

Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone



February 2021

MINISTER'S LETTER

Over the recent weeks in our notice-sheets I've reflected on the importance of hope, stated that it's okay to admit we're struggling, and reminded us of the need to take God's hand and walk on - even when we can't see where we're going. But I acknowledge that it's tough. This week, the last week in January in which I write, we've surpassed the terrible landmark of 100,000 covid-related deaths, and we've been told that this lockdown will last at least until 8th March. Again, it's tough. We're all missing out on so much, we're all making sacrifices, and we're all suffering to some degree as a result. It's tough.

But this week Tim's words from his service for Sunday January 24th have stuck with me. In the service Tim communicated a picture of Jesus walking on the water where he suggested that the water represents the turmoil and worries of our life, and that they are all at the feet of Jesus.

So yes it's tough, but I've found myself praising and thanking God more recently, reminding myself that even the turmoil and worries of my life are at his feet. And I've found myself worrying less and more at peace as a result of my praising. I'm praising God, not because everything is good and right in the world, what kind of faith only praises then? But, I'm praising because He is God, and He is worthy; I'm praising because I need to lift my eyes from fixating on our current problems and focus instead on Him who can do immeasurably more than I can imagine.... Psalm 111 says:

Hallelujah!

I give thanks to God with everything I've got—

God's works are so great,

Worth a lifetime of study—endless enjoyment!

Splendour and beauty mark His craft;

His generosity never gives out.

His miracles are His memorial -

This God of Grace, this God of Love.

He gave food to those who fear Him,

He remembered to keep His ancient promise.

He proved to His people that He could do what He said:

Hand them the nations on a platter - a gift!
He manufactures truth and justice;
All His products are guaranteed to last -
Never out-of-date, never obsolete, rust-proof.
All that He makes and does is honest and true:
He paid the ransom for His people,
He ordered His Covenant kept forever.
He's so personal and holy, worthy of our respect.
The good life begins in the fear of God -
Do that and you'll know the blessing of God.
His Hallelujah lasts forever!

It's okay to have bad days. It's okay to admit we're not always okay. But I encourage each of us to remember to focus on, praise, and thank God; not because everything is okay, but because He is God, He is worthy, and He is with us.
God Bless.



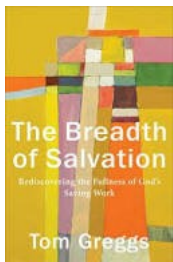
SABBATICAL

You are probably aware by now that I am taking the first four weeks of my sabbatical in February, saving the rest for autumn. Though I won't be 'away' in February I will not be working. Whilst I am off this month Revs Robin and Pat Brookes will have pastoral responsibility for our Church, please contact them with any pastoral or Church concerns, Rev Tim Woolley will chair our Church Council, and the stewards can support and direct enquiries too. The first port of call for circuit matters should be either Rev Tim Woolley or Circuit Steward, Mr Melvyn Brown. My thanks to all who are helping out, especially Pat and Robin, and for the kind words of encouragement and support I've received.
God Bless.

Jona

A METHODIST WAY WITH FRUITFUL CHURCHES

When I first came across “A Methodist Way” early last Autumn (as used in our circuit services during Advent), I struggled to see how it could fit with the circuit’s focus on “Fruitful Churches”.



I then had occasion to read John Wesley’s sermon on “Catholic Spirit” and two academic articles on the sermon. Finally, I am reading a book by a young, eminent, academic theologian, Tom Gregg – “The Breadth of Salvation” – who is also a Methodist Local Preacher. Gradually I have come to see that the two presentations present the same fundamental ideas of how we should live though in different costumes; and

we can be enriched by having both.

But first, a note on John Wesley’s writings. JW was an incessant writer on many subjects. As he rode his horse up and down our land (including, of course, to Newcastle as well as, in one day, Alnwick to Rothbury to Scots Gap to Hexham with sermons preached at the latter three!!) he read, studied and wrote using a special saddle that had a desk-top in front. (He would have loved the “Quiet carriage” on the train to or from London!!) He produced many different sorts of writing from a journal, to a bible commentary with his own translation in places, to medical books, to sermons. After his death, forty-four of his published sermons were selected to form an anthology that provides the basis for Methodist theological thinking. “Catholic Spirit” is Sermon XXXIV (34). For “Catholic” we should read “Universal”.

In this sermon, JW tackles a theological argument of his time – how to deal with different religious opinions and forms of worship. This became an issue in the Anglican Church when it separated from Rome and even more so in the time of Oliver Cromwell and the formation of non-conformist churches. As the hierarchical control of people’s religious beliefs waned in England in the 16th to 19th centuries, the question of what was allowed became an important debating point. There is even a special, long word – latitudinarianism – for a liberal position in the debate. (To this day, the UK is renowned for its tolerance, indeed encouragement of freedom of views and expression – as are USA, Australia, New Zealand. Many argue that this is the root of the UK’s difficulties as a member of the EU; the challenge for government to get agreement to lockdown rules during the present

pandemic; but also, for our creativity as demonstrated, for example, by the number of Nobel prizes we have won – second only to USA.)

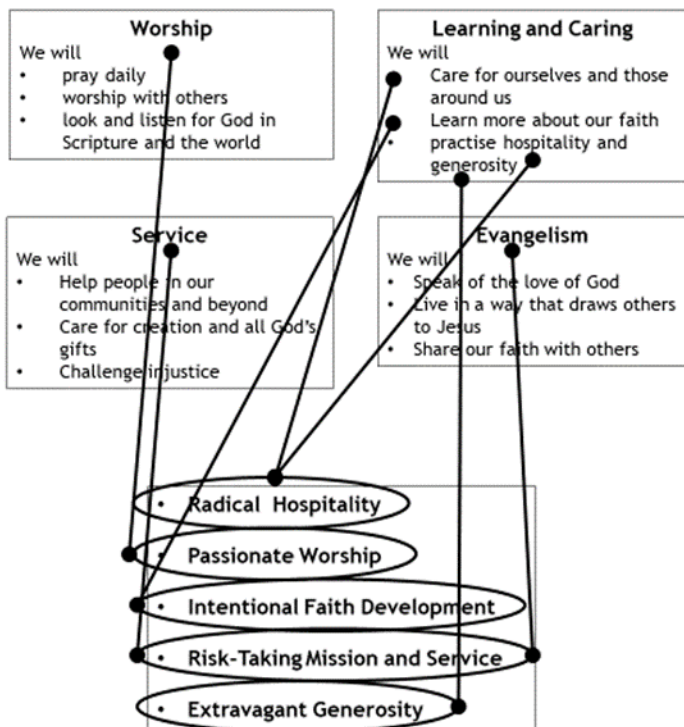
JW takes his text from 2 Kings 10.15 – the meeting of Jehu and Jehonadab. Jehu is on the warpath, slaughtering all the prophets of Baal. Jehonadab is a Rechabite and as Jeremiah records (35.1-10) has some very unusual views. The two men are very different in their beliefs and practices, both are very firm in their beliefs, neither is a paragon of virtue, both are God-fearing. JW uses this verse in the context of the overall story to enter the theological debate asking the rhetorical questions: “... although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?” JW answers that we surely can.

Greggs opens his book (the Introduction and start of Chapter 1) with a celebration of God’s immense love and grace which underpins God’s salvation of all creation. Following this soaring prose as an act of praise and thanksgiving, he brings the reader down to earth with this heading: **“Salvation in Christ, Not in Models of Christ’s Atonement”** and captures the overall message of the book in this sentence: “And we espouse our favourite of these [models] as if there were only one, and - worse still - as if the *model itself and not Jesus Christ in His self-sacrificial life, death, resurrection, and ascension* is the basis of salvation.” He goes on to argue that each model shows we mere mortals something – and only something, even when all the models are added together - of our immense God and what He has done for us.

So, with the two models for our individual and collective lives. From the methodical way of life of JW and his friends at Oxford University we continue the nickname given to them by more typical students – The Methodists. Later JW set out a basis for such a life with his 12 rules (not a word I find helpful in our time). These have been updated by Roger Walton. Robert Schnase used the biblical word “Fruitful” to be the objective of the Five Practices. This diagram shows how these two models link together.

Peter Hindle

A METHODIST WAY OF LIFE



FIVE PRACTICES OF FRUITFUL CHURCHES

A CALCULATED RISK

During the early summer of 1943, a member of 67th Bomb Disposal Squad, I spent several days on a farm on the Sussex Weald where a line of German bombs had fallen and failed to explode. Assigned to one which had made a considerable hole in the clay and was obviously fairly large, we sank a shaft and timbered it as we went down, fixing platforms every four feet or so so that the clay could be flung onto them and then shovelled up to the next and so to ground level; one man worked on each platform and two at the bottom of the shaft. We were armed with a mattock of the sort beloved of our recent amateur archaeologist speaker, and a square-mouth shovel.

Some members of the squad had put in for thirty-six hour passes for the weekend, passes timed from after duty on Saturday to midnight on Sunday. 'After duty' was a term that covered a multitude of situations, varying from eight in the morning if the man had been on guard duty overnight, to the end of the day if work had to go on late. Unfortunately for the men concerned, this Saturday we reached the stage of uncov-



ering the top half of a 500kg bomb at about eleven in the morning, a top half which did not reveal the two fuses. The proper procedure would have necessitated the careful excavation of the soil right round the middle section of the bomb until the fuses were reached and sufficient space cleared for someone to read the fuse number, decide on the appropriate action, and then fit the apparatus needed to neutralise the fuse and to extract it. We were all very blessed by the fact that German precision meant that fuse numbers were reliable and our experimental group had identified the nature of each and taught us the appropriate procedure.

The Company Serjeant Major happened to be on the site at the time, so he was in charge of the brief colloquy which ensued. The Army is not notably democratic, but in the bomb disposal world things were not very regimental, and all those on 'my' bomb were included in the discussion. Should the proper procedure be followed, which would entail us all working on the bomb until it was made safe? It would mean working the whole of Sat-

urday and possibly on Sunday as well; the men with passes would not be able to use them and be disappointed.

The bombs in this stick which had already been uncovered had all been fitted with fuses which were relatively safe to extract manually so it was a fairly safe bet that this, too, would have such fuses in it. We decided to take the risk. A tripod was erected over the hole and rope and pulleys rigged to a rope sling fitted round the tail of the bomb. Harry Fletcher backed his three-ton Bedford towards the shaft and the rope was fixed to his towbar. Our group retreated and crouched in a ditch while Harry moved his truck a couple of yards, thus pulling one end of half a ton of German bomb out of its muddy cradle and standing it on its end. Corporal Beck walked back to the shaft and went down to the bomb, cleaned off the fuse heads and read the numbers on them. Our luck had held, they were ordinary short delay fuses never known to have been booby-trapped or fitted with delicate trembler fuses. They were extracted by hand, the rope slings re-adjusted, and Harry's truck continued its movement until the whole bomb could be swung out of the shaft and lowered to the ground.

I have a snapshot in my old album of me steadying the tripod while this operation is being undertaken and another of the four of us who had done it proudly standing above the extracted bomb, like lion hunters posing with their prey. Wise or foolish?



John Gill

(Neither - extremely brave! Ed)

ACTION FOR CHILDREN

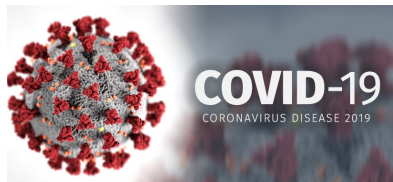


Massive thanks to everyone who contributed to the Action for Children Christmas Card effort, circa £2,000 has been raised. There is still some Gift Aid awaited and additional donations have been received.

I appreciate that I didn't receive from everyone their collection boxes but I will do this as soon as we are able to mix and if there is anyone who would like a box please let me know and I will get this to you when things are a little more normal. Take care everyone.

Rachel Wood

FIGHTING THE CORONA VIRUS - PART 2



The new year has started and we are all excited by the news that there is an extensive vaccination programme going to be carried out in our country and we do hope that other countries in the world will follow our example.

In our last magazine we informed you that we were volunteers at the RVI on the Oxford/ AstraZeneca trials. In October as part of the trials we had received vaccine injections. We did not know whether this vaccine was an effective vaccine against the virus or simply a placebo.

A few days before Christmas we received our Christmas present from NHS. We received a telephone call from our local surgery to book us into the vaccination programme as they were unaware we were on the Oxford Trial. Before we could confirm these appointments we had to contact the RVI and become 'unblinded' as to which vaccination we had received.

The email duly came back within an hour and simply stated 'Kathleen you have received two doses of the Oxford Vaccine - you do not need to receive any further vaccines.' 'Iain you have received two doses of the Meningitis vaccine (the Placebo) - you now need to accept the vaccine as part of the National Rollout.' Accordingly Iain was able to take up the offer from the surgery and duly received the Pfizer vaccine and now awaits the booster dose.

So, we are now in the privileged situation of each having a different vaccine and when a particular vaccine is announced on the television we are loyal to our particular dose and give a loud cheer as a supporter.

The Trial is not over as far as we are concerned. We will continue the weekly self-testing and give blood tests at regular intervals during this year to see how the vaccine is performing and hopefully strengthening our immune system.

Our Family - particularly our Grandchildren - continue to cheer us from the side-lines. That is fun for us. We have indeed been blessed by this opportunity to serve our neighbour particularly as there are no boundaries to our service that we can give. May God be with you in 2021.

Iain and Kathleen Farquhar

A CORONAVIRUS SONNET **(with apologies to William Shakespeare)**

Shall I compare thee to a winter's night?
We art more distant, two metres apart.
Lockdown does shake us all to stay local
And Covid's reach hath too long a fall.
Sometimes it's hard to book a slot
And oft the mask of PPE slides
And every remote chat room fails.
By chance, (or technology) unknown whims deter
But thine eternal winter will decrease
Or lose its power with vaccination.
Or shall death still rage in this pandemic
When in eternal testing stations, thou gavest,
So long as men can breathe, or R numbers decrease.
So long live remote hugs and these give life to me.

Rosemary Gray



BOYS' BRIGADE

We are still meeting via Zoom, and have had some good news that we have three new Anchors, who have joined our virtual group.

This week, we asked the Junior & Company sections, if they could be Prime Minister for a day, what laws would they pass? And the results, in no particular order...

1. Only go to school for one day a week
2. Get back into the EU
3. Anyone can vote at any age
4. Free sweets on Friday
5. Stop selling straight cucumbers

A future in politics for these guys!!!

Les Dodd

ARISTARCHUS TRAVELS WITH PAUL (1)

We seemed to be having a really fruitful time in Ephesus and I saw that Paul was greatly loved here. He must have realised that the church here was sure and steadfast in its faith and local leadership was assured, so the time had come for the team to move on.

Paul's teaching and writing reflected his concern for every congregation in the places and areas where he had preached Christ and the Spirit had given birth to believers. He had such a great love for each; like a father of a family he could praise and rebuke, but always in love, striving for the best in each one.

He had been troubled by those in Corinth, one of the richest cities in the world, where there was pride and prejudice, divisions between rich and poor, sectarians, and the ever-present relics of sacred sexual practice in the community. During our time in Ephesus he had left us to the work and spent a short spell in Corinth, so concerned was he for their situation. Scribing for him when he wrote to that church, I was so impressed by his description of pure love that it seemed like a vision of Christ Jesus Himself.

"I must spend a lot more time in Achaia and visit the churches in Macedonia on the way" he said one day and my heart was lifted at the thought of visiting my own native land and perhaps seeing my family and sharing with them what I'd learnt of the Way of Christ, for evidently a whole group of seven of us were to go with him. He had already sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead of us.

We set out using the land route and visiting the churches of Smyrna, Pergamon and Troas and then by sea and land by way of Thessalonica and Beroea we reached Corinth, where we spent three fruitful winter months with that congregation.

"Aristarchus" Paul said to me when we got there, "you and I have a task on our hands. I really must get to Rome, the place where all roads meet and from where the Gospel can reach the world. But first I need to write a really comprehensive letter to the church there. Not like the one we sent to Galatian churches, though in Rome as elsewhere there are still tensions between gentiles and Jews. We are one in Christ as I have always held. Uprightness doesn't come from human effort, it is a gift of God alone. Jesus the Christ is the uprightness of God.

"I want to show the whole development of God's plan: law that is good and holy can only be obeyed by spiritual power, the gift of grace. New humanity comes through Jesus alone – his life, death and resurrection are both the proof and the power to salvation and nothing at all can separate us from the love of the Father." We did a lot of the writing of that letter at that time.

The collection for the poor of the Jerusalem area was now complete and Paul was anxious to get the money there as quickly as possible. A ship was found bound for Syria and passages booked when one of the brothers made a chilling discovery. A group of Jewish hotheads had formed a murderous plot to way-lay Paul as he boarded the ship.

So with great secrecy we all left the night before that ship sailed and set out on the land route northwards through Thessalonica to Philippi again and sought for sea passage from there. As it turned out we couldn't all go on together. Six of us found passage right away and waited five days at Troas for the ship carrying Paul, Timothy and also Dr Luke, who was to be a valuable asset to the company. He was a physician and also had done a great deal of research into the family circumstances of Jesus himself, so useful to those of us who came from distant lands and knew very little about the early life of the Lord Jesus.

I'll not forget that week we all spent at Troas. The day before we were due to sail there was a very crowded meeting of all the congregation in the upper room of a big house. A very big attendance was there on a hot night with lots of lamps and candles burning, the air was thick and many of us drowsy as Paul preached long and earnestly. There was a lad called Eutychus sitting actually on a high windowsill. I suppose he was trying to get some fresh air, though it was almost as close out as in, anyway he must have fallen asleep in the sermon and the next we knew was an awful thump outside and the boy lying lifeless in the street!

It was Paul himself who was first on the scene, and he somehow restarted the heartbeats and brought life back into what we all thought was a dead boy. The most wonderful healing work I ever saw the apostle do. You can imagine how impressed and grateful the believers of Troas were.

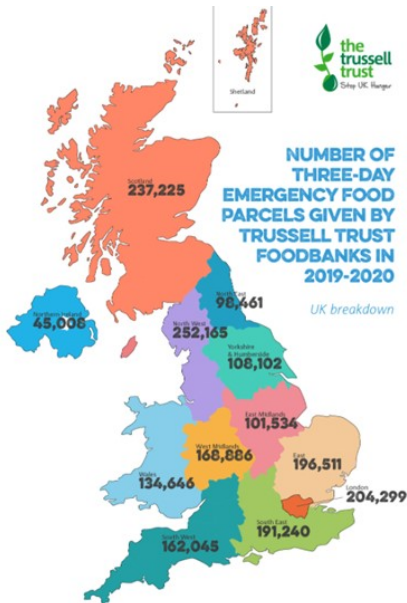
Paul went by land to Assos while the rest of us took a ship bound for Patara via Assos (where Paul rejoined us) then

Trogyllium, and Militis. It was from Militis that Paul sent for the leaders of the church at Ephesus. He did not want to be delayed by a stay in that place as he wanted to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost.

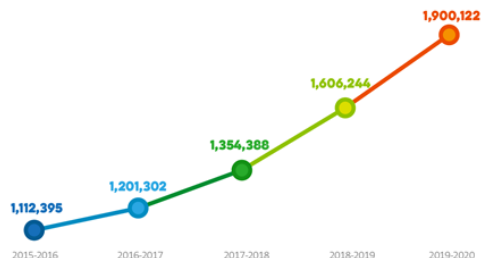
Acts chapter 20, Romans.

John M Gill

FOOD BANK NEWS



Quote from Trussell Trust website: -
“The best way to support your local **food bank** is actually through donating **money**. Rather than paying retail prices, our network of **food banks** works with major manufacturers, retailers, and farmers to secure healthy **food**.”



2015-6 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20
Total number of food parcels given out per year.

Ponteland Methodist Church giving:-

The Harvest Appeal (Oct. 2020) donated £1,108

By the end of Nov. 2020 a further £480 was donated.

since then £568.75 has been donated through Peter Michell (not including Direct Debit giving)

The West Road Food Bank is part of the Trussell Trust. Its latest report can be found through the following link:-

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/coronavirus-impact-report-final.pdf>

Please do not “be weary in well doing”

Peter Michell’s contact details are:-

01661 871885, 18 Pinegarth, Ponteland NE20 9LF

or peter_michell@hotmail.com.

Andrew Pay



‘REDEEMING LOVE’ REVIEW

As part of my Queen’s Award Brigader Brooch I was given the task to read Francine Rivers’ novel ‘Redeeming Love’. It is a Christian novel based on the Biblical chapter of Hosea, in which God tells his prophet, Hosea, to marry the prostitute known as Sarah in the novel. Sarah (also known as Angel) becomes a prostitute at the age of eight and even before this, Sarah has known only

rejection from men through being emotionally abused by her father. Sarah learns what happens to women who love men as she sees her mother grieve over feeling only rejection from the man she loves. Sarah has a really hard life, just when you think you know all the awful things that have happened to her, Rivers hits you with more saddening facts.

Michael Hosea tells Angel he wants to marry her by the commands of God, he claims to love her as his wife and refuses to have sex with her. He is different from any other man Angel has ever known thus leading her to become confused and unwilling to trust him. Along the way there's a huge prejudice against Angel due to her past, and sex being the only way Angel knows how to repay a man. Michael and Angel’s relationship is incredibly challenging, yet Michael has faith that God will give her a kind life eventually. Angel realizes she does love Michael, but forces herself to leave due to the perception of love shown to her by her father's treatment. In the end through God’s faithfulness and protection Michael proves to Angel she is worth loving and blesses the couple with complete devotion for one another and children, which they didn’t believe to be possible.

What I loved about this book was how Rivers looked so realistically at the life of a prostitute and is not safe with her writing and is true to God. The explicit imagery presented illustrates that we should bare all to God and give him all the trust that we have. This gave me a different perspective to the bible, one which did not sugar-coat female sexuality.

This novel helped me understand the bible better due to its being based in the 19th century, this allowed me to gauge a more realistic picture of the events that unfolded throughout. It allowed me to see for myself that God truly never gives up. He set

out a plan for Angel's life and turned her cruel life into a beautiful one. With the help of God's love and His plan Angel was able to create something beautiful out of her horrible life and thus, Angel was able to take all of the pain from her past and use it to help others. The main message in the novel is presented to us through the two characters present. They teach the reader about the importance of trusting God's plan, how it never fails, and how it can overcome any circumstance.

Hannah Kirtley

UPDATE FROM 1ST PONTELAND GIRLS' BRIGADE LEADERS!



The 1st Ponteland BG leaders wanted to just say 'Hello' and let you know what we are up to. There has been a hive of activity to prepare Winter sessions for the girls. The GB has had to move entirely online. We communicate with the girls via Facebook and we have been very creative in ways of how we can reach them. Before we begin with our sessions, we always deliver activity packs to the girls that contain what they need to take part. There has been a lot of filming going on. We have been filming prayers, craft activities and storytelling. You can see from some of the photos that we are telling stories through animals in the Bible. I'll leave it up to you to guess what animals have been in action so far.

Our aim is to have the girls understand how faith, hope, love and trust have been portrayed in the Bible and what that means to the girls in their everyday life. The great thing about Facebook is that the girls have been able to feed back to us what they think and post pictures of their craft activities.

We would like you to pray for us. Pray for the work we do and the creativity we need to keep staying in contact with the girls. They are so important to us and we want to show that the Church still cares for them. Also, many parents are struggling to juggle many commitments they have and would appreciate your prayers. We keep letting them know that we care and are praying for them. It helps them a lot.

Helle Sewell

THE DOVE'S STORY

I'm feeling a bit scared and bewildered, here locked in this cage with lots of other doves just like me. This place is so busy, thronged with people of all shapes and sizes! The noise is horrendous and don't get me started on the smell! A mixture of perfume, cooking and dirt.

The man who captured me and put me in this cage has just taken money from a poor-looking man and pulled out one of the doves who is sharing the cage with me. I have no idea why he has bought her or where he is taking her, but she is flapping wildly. Perhaps it's my turn soon – part of me thinks 'anything to get out of this horrible, hot, cramped cage!'

Oh to stretch my poor sore wings again – now that would be wonderful!

There is a very old man and a very, very old woman standing nearby. I recognise them – the woman is always here in this building and the man comes along now and again, although today is the first time I've seen him in a while. I would see them both as I flew high above them before I was captured. It's comforting to see a face I recognise.

They are talking together. 'Ah Anna how wonderful to see you' says the old man, 'God has promised me that I will not die before I see Him – I'm old and frail now and still no sign of Him. However I trust in the Lord my God to keep His promise – He will come and I will see Him in the Temple before I die, I'm sure of it!'

'Of course He will, Simeon!' agreed the old woman – 'God keeps His promises to those who trust in Him with all their heart!'

The man is smiling, he looks so tired but is looking longingly out towards the main gates of what I now know is the Temple of Jerusalem. His smile fades and his face becomes more serious, then wonderous – what has he seen, what is he looking at? I crane my neck to see around the dove next to me. I still can't see what he's looking at! Edging my way slowly to the front of the cage, I look out through the wider gaps of where the cage flap gets opened. I follow the man's gaze...

Walking unsurely through the gate is a young family; a man, a young woman and a baby. They are looking around them as if

wondering where to go next. Spotting the stalls with the animals on they walk hesitantly forward towards the lambs.

The man looks forlorn: 'We can't afford a lamb, Mary,' says the man, 'We need to pay for somewhere to stay and something to eat – a lamb will take all the money we have.'

The young woman smiles, the most gentle and loving smile I have ever seen. Laying her hand softly on her husband's hand, she tells him, 'It doesn't matter Joseph, I'm sure God doesn't mind if we offer him a lamb or a couple of doves and pigeons – he will love and bless us just the same.'

They walk on to where my cage is. The very old man stops them, he is crying with joy. Taking the baby in his arms, he begins to give thanks to the Lord God, saying that he can now die in peace as he has seen the Messiah!

Woah - What! Who? How? This tiny baby is the Messiah? God's perfect gift to the world, the hope of millions, the one who will be the light of the world!

The old woman is giving thanks to God too as she has also recognised the baby for who He truly is. The parents look amazed – the man is telling them that their child is chosen by God to do wondrous things – that He will bring hope to all people, but he also tells the child's mother that her heart will be broken and full of sorrow. She turns her head slightly away, with sadness in her eyes – I think she is trying not to cry. It's as if she knows too how special her boy is.

I look around at the other people nearby, none of them have noticed what is going on. They are all too busy wrapped up in their own lives, but I've seen it and I know deep down in my heart that this is a very special moment – this man has recognised a baby, a baby whom God has told him will grow up to be the Messiah – He is the Son of God – the Son of God – and nobody outside this small group of people has noticed what has just occurred - except me!

I'm in a spin now – my mind is racing, but at the same time, calm. My fear has gone. Here is the child who will grow up to be the Saviour of the World, and I've seen him with my own little beady black eyes!

I'm now distracted and I don't notice the cage door being opened. From my vantage point, I'm right there at the front. The

salesman grabs me and pulls me and another dove out, coins are exchanged. I look up at the woman who is gently holding me; look up into the most serene eyes I have ever seen and I feel peace. I'm feeling peace about being chosen as this family's offering to God for the birth of their son – the Messiah, the one who will bring hope to all people – the one who will grow up to be the light of the world. Like Simeon, I too have seen God's Glory in a tiny child...

Maureen Hodson

MAKE A DOVE

You will need:

- A paper plate
- A small piece of yellow paper
- A wobbly eye
- Scissors
- Glue
- Pencil



Draw the dove outline on your paper plate then cut both pieces out.

Glue the wing on the back of the body.

Stick the eye on.

Cut a small triangle out of yellow paper and glue on as a beak.

If you like, you could use a hole punch to put a hanging hole in the head of the dove and thread string or wool through. Hang the dove in your window or from your bedroom ceiling.



Maureen Hodson is the lady in a white hat. She is being a dove and telling a story of Jesus being presented in a Temple.



Sue Kirtley is a sheep, and she is telling a story of David who was protecting his sheep by fighting bears and lions to show that he was ready to fight Goliath.



Alison Maynard is a lion, and she is telling a story of Daniel being thrown in the lion's den.



Ela Akay is holding up a camel. She told the story of three wise men visiting the Jesus from a camel's point of view.



PHONE CHURCH SERVICES
No Computer? Can't get to church? Why not try
our District Phone-in Worship this Lent and
Easter?

To take part there are just three easy steps...

1. Dial 0333 0164757 on any mobile or landline phone.
2. When asked for your room number, dial 60952306 and press the key marked #.
3. When asked for your pin number just dial 8114 and # and you're in! (The call should be charged at your normal rate.)

The dates for our Lent and Easter Worship are:

Lent Course

Wed 24th Feb

Wed 3rd March

Wed 10th March

Wed 17th March

Wed 24th March (all of the above will be at 2pm)

Good Friday Service Friday 2nd April

Easter Sunday Celebration Sunday 4th April (times to be confirmed)

Rev Jona Sewell

MY FOREVER FRIEND

Let's praise Him for all good things

And all the love and joy

He brings

We may not see them every day

Perhaps too busy at work or play

But He is there with our cares in His mind

Showing compassion.....so loving and kind

Remember when things don't go as we'd like

He never leaves us, day or night.

Noreen Green

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT
22 FEBRUARY – 7 MARCH



FAIRTRADE

For two weeks each year at the end of February and the start of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food, our drink and the cotton in our clothes, people who are often exploited and underpaid.

In 2021, Fairtrade Fortnight will be very different: physically campaigning and meeting people is unlikely to be possible; there are no Big Brews planned in Ponteland this spring.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how globally connected we are. This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message, a message that can still be championed, despite lockdown restrictions, through our shopping choices and by campaigning online.

In Fairtrade Fortnight 2021, the Fairtrade Foundation is asking us to think about the challenges that climate change brings to the farming communities with whom it works. It is organising an online **“Choose the World You Want”** festival featuring:

- Farmers and workers from around the world explaining why they need to earn more to survive a climate crisis that is already hurting their communities;
- Discussions between farmers, other experts and famous faces about what we need to do to choose a better future;
- Music, art and entertainment, from all corners of the passionate and talented global Fairtrade community;
- Fun interactive workshops on sustainable living here in the UK.

To sign up to the festival and receive further information, go to:

[https://action.fairtrade.org.uk/page/73941/subscribe/1?
ea.tracking.id=fthp2021](https://action.fairtrade.org.uk/page/73941/subscribe/1?ea.tracking.id=fthp2021)

Alternatively, why not mark Fairtrade Fortnight by keeping a tally of every fairtrade tea or coffee you drink and make a donation to Traidcraft Exchange for each cuppa enjoyed. You could collect money in a jar and I'll collect it from you after Fairtrade Fortnight, you could donate directly at:

https://action.traidcraft.org.uk/donate?utm_campaign=Big%20Brew&utm_source=Big%20Brew# , or donations can be made through our Church Treasurer, Peter Michell. Donations made between 8th March and 7th June 2021 will be doubled due to the UK Government's UK Aid Match scheme.

And.....if you've managed to munch your way through all your Christmas chocolates, now's the time to order your Fairtrade, Real Easter Eggs by going to www.meaningfulchocolate.co.uk .

Bev

APPEAL FOR UNWANTED LAPTOPS, TABLETS OR IPADS

During the lockdowns it has become apparent that most of the asylum seeker and refugee children, who in better times come weekly to the Hub drop-in at West Road Baptist Church, are now really struggling with home schooling. Nearly every family the volunteers approached does not have sufficient IT equipment at home.

We understand that in some schools in deprived areas in the city most of the children do not have access to home IT equipment. In some families several siblings are sharing a laptop. Some of our mothers have been using their mobiles in an effort to help their children to study - an expensive option!

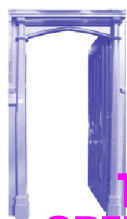
Our children are highly motivated, and their parents are supportive. We have several who, against the odds, have excelled academically and are now working in a variety of skilled jobs and professions. We want to help to prevent the educational gap which is developing now for our school-age children from widening further.

Our Hub Rights Advisor, Bridget Stratford, is involved with N.E.S.T. a charity based at the University which supports asylum seekers and refugees. N.E.S.T. has direct links with the relevant local schools via Bridget. The schools then allocate donated equipment to families.

Our appeal is that you contact us if you wish to donate equipment. Let us know if any personal data needs clearing on your machine. We will then pass on your donations to Bridget, who will ensure that it is suitably prepared, before giving it to the schools.

We both thank you in advance for your generosity.

Chris and David Cogan
Telephone: 0191 2712637



THE OPEN DOOR

I hope you are all keeping well during this latest lockdown.

Here is an easy to make, creamy soup to keep you heathy and hearty this winter.

Judith

Courgette and leek soup

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 leeks, chopped
- 4 courgettes diced
- 2 sticks of celery, chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- 1 medium potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 tbsp flour
- 1lt vegetable or chicken stock
- Salt and pepper for seasoning



Heat the oil in a pan and add the courgette, leek, celery, garlic and potato.

Cook for 10 mins until shiny and a little caramelised.

Mix in the flour, salt and pepper.

Add the stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 mins.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 15 mins.

Blend and adjust the seasoning to taste.

Reheat and serve with a dollop of crème fraiche or drizzle of cream.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 5TH MARCH 2021

BUILD ON A STRONG FOUNDATION



The World Day of Prayer has been prepared by the Christian women of Vanuatu, an archipelago of 80 islands located in the South Pacific Ocean whose languages, values and spirituality originate mostly from Melanesian and Polynesian cultures.

They understand about building on a strong foundation as the islands are in a tropical cyclone zone. In 2020 Cyclone Harold destroyed everything in its path and they are still recovering from the devastation. The people of Vanuatu need our prayers so try and join in the Day of Prayer with the rest of the world on 5th March.

Ponteland Methodist Church are hosting this year's World Day of Prayer. Although there will be no live service in our church on 5th March, you will be able to access the service documents very shortly via a link on the Methodist Church website.

www.ponteland-methodist-church.org.uk

Alternatively, if you prefer, we can deliver a service booklet to you. Donations should be sent to Ponteland Methodist Church (WDP), either by cheque made payable to Ponteland Methodist Church or electronically through the information on the website.

Angela Lisle 822532
Christine Pay

If you wish to make a donation to the World Day of Prayer, here are the bank details for on-line payments -

Account Name: Ponteland Methodist Church

Sort Code: 40-52-40 Account Code: 00024788

A reference like 'WDP' would help the treasurer recognise these donations.

If you are sending a cheque, please make it payable to "Ponteland Methodist Church", mark the back "WDP" and send it to Peter Michell, 18, Pinegarth, Ponteland NE20 9LF.

CAROLS ON YOUR DOORSTEP



Prior to Christmas I noticed an article in Cornerstone and on facebook advertising Carols on the doorstep. This was being promoted by Newcastle Methodist District. After our NHS clapping in lockdown I thought it would be lovely if I could promote the Carols initiative for the residents on my street.

At a challenging time I wanted to try and bring some joy to our community at Christmas time.

There was an invite published on the website which I adapted and dropped to all residents on the street. The carol sheets were available to print and were played on Sunday December 20th at a nominated time by Premier Christian Radio. Residents could listen to the the Carols on the radio at home or were invited to join socially distanced at the end of the cul de sac.

A picnic table with a nativity, candles, Christmas tree and carol sheets was placed at the end of my drive. Alongside some mulled wine. 15 Residents including Children attended and the carols were played via a portable speaker from my mobile phone. One of the teenagers had made his own mince pies to offer everyone.

It was a lovely way to meet each other in a safe way to celebrate Christmas and share our faith.

Sue Kirtley

PREBENDS BRIDGE, DURHAM



Between lectures and lunch students walk this bridge across the Wear, hardly noticing its strength, quiet permanence in a life of constantly shifting boundaries.

How did it happen to us, my love, when that kind of life ended, yet we knew in our hearts this place meant something more, with its special romantic setting?

Still today, the river bank welcomes lovers who retreat into its calming ambience, seek solace from noise, and roam quietly below in peaceful shadows of Cathedral towers.

We have returned many times, but when that moment came to say a final goodbye, I knew you were happy there, your spirit remains within its stones, waiting for my visits.

While time moves us along its hurried path this reliable structure supports me in all my weakest moments of despair, its silence lifts me into harmonious tranquillity.

Rosemary Gray

GARDENING FOR FEBRUARY 2021

Happy New Year. How happy it is going to be we will have to wait and see. I am still under shielding rules. We have had our first vaccinations but according to eminent scientists the protection it offers will probably have gone by the time we get the second one. Our garden is flooded, thanks to storm Christolf, so there will be no early planting this year. The spring cabbages and purple sprouting broccoli still look good. We are enjoying the most tasty Brussels sprouts we have grown in the last 30 years – variety Windsor, as well as leeks and savoy cabbage.



As households disposed of their Christmas trees an article appeared in The Times, entitled “Come pine with me – we’ll feast on the Christmas tree”. The high priestess of fir-related snacking, Julia Georgallis, a design and baker has turned an informal supper club into an edible Christmas tree industry. The club experiments have led to a recipe book, “How to Eat Your Christmas tree”, published in October.

This is a bit late for 2020 trees but nice and early for 2021 – it could influence the tree that you purchase in December. The rainfall I recorded in 2020 amounted to 33.68 inches which is average (33.71 inches) for the 23 years I have kept daily records. The pattern of rainfall was quite different from many years. Less than a third of the rain (10.5 inches) fell in the first half of the year with April and May being particularly warm and dry. The wettest month was October with 6.08 inches. The ground has been saturated ever since and hence the reason for the snow and rain in January 2021 causing the flooding.

Last year was supposed to be time to “say goodbye to peat-based potting habits” for amateur gardeners although nurseries producing plants for sale would be allowed to continue to use peat-based composts. A friend tried peat-free composts and was very disappointed with the results. I haven’t knowingly tried any. Peat has its advantages – clean, not sticky and holds water well. As it gives no nutritional value to the compost it’s just there to provide water absorbent bulk. It requires lime (as peat is acid) and the addition of all the nutrients (nitrogen phosphorus, potash and trace elements) to grow plants. It is convenient and nice to handle. Years ago I used peat, some coarse sand and nutrients that could be bought to mix in. Manufacturers pelleted the nutri-

ents and the resulting composts produced very disappointing results so I stopped using them. Although the Which Gardening Magazine for February has not arrived the information I was able to get from the website lists four best composts for sowing seeds. Clover Multipurpose Compost (Clover products are available at Halls of Heddon Nursery) has 100% peat content and costs 9p per litre (£5.50 for 60 l bag) – score 81%. Thompson & Morgan Incredicompost contains 80% peat. It costs 21p/l (£14.99 for 70 l) and only available from Thompson & Morgan – score 84%. Two peat-free composts scoring only 67% are Melcourt Sylva Grow with added John Innes (sterilized loam soil) costing 18p/l (£8.99 for 50 l) and Westland's New Horizon – no peat (only suitable for seed sowing) costing 14p/l (£6.99 for 50 l). These last two should be available at Garden Centres. Other peat-free you may see are Scotts' Miracle-Gro Peat Free, Bulrush's Peat-Free and Dalefoot's Wool Compost based on wool and bracken. Also some supermarkets and DIY stores have their own composts. I hope to be able to give you more information in March Cornerstone. The vital aspects of the new peat-free composts will be very careful watering and feeding – both will only come with experience. Having so many planters most of my composts used in them are home mixes made up of recycled from previous plantings, last year's tomato compost (always bought new) sometimes with added coarse sand or grit plus a combination Growmore (7:7:7), Fish, Blood and Bone and long life fertilizer. I rarely add lime but use 'swell-gel' in smaller planters and hanging baskets to retain water rather than flushing the nutrients out each day watering.

As we progress, hopefully with less precipitation we should be able to attend to tasks that have been neglected with the gardens being so wet in December and January. There will probably be some pruning of apples, autumn fruiting raspberries, even currants, roses and winter flowering shrubs. The end of February can still be in time to plant bare-rooted soft and top fruit and shrubs. Always soak the bare roots in water overnight before planting. You may be looking for new shrubs and new perennials – they will be appearing in garden centres which are currently still open.

Good gardening in February. Let us hope that gardens will not be the only lifeline in 2021.

Syd Cowan

A CHRISTMAS CARD SCENE FROM MY WINDOW

Today my garden is transformed into “White Perfection” - not a sign of a weed or fallen leaves.

The hand of nature has turned trees, shrubs and pathways into a mystical, magical world inhabited only by birds. Long-tailed tits are crowding on the fat balls and peanuts, and every variety of the tit family is busy at the seed hoppers. A walk down the garden reveals all sorts of footprints and tracks. Some can be identified but not all – one wonders just “who” or “what” has been prowling. When the birds go to roost another cross-section of wildlife moves in. Unbelievably just prior to the snowfall I espied the Aconites, Daffodils and Snowdrops also the Scillas, all beginning to pop through – even although the earth was absolutely frozen solid. All a miracle of nature. So there are signs of spring coming!! Before long we shall be able to be out and about again in our wonderful countryside.



Meanwhile for the cover this month there is a view of St Nicholas Cathedral and the Black Gate. The Cathedral boasts a beautiful ornate lantern tower and although it isn't a huge building, it is a most interesting visit. So when we are all free to move around again, it is somewhere to consider visiting. Also it has an excellent refectory serving delicious refreshments.

Meanwhile keep well and we can all feel optimistic of the covid situation now that the vaccine programme has commenced.

Jean Tweedie

NEWS OF SHADE AND NORTHERN KENYA



Dear friends,

Greetings from Kenya. I hope you are all keeping safe and well in these strange COVID times. Ironically as British schools have closed, schools in Kenya went back after 10 months of very varied learning from home. While some schools have been able to offer online classes, others have not been able to give students any assistance in learning from home. While some students have access to internet and electricity (albeit with frequent power cuts and connection issues) others live in places with no internet access or access to a computer. It really is going to be difficult for some students to catch up. It is also a stressful time for students in important exam years (Wesley included). Despite fears that Kenya's health system would be overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases we are very thankful that this has not been the case. Although over 1,700 people have died and over 100,000 infected so far, it could have been much worse at this stage. The pandemic has hindered some of the work that SHADE had hoped to start. In Loonjorin, community health education has had to be more one on one via the community health worker, as gathering people together in groups or seminars is not advisable at the moment. At least the frequent hand-washing message has been heeded and as a result coronavirus is not the only pathogen being prevented from being spread; the incidence of communicable diseases has also drastically reduced. Hopefully this is a trend that will continue even after the pandemic threat reduces. Starting construction of the Steve Gray Meeting House is also delayed due to communities being forced to move out of forest areas by the government and therefore the location of the meeting house can only be decided once Loonjorin community has moved. It is very dry all over Kenya as drought is starting to hit livelihoods. There is also the risk of wildfires and one has just been reported in Samburu County, not far from Tuum. Such fires can decimate grasslands and grazing areas rapidly. The other destructive force still threatening grazing and crops in Samburu is the Desert Locust. Despite previous swarms being successfully controlled, new swarms have started arriving from

Somalia.

Please pray that the multiple threats to people's lives and livelihoods in Samburu County can be overcome and their effects minimised. We pray that the spread of coronavirus in Kenya will not escalate while we wait for vaccines to arrive and that an equitable and effective vaccination programme will follow. Please pray also for students throughout Kenya, many of whom have had little or no educational input for almost a year and for those who face important exams or assessments this year.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

Alison Lesingiran



PHONE LINE PRAYERS AND INSPIRATION

Do you know someone who is isolated and finding it hard to connect in this lockdown? The Methodist Church is offering some phone-in options where you can dial in to hear a prayer, pastoral message or podcast. All numbers are free to call.

- Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514
- Listen to a pastoral message from the President and Vice President: 0808 281 2695
- Listen to our Podcast: 0808 281 2478

Hazel Sargeant

AN AMAZING WEEK-END - JAN 29-31, 2021



The last week-end in January every year is when some of us go on 'retreat' to Bassenfell Manor Christian Centre near Keswick. Anyone is always welcome: people of all ages, those who have been going for 30 years, those who have never been before. It's a time of fun and fellowship, with quiet times, good speakers, lovely walks or just chilling.

This year we have had to do 'Virtual Bassenfell'. Amazingly about 60 people attended from across the whole Circuit on zoom, including one from America and one from Mozambique. We began on Friday evening with a game organised by John@Heddon. Steve@Heddon, master of the technology, put us into groups of four and we had much hilarity. Our theme of **'GOD'S COMFORT & SHELTER'** was opened on Saturday night by Rosemary@ Ponteland speaking on 2 Cor 1: 'as Christ comforts us...we comfort others'. We had discussion groups afterwards and stayed chatting in virtual rooms.

Saturday morning prayers were led by Juliet@Westerhope then Matthew@Ponteland set us a challenge involving our five senses and praying on any walk we took that day. We came back together late afternoon to share what we had done on the challenge then Matthew did a fun quiz. Ann@ Ponteland led the Saturday evening session on 'Peaceful dwelling places': using bible passages we shared things about 'Home, homelessness, home in lockdown'. People enjoyed the small group discussions as we went along. Then we watched a film called 'Amazing Love'.

Rosemary@Ponteland led a discussion on this film on Sunday morning before our superb service led by Robin and Pat Brooks @Heddon on 'God's Comfort and Peace'. Finally on Sunday afternoon Colin@Heddon led us in thanksgiving.

Virtual rooms were open the whole week-end for people to drop in and chat. So although we were separated by the miles we really felt connected in fellowship. The Holy Spirit was binding us together and lifting us up to the mountain top....there was op-

portunity to view lots of the lovely Lake District scenery on pictures from past years. Hopefully next year we can meet in the flesh, (look out for invitations in the notices about September) but this was a really good substitute for the present moment. Thank you God!

Ann Cooper

For those who would like to reminis you might like to visit the video that was shown. Here's the link

<https://youtu.be/Dwykyj48jWw>

Please feel free to pass this on to whomsoever you think may like to see this.

I pray it continues to bless and heal.

Steve Philipson

"NO EXCUSE" SUNDAY

For when we return to worship

To make It possible for everyone to attend Church we are having a special "No Excuse" Sunday.

Beds will be placed in the aisles for people who say "Sunday is my only day to have a long lie in".

Eye lotion will be provided for those who watched T.V. too late on Saturday night.

A local building site is lending hard hats for those who say "the roof will cave in If ever I come to church". Electric blankets will be provided for those who say the Church is too cold and small portable fans for those who think it's too hot.

Score cards will be provided for those who wish to list all the hypocrites present.

T.V. dinners will be given away free in the foyer for those who cannot cook and attend worship on the same day.

One aisle will be filled with trees and grass for those who like to see God in the world around them.

Hearing aids will be supplied to those who find the preacher speaks too softly, cotton wool for those who say his voice is too loud.

Found in 1998 Cornerstone by Pat Turner.

VILLAGE NEWS

Community Scheme to improve broadband

The Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme was established to resolve issues relating to poor broadband coverage in some parts of the area. 15 per cent of premises in Darras Hall are said to be without an existing superfast connection. The government and Northumberland CC are in collaboration.

Local Elections

Local council and Police Commissioner elections are due in May this year. Currently Northumberland CC and the government are indicating that they can go ahead. There is a view that it will not be possible due to the pandemic and they should be postponed to September.

Proposed opencast coal mine on land north of Throckley and East of Ponteland Road (B6323)

Newcastle CC voted unanimously to refuse permission for this scheme at their December planning meeting.

“Step into Christmas” event organised by Rotary Ponteland

The Rotary Club organised this event to raise funds for the charity “Daft as a Brush Cancer Patient Care”. This was done by encouraging families to take a walk over the festive period. Details of local walks were suggested and guidance to ensure the Government’s advice on social distancing and maintaining family bubbles were observed. Almost £500 was raised.

Jameson Manor, former Police HQ

This new housing development is providing 253 new homes, including 51 affordable homes for local people through rent or shared ownership. As part of the planning agreement the house builders, Bellway and Ashberry Homes will provide £690,000 towards highways infrastructure, traffic management and public transport. A new pathway and cycleway will be provided.

Jennifer Hardy

FAMILY NEWS

Please remember **Chris Matthew**, a member of our Meanders Walking Group. He has had a successful knee replacement.

Sad news another walker, **Jean Trimble** has died.

Mike Fleet is still awaiting some investigative hospital tests. Please remember both him, and Rosie, in your prayers.

Please pray for **Amy Higgins**, **Alison Fairbairn** and **Anita Anderson**.

We particularly remember all our families who are struggling with juggling work and home schooling, thinking particularly of those who were due to take important exams this Summer. Please pray too for all our friends who are self-isolating, and for those in our local sheltered housing and care homes, at this difficult time.

We also remember our local medical and care staff who are supporting many vulnerable people in the community, and for all those working in hospitals.

Lilian Smith is still in Hexham Hospital but making gradual progress.

Isobel and Peter Hindle are delighted that their seventh grandchild, Beatrix, was born safely and well at Cramlington hospital, Wednesday January 27, 2021. She is the third daughter of Isobel's youngest son Mark and of Kirsty, and so is sister to Arianwen and Neve.

We congratulate **Lesley Braiden** on being awarded an MBE for her services to higher education.

Joan Harrison has a sixth greatgrand child called Marie Amelia who is in San Diego.

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



Friday 5th March 2021

VANUATU 2021

World Day of Prayer

Build on a Strong Foundation



From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the March edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 19th February 2021**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com . The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*