God.' I believe that, at its best, love does speak of and reveal something of God.

Jesus' friend John tells us in the bible that 'God is love'. I believe one of the many things this means is that God, in his deep love for us, stands by us through our difficult times; that God accepts us despite our blemishes and imperfections, and God is willing to forgive us even when we do wrong. More than that, I also believe it means that we can experience and know acceptance, freedom, reassurance, peace, security, hope and so many other good things in the experience of God's love.

This Valentine's Day, and every day, I hope you know yourself loved by others, and may you know that you are deeply loved by God.

God Bless



JANUARY

Here are a few thoughts covering the festive season. The celebrations are over and daily routine is now the order of the day. A new year is often a time for reminiscences and here are a few lines from a church magazine printed in the north of Scotland entitled "Div Ye Min?" – "Do you remember?".

I remember the corned beef of my childhood
And the bread that we cut with a knife
When the children helped with the housework
And the men went to work, not the wife.

The cheese never needed a fridge
And the bread was crusty and hot
The children were seldom unhappy
And the wife was content with her lot.

I remember the milk from the bottle
With the yummy cream on the top
Our dinner came hot from the oven
And not from a freezer or shop.

The kids were a lot more contented
They didn't need money for kicks
Just a game with their friends in the street
And sometimes the Saturday flicks.

Many of us can relate to these recollections and it is good sometimes to look back and to make comparisons and appreciate the good things which are available in this century, one of which is our amazing Health Service.

Happy New Year everyone.

Jean Tweedie

PONTELAND WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Our Women's Fellowship Meeting was reconvened in 2003 under a new arrangement with the title "Friends of Women's Fellowship". Ponteland Church Life Committee called a meeting of people who would like to assist to prevent the meeting closing as those on the Committee felt that they could no longer continue having served many years. There was great support and it was agreed to ask members and friends to volunteer to be a

Friend and run and care for one meeting a year. There would be no committees. We were thrilled at the number of people who offered and this has continued successfully ever since.

Now however, most of the original 'Friends' have moved, aged or have passed on to higher service.

We now have only two of the original volunteers helping although we are pleased that three other 'Friends' who when asked have agreed to join us.

We would like to ask our people at Ponteland Methodist Church if they would consider joining us as Friends. The meetings are held fortnightly on Tuesdays at 2.30pm for about one hour. The meetings are from September to May with breaks for Christmas and Easter. The principal task of a Friend is to run the meeting to either speak or obtain a speaker or perhaps to show slides from holidays etc.

Joyce Davis and I are still caring for the meeting - now in its 17th year in its present form - and we enjoy meeting with the ladies who are very appreciative of all that is arranged for them. As we are planning for the next session in September we would like to double our number of Friends so we are seeking five new Friends. Would you please consider whether you can help us? Please have a word with me if you feel able.

Kathleen Farquhar
Coordinating Secretary

BLESSINGS AT BASSENFELL

Our 30th weekend away was another successful time of fellowship and friendship. As we all gathered in Bassenfell Manor Christian Centre for our first meal, the peace and tranquillity filled our spirits with hope for our weekend.

The view from the windows in the morning over Bassenthwaite Lake, as the mist gently lifted was so beautiful. God is good. His creation never ceases to amaze us. 34 people gathered from the churches in Ponteland, Heddon, Milbourn and Stamfordham. There were four children with us this year. It is great to see young families enjoying the freedom of the place.

We worshipped God and sang some great new songs all wonderfully illustrated by video pictures. Rev. Colin Barrick led us on the theme of FABCAPS reading from Paul's letter to the

Ephesians. We learned what these initials stood for and about God who gives us many good things:- Forgiveness, Acceptance, Blameless, Chosen, Adopted, Predestined and Sealed.

We learned what it means to give and receive God's blessing as in Numbers 6:24-27. We laid our sins at the foot of the cross where Jesus died to restore us into new life. We walked 6.5 miles around the edge of Bassenthwaite Lake, chatting to each other sharing worries and concerns as well as laughter and fun. Matthew led us over the most rickety stiles and through some very muddy fields. We avoided a rather frisky stallion as our horse whisperer, Dianne, calmed him down. For some reason Alison ended up sat in the mud, we managed to haul her out of the mire and restore her balance and decorum.

Colmore Catering provided good food and the warden's daughter, with her fiancé, offered to do the washing up for a small reward towards their wedding funds. We wished them well for their future married life.

We took part in a simple Communion service and shared open prayers, happy and uplifting worship songs and much chatter in the coffee bar between the meetings and eating.

I always look forward to this weekend, every year is different but so wonderful – roll on next year.

Rosemary Gray



HEXHAM DEBATES

Hexham Quakers are delighted to share the programme for Series 13 of the Hexham Debates. These thought-provoking talks cover a wide range of subjects and have the format of a talk followed by a short discussion. All are invited.

The talks are on Saturdays from 11.00am to 12.30pm with tea and coffee to follow at The St Mary's Centre, St Mary's R C Church, Hencotes, Hexham, NE46 2EB. Admission Free, with a retiring collection.

Saturday 8 February 2020

Rethinking Security: How the UK can think globally and act responsibly

Security matters to everyone, but much that governments do in its name is making us all less safe, at home and around the world. It's time for a rethink – here's why.

Richard Reeve, Director of Rethinking Security (rethinkingsecurity.org.uk) and, until October 2019, Chief Executive of the Oxford Research Group. Richard has worked on peace and conflict research and analysis for 20 years, particularly focused on Africa and the Middle East, including with International Alert, King's College London and Chatham House. Since 2013 he has been mainly focused on the UK and its foreign and security policy.

Saturday 28 March 2020

The eco-spiritual challenge of our time: Extinction Rebellion as our last best hope

We have gambled too much to date on being able to stop the juggernaut of climate and ecological collapse from destroying us. In this talk I discuss the idea of 'deep adaptation', which aims to prepare society for likely impending collapses, and the need for it to be a key demand in climate campaigning. I probe the spiritual dimensions of deep adaptation and more generally of waking up to the full gravity of the long emergency we are in.

Rupert Read, Reader in Philosophy at the University of East Anglia; Co-convenor of XR Political Liaison Group. Rupert is author of seven books and specialises particularly in Wittgenstein, philosophy of film, and environmental philosophy. Recently Rupert has become a key spokesperson for the Extinction Rebellion movement.

Saturday 25 April 2020

Refugees in modern world history: reflections on past and present

The plight of refugees has again become a dominant focus of public debate as it was in the aftermath of the two world wars. It speaks of the desperation of displaced people and the intransigent stance adopted by many governments. This talk examines the circumstances, actions and trajectories of refugees in different times and places, and what this means for refugees to encounter government officials, aid agencies and host communities. In thinking about refugees as flesh and blood rather than as flotsam and jetsam, the talk will also reflect on the ways in which refugees have expressed themselves.

Peter Gatrell, Professor of Economic History, University of Manchester. Peter is the author of several books on refugee history. His latest book, *The Unsettling of Europe: the Great Migration, 1945 to the Present*, appeared with Penguin Books in 2019. In 2019 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

Saturday 2 May 2020

Thinking Like an Ecosystem: The Need for New Stories

In a world that has been reduced to a market, and nature a cache of exploitable resources, people are downgraded to consumers. Our compliance in this travesty is bought by marketing, to which digital technology has gifted ubiquity, camouflage and even more power. The resulting harm to our bodies and planet is becoming all too apparent; but the most damaging effect is to blot out alternative narratives.

Gerard Hastings, Emeritus Professor, University of Stirling. Gerard researches the impact of business on society – both for good and ill. This has involved him in advising Government and civil society nationally and internationally. His latest books are *Social Marketing: Rebels with a Cause* and *The Marketing Matrix: how the corporation gets its power and how we can reclaim it*. In 2009 he was awarded the OBE for services to healthcare; in 2014 he accepted the Queen's Anniversary Prize on behalf of the University of Stirling.

Saturday 6 June 2020

The Politics of Global Heating

How has it taken so long to get serious about global heating and

climate disruption? Why have climate change deniers been so resolute, and have we at last started to respond properly – and in time?

Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies, University of Bradford and the Oxford Research Group's Global Security Consultant. Paul has worked in international security, arms control and political violence for over 30 years. He writes monthly Briefings for the ORG website analysing the international security situation, and reports for the ORG on international security and the 'War on Terror'. He also writes regularly for openDemocracy.

Andrew Gonnet

IN THE SPIRIT OF THINGS

Over many years travelling up and down the A1 on our visits to our son and daughter and their families I developed a few abbreviated text phrases, for use with the mobile phone, to keep them up to date on the progress, or otherwise, of our journeys. These were based on that very well-known phrase "The Eagle has Landed" used as a secret code for covert military operations in fictional activities during World War 2. The latter simply conveyed that we had arrived home safely whilst "The Eagle is in Flight" implied that we had left home and were on our way!

In recent times our movements have been curtailed to weekly visits to the Freeman Hospital and after our last trip between Christmas and New Year, whilst awaiting the arrival of our taxi for the journey home, I sent a quick text "The Eagle is in Flight" to advise the family accordingly. Inadvertently I sent the text to a local representative for a company who had recently done some work for us at home. The mobile number was alphabetically next to our daughter's in the list of contacts! Within about 10 minutes as we were getting into the taxi the mobile rang and it was the recipient responding most appropriately with a covert coded message "Red Sparrow in position"! He was no doubt baffled by the anonymous call but he certainly entered into the spirit of the occasion.

John Turner

AUDREY MACDONALD

Audrey was born in 1932 to Percy and Amy Davey who were from Durham, though Audrey herself was born and raised in Askern, near Doncaster – her parents having moved there for work. She was an only child, but was close to some of her many cousins, including Olive, Jean and Stan, who were also brought up in Askern, and Pam and Margaret from Durham.



Audrey and David knew each other from childhood as they both were taken to Askern Methodist Church where Audrey's father taught in the Sunday School and David, I am told, was the resident rascal! But from a young age, church was more than what you did on a Sunday. Audrey had a strong and lifelong faith that sustained and mattered to her, and a faithfulness which would be evident throughout her life.

Aged 15 Audrey left school and began to work

in the local wages office at the Coal Board, staying there until she married David in 1961, who was recently returned from missionary service.

Their first move took them to Conisbrough, South Yorkshire, where Alistair and Fiona were born. After five years there they moved up to Ponteland and remained in the North East with David's ministry taking them to Heaton, Benwell, Fenham, and Sunderland. They then returned to Ponteland upon retirement. Audrey loved being in Ponteland, where she felt valued and at home, and where she found a warm welcome from old and new members of this Church.

When Alistair and Fiona were old enough to go to school Audrey went back to work as an accounts clerk, which she did

for about 15 years; then followed a variety of jobs, from accounting to working on reception at A&E at the RVI. Even when working she always made time for the children and was very supportive and encouraging of whatever Alistair and Fiona chose to do, whether travelling, education, or in day-to-day living; Audrey seemed determined that they would have everything they needed to succeed, and the chance to make the most of every opportunity – even if money was sometimes tight. Audrey had a great love of music and was a good organist and pianist, having learnt to play the piano as a child, and was often the organist at Askern Methodist Church. Later she encouraged Alistair and Fiona to take up instruments, accompanied them in clarinet and violin exams, and took them to concerts at the City Hall and further afield. She took up the harp as a side-line, accompanying David on the Northumbrian pipes at many a church hall concert in the 70s and 80s. In retirement Audrey and David sang with the Newcastle Choral Society for a number of years. Audrey was also very well-travelled, including trips to Australia and New Zealand, and several visits to the USA – particularly to Annapolis where, after a church exchange in 1976, she maintained some great friendships. In 2009 Audrey accompanied David to Sarawak, Malaysia, where he had served as a minister before their marriage, to join in the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Methodist church in Sibü. This was such a special and meaningful trip.

Audrey made lasting friendships in all the different places they lived, while still keeping up with older friends, including Pat, who was a very dear friend from her school days, and Pat's cousins Pam and Margaret, who have all been loyal and supportive, including over the past few difficult years. Many friendships have been invested in and kept over the years.

She was quite an independent person, always keen to be judged on her own merits and known as a person in her own right rather than just as 'the minister's wife'. And in some ways she was not a conventional minister's wife of her era – she was never keen to speak at meetings, open fetes, or conduct the choir; she didn't seek attention or like being at the centre of things; that wasn't her style. However, behind the scenes she was a tremendous support to David, and was his best sermon

critic giving honest feedback to his content and delivery.

She further exercised her own ministry by showing a great care and concern for other people; a good listener, people would often turn up at the door to 'have a chat with Audrey'.

Many people have also mentioned her gift and ministry of hospitality; their home was a place of welcome and people were always free to pop in – whether church members or friends of the children; all were welcomed with openness and love. And so, with that in mind, she would have loved you all to stay for refreshments after the service in this Church that she called home.

Please do join us if you are able; eat, share, remember!

Audrey also got a lot of enjoyment from her grandchildren, Rosie, Ben and Jon, and she always loved to hear and was very proud of their achievements and progress. She particularly loved having them to stay in the summer holidays, with regular visits to Ponteland swimming pool and library, and trips round Northumberland fondly remembered.

Audrey had a very sharp mind – she was hard to beat at Scrabble and could complete a cryptic crossword in the time it would take many people to decipher the first clue. But she always regretted not having had the opportunity to continue her formal education, and eventually she took the plunge and went back to studying. Via the Open University she gained a place at Newcastle University and, at the sprightly age of 59, obtained an honours degree in history – this was quite rightly one of her proudest achievements.

Over the past five years Audrey's mind sadly suffered from dementia - a cruel disease which robbed her of some of the things she held dear, including her independence and ability to organise and think clearly. But to the end she remained determined and feisty, as the staff at Whorlton Grange care home would confirm. She was a blessing to those who knew her and we are thankful to have known her and that she gone to glory in the eternal love of God.

Jona Sewell



THE OPEN DOOR

Margaret Ashford made and served this soup last month and it was enjoyed by everyone who chose it. I have been asked to print the recipe so a big thank you to Margaret for passing it on. This will be the last month when soup will be on the menu. Please note the information at the foot of the page.

Judith

Celery and cashew nut soup

1 Medium onion, chopped
1 medium potato, chopped
½ a head of celery, chopped
1 oz butter
3oz broken cashew nuts
1 ¼ pts vegetable or chicken stock
¾ pt milk
Salt and pepper to season



Melt the butter in a pan and add the chopped vegetables.
Sauté for 5 mins.
Add the nuts and cook for a further 5 mins.
Add the stock and bring to the boil, stirring.
Turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 20 mins.
Add the milk and allow to cool.
Blend until smooth.
Reheat and season to taste.

Summer Opening Times

From March 2nd



Mondays 2pm - 4.30pm
(except bank holidays)

HELLO FROM ALISON

Happy New Year a little belatedly I hope you all have had a great time of joy and relaxation over the festive season, which now seems a distant memory!!

A HUGE THANK YOU to all those who helped with an extremely successful Christmas Journey. From our set-up and take-down teams, puppeteers, actors and volunteers, you were all awesome and we could never have done it without you. Almost 120 children plus teachers and carers went through the journey and they were all

buzzing when leaving the building. I received this very nice email from the headteacher at Richard Coates School;



Hi Alison

I just wanted to write to say a huge thank you to you and the volunteers today. It was so lovely - both the teachers said it was the best Christmas event they have ever taken children to.

So much time goes into organising things like this but it really is a fantastic experience for the children.

Kind regards (see you tomorrow)

Heather

Richard Coates Church of England Primary School

The year 2 teacher at Ponteland Primary spoke to me the day after they had been, as I was doing an assembly there, and said how much the children and staff had enjoyed the Journey and

recognised how much work, time and effort had gone into it. They very much appreciated all we did for them.

So we begin a new calendar year, where the Lunch Club continues at Richard Coates school, seeing 12 children each week doing Bible-based crafts and stories.

I am continuing assemblies at both Ponteland Primary and Richard Coates which are going well and being well received and appreciated by the schools.

EASTER JOURNEY is happening the week of 23rd March to the 27th when we will once again require lots of help for set-up/ take-down, actors and chaperones etc... If you think you can help with this then please, please do get in touch with me.

The sooner the better, as letters have already gone out to the schools inviting the year 5s to this event and we have already one school booked in!!! Please fill in the rota which is on the notice board in the foyer.

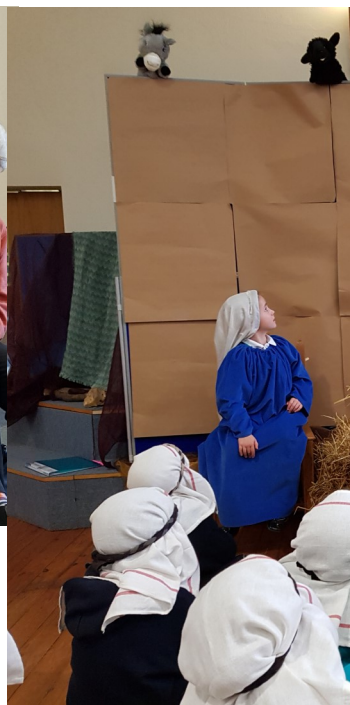
Advance notice: This year's Holiday Club is booked in for the 20th—24th July with a fun event on the 25th July. I hope to gather a team together to run this as it's a full week's worth of fun, games, bible stories and craft. For all those involved last year please spread the word and if you can commit to helping then please let me know.

I continue to be involved in the GB and BB on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. A great opportunity to help the girls and boys understand a little more of the Christian faith and encouraging them to grow in that.

I am still looking at and praying for the nucleus of a youth group and asking God to show me the way forward with this. Please continue to pray for myself and the work I am involved with as we reach out together to our community here in Ponteland.

Every Blessing

Alison Maynard



Christmas Journey





THE SHEEP FARMER'S WITNESS

He said he was the Good Shepherd and that really hit home to me. I've been dealing with sheep since I was a nipper and he certainly got it right. Some sheep are pretty gormless, they wander off looking for some different sort of feed, or perhaps they are afraid of the tup or are being bullied by an old ewe. I've had to traipse for miles to find one that's had a mind of its own and found it stuck in some mud or on a rock face. I don't say I always brought it back rejoicing, cursing more like if the truth be known, but then I'm sinful man and not the Lord God Almighty. But I have been right glad to have it back in the flock, worth the effort.

Yes, I have a decent size of flock of my own now, but started like most, working for someone else, and I know that hired hands are not always what I would call natural shepherds. They don't learn the ways of each of the flock and they scarper if things turn nasty and a wild dog or a wolf pack appears. As Jesus has just said, it's the owner who faces up to danger and sees it off. All sorts of things happen out in the hills, things you townees wouldn't credit.

Why, I remember the strangest thing that happened to me years ago, when I was in my first job. I was about fourteen years old and working for old Isaac ben Israel. No, not the patriarch! I'm not *that* old! He was a sheep owner down Bethlehem way. I was the one to do the fetching and carrying and had been sent by Isaac's missus to get some bate to the men. It was nearly midnight when I reached the boss and his men at the fold on the hillside.

We were eating our bread and cheese when suddenly the sky, with its brilliant stars and half a moon, was lit up strangely, bright enough to show our black shadows and the white fleeces of the flock in the fold. Strange music was all around us and from some where we heard a VOICE, unearthly but musical, a lovely tone, and it was a message. The Anointed of the Lord of prophesy was being born at that moment! Just down there in our little town! We'd find him for ourselves if we went and looked for a newborn boy swaddled, and in a manger of all places.

Then the voice was swamped by an overwhelming chorus and

we were frightened and flabbergasted. Angelic voices and choirs astounded and scared us. But what were we to do? The boss and most of the hired men were for running off to the town, but I was told to mind the gate of the sheepfold, so I never saw that wonderful child.

Now I hear this new Rabbi and see what he is like, I wonder if he is more than an ordinary carpenter with a gift of healing and preaching. Could he be that wonder child and are we now seeing the Anointed One himself?

John M Gill

Newcastle Methodist District Music Society

Celebration Songs of Praise

*celebrating the forthcoming bicentenary of
Brunswick Methodist Church*

Preacher: Revd. Prof. David Wilkinson

Additional songs by Revd. Gavin Hume

Saturday March 7th 2020

Brunswick Methodist Church

Newcastle upon Tyne

Choir rehearsal at 3.00 p.m.

Evening worship at 6.00 p.m.

Retiring collection

For further information or bookings contact
Monica Goldfinch 0191 285 6223; monica.goldfinch@btinternet.com

NOREEN GREEN

In mid September I suggested to my carer that there must be many people living in care homes who would perhaps like a little light entertainment. So I put my name forward if required, to give



a poetry reading in one of their homes. It was greatly appreciated and it was arranged that a car would pick me up and take me over the river to their flagship home. I was advised that I would be given coffee, then lunch before people came in to hear what I had for them. It was a means for me to say a sincere thankyou for all the help I've been given over the past months .It was an

absolutely first-class care home set with linen table cloths and similar serviettes. The meal was delicious. People came in in driblets and drabs perhaps sorry they were missing their afternoon naps. After a short introduction I began my first poem and at the end was given applause. I felt I was giving something worthwhile. After all that, I met a gentleman from Darras Hall who I'd met years ago and we went over great memories. There might be people nearby who would be thankful for someone to lighten their dull days. I'm sure you'd be welcome.

THANK YOU

*Have you noticed what is happening in our gardens every day
From the Lord come flowers in their colourful array
Be thankful for the good things in life, He sends our way
And truly say Thankyou in a very humble way.*

Noreen Green



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 24TH FEBRUARY – 8TH MARCH 2020

This year the Fairtrade Foundation is continuing its campaign to promote a living income for cocoa farmers, particularly women.

Chocolate may be our favourite snack, but read on to see just how much you really know about it.....

Cocoa was previously thought to have first been used by Mayans in Central America, however recent research suggests its use dates back even further, to the Omlecs who used it for religious rituals or as a medicinal drink.

The word **cacao** is the name for the bean and **cocoa** is what we make from it. Cocoa butter is the oil taken from cocoa beans before they are roasted. It is used along with the cocoa beans to make solid chocolate, and is also used in many other food items and skincare products.

The creation of the first chocolate bar is credited to Joseph Fry and his brothers who, in 1847, found that adding cocoa butter and sugar to the cocoa powder formed a moldable paste, thus transforming the drink into a tasty snack.

Today most cocoa is grown in West Africa – the bulk in Côte d'Ivoire, which produces around 40% of global supply.

The average age of cocoa farmers is 50. The benefits of cocoa farming are so poor that few young people want to stay in the profession. 60% of West African cocoa farmers live in extreme poverty. Only 3% of cocoa farmers in West Africa are able to earn a living income. A living income means enough money to live a decent life – for example enough money for food, medicine, clothing and education. 'Living income' has been calculated as £1.97 a day (\$2.50), which is double what most currently earn.

Children often have to work on cocoa farms using dangerous tools such as machetes. Child labour is a major issue in cocoa-farming communities, driven by poverty and the need to maximise production at minimum cost.

Each tree produces around 1,000 beans a year - that's enough for about 1kg of chocolate - which is not a lot considering that globally we consume over 3 billion kg of cocoa each year!

According to the International Cocoa Organization, Europeans account for half of the world's chocolate consumption with the British being the biggest chocoholics! In the UK, we each eat on average 11.5kg of chocolate a year, that's 11 trees each that we need to sustain our appetite!

Most cocoa farmers have never tasted chocolate. The cocoa is sold from the farms before it is turned into chocolate. The end product is a luxury that very few cocoa farmers will ever be able to afford.

But here's the good news.....Farmers in the Fairtrade system receive benefits to help make farming sustainable. Benefits include the Fairtrade Premium, an extra amount of money which farmers can invest in business or community projects. In 2015-16, Fairtrade cocoa farmers earned approximately £22 million in Fairtrade Premiums, almost a quarter of which was invested in directly supporting farming families to meet their daily needs.

For further information on Fairtrade Fortnight and on how to support the campaign, go to

www.fairtrade.org.uk

Please support the events in Ponteland to mark Fairtrade Fortnight:



Saturday 22nd February - information stall outside the Co-op on Broadway from 10am;

Monday 24th February – Fairtrade theme to Open Door and Traidcraft stall, here between 1pm and 4pm;

Saturday 29th March - a Big Brew at St Matthew's Church Hall between 10am and 12 noon.

Friday 6th March – Merton Hall coffee morning, details to be confirmed.

Bev

MEN'S FORUM AND FOODBANKS

At our December meeting John McCorry, who manages the West Newcastle Foodbanks, spoke to us about 'How can we do away with foodbanks'. He first told us how they operate with referrals made, needs assessed, food received by donors and about the volunteers who make arrangements for its distribution. He then explained some current problems that need to be solved if foodbanks are to become unnecessary.

Firstly the Universal Credit system normally pays claimants at the end of each month the same as most people get paid when working. When becoming unemployed the assumption is like changing jobs with the final payment from the last job having to be used until the first unemployment payment is received. However there have been many teething problems and delays in processing claims have caused much distress. The DHSS are making advances to assist but until they can operate more speedily claimants will not be able to manage and this is when the foodbank assists.

Secondly there are problems caused by Zero-Hour contracts between an employer and a worker, where the employer is not obliged to provide any minimum working hours, while the worker is not obliged to accept any work offered. Zero-Hours workers are entitled to statutory annual leave, sick pay and the National Minimum Wage in the same way as regular workers are legally entitled to get other work. Some types of business have flexible demands to meet so benefit, and some workers like the arrangement so legislation to ban them is difficult. However they cause many problems for the DHSS to work out benefits and for families to manage. The foodbank helps people who suffer from these but apart from discouraging the unnecessary use of such contracts it is a difficult problem to solve.

Thirdly there are those who just can't manage their spending through various pressures in life and some with mental problems. John McCorry said that he did not aim to enlarge the foodbank but to make it more effective. It was encouraging that a 'Pathway out of Hunger' group had been set up. Those coming to the foodbank a few times were monitored and given advice with referrals made to doctors and other advice agencies when appropriate. Client support plans were then put in place.

Food poverty generally is a wider political issue and until various problems can be solved the foodbanks will continue to provide a valuable service. February can however be a very difficult month and donors are asked to give that little bit extra at this time of the year.

Alan Groves

VILLAGE NEWS

New Schools, Leisure Centre, Fire Station, Callerton Lane

Work is progressing well. The new fire station is completed but is not yet operational. The Archaeology Dig has unearthed evidence of settlements back to the Iron and Bronze Ages. The findings will be issued during the coming year.

Kirkley Hall, Northumberland College

An investment programme will be providing new learning opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. There are also plans for an equine centre and a specialist management centre.

The Diamond Inn, Vaulkhard Group

A year ago the Vaulkhard Group took over the Diamond Inn. The company has now bought a lease for the building beside the Diamond, which has nine bedrooms. There is a planning application to alter the interior of the building to increase seating capacity. This will mean relocating the toilets and cellar to the rear extension. No additional car parking will be provided.

Our Library

Northumberland CC claims to be having a consultation on library services but as far as I understand, it is only consulting those people who use the library. In my view, they should be consulting everyone. I went to the library and picked up the consultation survey which should be completed by 16th March. I have put a few copies in our foyer. It will also be available on line. There was an "Open Day" event at the end of January, but not well publicised.

10 West Road

A Planning application has been submitted to change the use of this shop to a micro brewery.

Jennifer Hardy

JEAN THOMPSON

On 17th July 1936, she was born to my Gran and Grandad, Betsy and Robert Oswald, a little sister to her brother Robert. They lived with Grandad's brother Jack, who owned a shoe shop.



Tragically, when Mum was only 10 months old my Grandad died and Jack had to become her and Bob's father figure. A few years later when he also took ill, the house and business had to be sold and my Gran, Betsy, took on a role of a lady's companion to the Bean family in Sunderland. The Oswald family home had various musical instruments, including two pianos, an organ and some violins so Mum's passion for music started in her very early years. She went for piano lessons and

would often play the organ in her local church. She quickly became very accomplished on the keyboard and then later she also learned to play the clarsach, or Celtic harp. She attended Wellfield Grammar school where she was extremely popular and was appointed head girl. Not only was she academic, she loved sport and was on the hockey team.

Not long after leaving school she started Scottish Country dancing and at one of these dances she met my Dad. He also had a great love of music and played the Northumbrian Pipes so I suppose you could say they were a match made in heaven!

Mum became a student at Alnwick Teacher Training College in 1954, where she lived in the castle itself. She was elected senior student – no surprise really because not only was she talented and clever but she was such a brilliant peace-keeper and able to sort out any disputes between students.

Mum and Dad married on 22 December 1956 and lived for a few years in Gosforth where Alison was their first-born. I followed a

couple of years later and we moved to Darras Hall where Dad designed our house. Andrew came along four years later. Mum took some time out from teaching when we were young and was a brilliant homemaker.

Mum and Dad were always very busy performing at various concerts around Northumberland and in the mid-sixties made a record, *Dreams of Northumbria*. The cover photograph was actually taken in Alnwick Castle, harking back to her time there as a student.

She was a respected member of many choirs, either singing soprano line or conducting them. When she led them, everyone loved her unique skill that combined sensitive musicality and charisma. She was one of the founder members of the Northern Sinfonia Chorus, being a member for 34 years. She loved singing in the Chamber Choir which started when the Sage was opened in 2006, and also sang with a group called the Pele singers, named after the Pele Tower in Ponteland. Mum also took the Ponteland WI choir for many years and was an active member of Ponteland Repertory Society where she then became Musical Director for about 15 years.

She was also a member of the Northern English Singers who would perform not only locally but also around Europe and wherever they went they would always sing *The Water of Tyne*, which she also sang as a much-loved duet with my Dad.

More recently Don encouraged her to join a little concert choir called the Grainger Singers. Mum also put together a Christmas choir for this Church.

Music and dancing often go hand in hand and she also loved to dance. She loved a good ceilidh so we organised one to celebrate her 80th birthday, with Rod Matthews providing the music. Mum was a teacher at Goosehill School in Morpeth as Deputy Head. She was there for 20 years alongside her best friend Beryl who was the Head for 29 years. The school recently held their Sundown celebrations where Mum and Beryl were interviewed which was posted on Morpeth News TV website. The comments that flooded in from past pupils were just so touching and illustrated just how much affection there was for them both. When I was out with Mum, we would often be approached by one of her ex-pupils who would say how much they loved hav-

ing Mum as their teacher.

Mum continued to play the harp both with my Dad and also as part of the Clarsach Society. She later started playing in a trio with her close friends, Betty and Judith.

Mum was absolutely over the moon when her grand-daughters Emma and Bethany arrived. Emma was a December baby and Mum was singing The Messiah in concert at the same time that I was in labour. She said she had never sung 'For unto us a child is born' with such meaning. She thoroughly spoiled the girls as only grandparents are allowed, and they worshipped her. She was so delighted when the girls starting playing the harp, having lessons from her friend Betty.

Music continued to be her passion throughout her life, it was her lifeblood and the glue that held everything together when times were difficult. And there were some very difficult times, because in her lifetime there were several devastating events and yet she always handled them with grace and serenity. After my Dad died in 1990, she remarried a few years later, a friend of my Dad's from the TA. She had a few very happy years with Cliff and then when Cliff fell ill she nursed him before she was widowed again. A few years later she got together with Don and has been with him for 14 years. She never complained about the fact that she was widowed twice – she just said she was so fortunate to have found love and happiness three times. She just wanted to make every day count and embrace her blessings - and that was so typical of Mum, she was just so loving and giving, of her time and her talents. She knew that there is more pleasure in giving than receiving which is why she was so generous. She not only lived life to the full, she lived it so that it was brimming over. She was strong yet gentle. Immensely talented and yet humble. As a mum she was just the best role model and I am so incredibly proud and blessed to be her daughter.

Music is a universal language that breaks down barriers and crosses all divides. When my sister Alison was living in Care Village, Mum would get Alison and her friends together and teach them the hand chimes. Each of them had one note to play and Mum wrote the music in such a way so they knew when they were to play their chime and they all loved it. In Au-

gust we had a party for Alison's 60th birthday with all of her friends and their carers and the chimes made their appearance. It was such a great way to bring everyone together and there was much fun and laughter. My Mum was my best friend. And now this beautiful lady, who was loved beyond measure, has left us and gone to a better place.

Fiona Tuckwood



**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
(A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL,
ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)**

Press Release

Rise, take your mat and walk

Women, men and children of all ages

are called to 'Rise, take your mat and walk' to join this day of prayer.* Women of Zimbabwe have prepared this year's service and they encourage us all to reflect on the difficulties and unrest that have plagued their country over many years. They share the challenges they have met and the hopes they have for the future. They encourage us to **'Rise, take your mat and walk'** with them as they continue their often turbulent journey towards full reconciliation.

World Day of Prayer is an international inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday 6 March 2020, people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Zimbabwe.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 170 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world --- through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas - before finishing in American Samoa more than 36 hours later.

* For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area see the WDP website: wwdp.org.uk



GARDENING FOR FEBRUARY 2020

Happy New Year. I have been amazed at how far Cornerstone now travels from the positive feedback I have had in recent months. Thank you. Writers of regular articles do need to hear how they are received. Weather often features in our conversations – another record was broken after 300 years when the barometric pressure at Heathrow was 1049.6 millibars on 20th January 2020. My amateur device shows 1050 mbar today (21st January). Higher readings have previously been recorded with 1052.6 mbar at Aberdeen in 1902. You might say “What about the rain in 2019? My records at home show 39.96 inches compared with 30.30 in 2018. The average over 25 years is 33.70 in. The driest months in 2019 were January and February (0.59 in each) with the highest rainfall of the year in August at 6.41 in. 68% of the annual rainfall occurred in the last half of the year. 2019 although only the 11th warmest overall, set new heat records since records began 140 years ago. On 26th February Kew Gardens recorded 21.2C and on 25th July Britain had its hottest day with 38.7C at Cambridge Botanic Gardens. In mid December 18.7C was recorded at Achfary in the Highlands. Previously on 23rd February 13.9C minimum was found at Achnagart – lasted over 24 hours. So that you can start sourcing composts for greenhouse and gardens I summarise the findings of Which? Despite the environmentalists wanting gardeners to go “peat free” from 2020 the highest-rated compost for seed sowing is Clover MultiPurpose Compost (8p per litre; 100% peat, available at Halls of Heddon). Bathgate Champions Blend All Purpose Compost with 70% peat costs 13p per litre; Thompson & Morgan Incredicompost has 80% peat, costs 20p per litre and is only available from Thompson & Morgan; Humax Original Compost has 100% peat and costs 11p per litre. For raising young plants Melcourt SylvaGrow Multipurpose Compost comes out well above any of the others (no peat, 15p per litre) while Clover Multi-Purpose is second on the list. For containers the first and third are both Wyevale (and available at their Garden Centres), namely Wyevale Multipurpose Compost with John Innes (14p per litre) and Wyevale Multipurpose Compost – a consistent all-rounder costing 12p per litre. Second in that is Bord na Mona Growise Pro 5 All Purpose Compost at 14p per litre and recommended for flowers. It is time to get started – I have planted broad beans in trays in

the greenhouse. To grow smaller numbers of plants a window ledge propagator or just a sunny window ledge may be warm enough. Use small trays or even butter containers washed out



with plenty of drainage holes. Many seeds are very small so I sieve compost with a fine 3mm sieve.

The compost should not be pressed down into the tray or plant pot – only give it a sharp “tap” then before sowing, water from the bottom with water that has stood 24 hours in a can to bring it up to room temperature. To reduce the likelihood of any disease always use tap water in preference to rain water. Small seeds only require a light covering of

sieved compost. Carol Klein uses fine grit so that she can see that the tray or pot has had enough water when the fine grit changes colour. To aid germination the tray can be placed in a polythene bag (or covered with glass) with the cover removed as soon as germination occurs. Small plants can be pricked out when large enough to handle (often with two true leaves).

Recently Alan Titchmarsh has been encouraging us to consider waiting to have our fruit and vegetables in season – as we once did before aeroplanes could deliver items such as strawberries within hours of picking. He suggests that we should see beyond “the recycling bin” as our sole contribution to aiding the environment”. An article in the Sunday Times on 5th January is entitled “Green Gobbled up by urban sprawl in this greying pleasant land”. The space occupied by buildings and roads has grown over 10% in the past decade. The statistics are alarming:

The increase in land mass occupied by man-made surfaces such as car parks 31% (282 square miles), by buildings (12%, 129 sq m), land used for roads 9%, 132 sq m and land for gardens 6%, 142 sq m. As I walk I see the fronts of new builds being covered in paving, flower borders being dug up and replaced by pavers and a reduction in front gardens. The Royal Horticultural Society is predicting that it is expecting an increase in the popularity of “messy” gardens as people become more aware of the environment with more bee hotels, wildlife ponds and home-grown vegetables, wild flowers and pollinator plants to attract insects. It is expected that more garden designers will incorporate planting schemes to benefit wildlife and the environment at the Chelsea Flower Show 2020.

Good Gardening 2020.

Syd Cowan

DATES FOR THE DIARY

February

Thursday 6th	19.00 Forum meal at Blackbird
Tuesday 11th	14.30 Women's Fellowship—Rosemary Gray
Thursday 13th	19.30 Focus
	19.30 Church Council
Saturday 15th	09.30 Meanders
Monday 25-8th	March Fairtrade Fortnight
Tuesday 25th	14.30 Women's Fellowship—Andrew Pay
Wednesday 26th	Ash Wednesday/ 1st Day of Lent
Thursday 27th	19.30 Focus—Doug Collender—Time Capsule
Saturday 29th	09.30 Meanders

March

Friday 6th	14.15 World Day of Prayer at URC
Saturday 7th	10.00 Mini Meander
	18.00 Celebration Songs of Praise at Brunswick

FAMILY NEWS

We wish **Bev Mintern** a good recovery.

Sad news that **Joyce Knowles** has died. Our thoughts are with her family.

Congratulations to **Lilian Smith** on her 94th birthday.

Congratulations to **Rachel Kirtley** on her 21st.

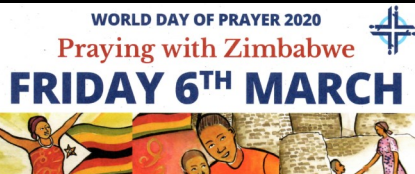
Sue Kirtley is now of a certain age!

Congratulations to **Noreen Green** who will be celebrating her 90th birthday on 10 Feb.

Barbara Bradley is making good progress in Freeman Hospital, following an accident on Christmas Eve. She would like to thank both Jona, and all her church friends, for their visits, cards, prayers and kind wishes. The love and encouragement given has been greatly appreciated.

Preachers February

2nd 10.00am Sewell (S)
6.30pm Wriglesworth
9th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Forrester
16th 10.00am Wood
6.30pm Sewell (S)
23rd 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Orrock



World Day of Prayer Service
to be held in
United Reformed Church,
Broadway, Darras Hall Estate
on
Friday 6th March 2020
at
2:15 p.m.

Everyone Most Welcome

SHE DESERVES
A LIVING INCOME

Fairtrade Fortnight

Saturday 22nd February

Information stall outside the Co-op on Broadway from 10am

Monday 24th February

Fairtrade theme to Open Door and Traidcraft stall, here between 1pm and 4pm

Saturday 29th March

A Big Brew at St Matthew's Church Hall 10am to 12 noon

Friday 6th March

Merton Hall coffee morning, details to be confirmed.

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the March edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 21st February 2020**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*