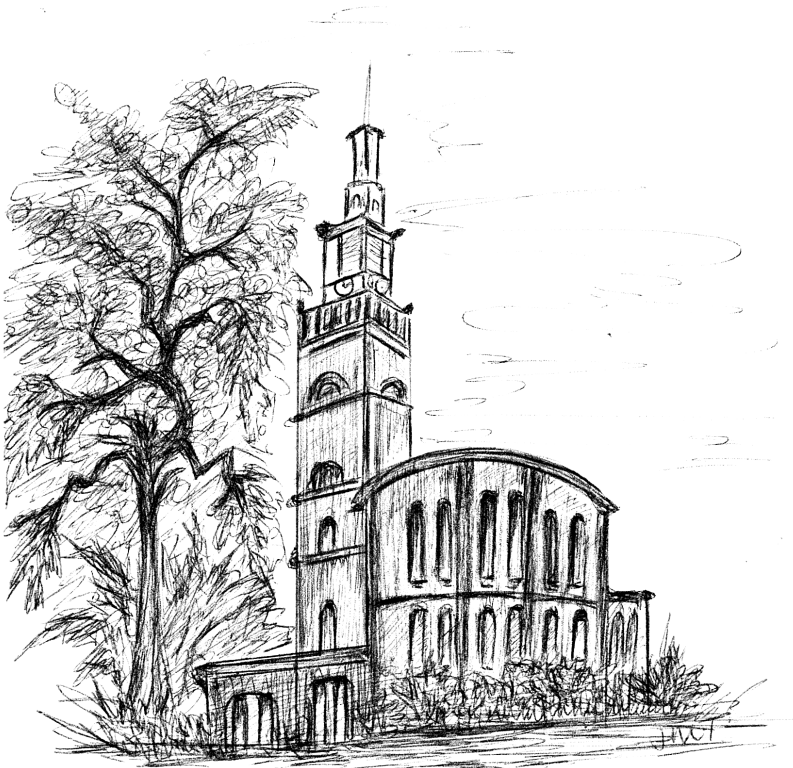


Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone



All Saints Church
Newcastle

July/August 2021

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

As we move into the summer month of July we're still living with some national restrictions in place; it has been a long haul to reach this point. What many are calling 'Freedom Day', the day when all restrictions will finally be lifted, has been postponed by another four weeks to 19 July.

For Christians a different sort of 'Freedom Day' happened around 2000 years ago with the resurrection. We believe that through faith in Jesus we can experience a different kind of freedom; an inner freedom from fear, regret, low self-esteem and from all that stifles and inhibits us. We often live 'restricted' by our fears and concerns, and by our relationship to them; these are the things that keep us awake at night! Through trusting God we believe that it doesn't have to be this way. We believe that we can experience an inner freedom which liberates us to truly live and experience life in all its fullness. It's not that our problems or worries suddenly disappear, but that our relationship with them changes as we let God's love transform us and free us. I hope and pray that you may know and experience this kind of fullness of life regardless of whether physical restrictions are in place or not.

Our aim is to reopen the church for gathered worship from July 25. However, whenever the national restrictions are finally lifted and 'Freedom Day' arrives, we know that we will look forward to gathering with old friends and to doing the things we used to do. In all of this I hope and pray you will be safe, well, healthy and free.

God Bless,



SOME UPDATES FROM OUR RECENT CIRCUIT MEETING

Online Worship

The current provision of full weekly pre-recorded worship being released via YouTube will continue until the end of August. As churches reopen, and considering the ongoing demands of recording and editing, we will be switching to a new provision after this.

From September a monthly 'full service', similar to what is produced now, will be released online on the third Sunday of each month. For the other weeks we will be trialling releasing a shorter service consisting of a bible reading, reflection or address, and a prayer. These shorter videos will occasionally be used for us to explore themes together over a number of weeks. They will also be a resource which churches, house-groups or individuals may wish to use for worship, study, or discussion, as appropriate. We will trial this new system for six months before reviewing it.

Gathered Worship and Preaching Plan

As churches move towards reopening it has become apparent that there *may* be times when it will be difficult to fill the preaching plan and allocate a preacher for every church for every Sunday. Sabbaticals, health, preachers' workloads and holidays are all factors in decreasing availability and our likely inability to always be able to provide a preacher. Please be assured that we are doing our best, but please also be gracious and understanding when every preference and need cannot be met. If a preacher is not available then we hope that churches may choose to watch one of the shorter services containing a reading, address and prayer, as mentioned above; churches could also include their own choice of hymns and songs to accompany this.

We will also do our best to support churches in this situation by sharing information about what other worship resources are on offer from around the other Circuits in the Newcastle Methodist District, and from the wider Methodist Church.

Circuit Discussion Group

The Circuit Discussion Group will continue to meet via Zoom until the summer holidays; the final session will be on 14 July. It will then be held monthly from September on the Wednesday after the 'full service', and will continue to be held via Zoom. For times of themed preaching, then we may choose to hold the discussion group weekly. We will keep you informed of any changes and review after six months.

Church Mission Plans

After returning to gathered worship churches are encouraged to spend some time reorientating and getting used to being back

to how things will be; but we don't want to risk becoming comfortable or unfocused. Each church will therefore be asked to look at their mission plan, rewrite in the light of covid as appropriate, and think about how the church can best serve and witness to the community in our post-lockdown future. What new opportunities for mission, outreach and service are there? Our previous work with Schnase's Five Fruitful Practices should help give us good grounding for this. There will then be a special Circuit Service, at around Easter next year, when all church plans will be brought together, prayed for and offered to God in worship.

Rev Juliet Wriglesworth

Juliet's current appointment to the Circuit comes to an end next summer (2022) and she has decided that now is the time to move on, so she will be entering the 'stationing process' and moving to a new appointment next year. Please pray for Juliet (and Rebecca) throughout this process, and for Juliet as she begins her final year of ministry with us.

This also means that the Circuit will be looking for a new minister to replace Juliet from next September.

Rev Jona Sewell

My current appointment to the Circuit also comes to an end next summer (2022). After much prayer and consideration we (my family and I) have decided to seek to stay, and I have requested a three-year extension to my current appointment. If agreed then this would see me remain in this Circuit until summer 2025. There is a set process, laid out in detail by the Methodist Church, that must be followed to facilitate the process. This will be led by the Circuit Stewards, with the support of the Circuit Invitation Committee. Please pray for them as they work through this and seek to prayerfully discern the best way forward for the Circuit. Please also pray for my family and myself throughout what could potentially be an unsettling time. I am very grateful for the diligence and hard work that has already been undertaken by the stewards and Invitation Committee in these two areas.

Rev Jona Sewell

OPENING

The gradual reopening of churches around the Circuit is continuing. Blucher and Westerhope (mornings only) are currently meeting for worship with appropriate covid secure and social distancing measures in place. Ponteland and Stamfordham are planning to reopen on July 25th. Heddon are continuing with Sunday services held via Zoom, this will continue until all restrictions are lifted. Denton Burn, Milbourne and Scots Gap are planning to reopen on September 5th. Before the recent postponement of easing restrictions Lemington had agreed to reopen on July 18th, this is now being reviewed.

I am proud of the way our Circuit has supported worship throughout this pandemic as we quickly adapted, have learned new skills, and balanced new demands. We recognise the desire to return to face to face worship as fellowship and being together are very important aspects of our gathered worship. Each church council is making decisions on what it feels is the best choice at any given time, please pray for them and each church as we continue to reopen.

Jona

The Men's Forum have held their AGM and discussed the programme for 2021/22. The first meeting will be a Pie and Pie Supper on 23 September with Geoff Orrock as our guest speaker. Other dates for the diary are 28 Oct, 25 Nov, and then in 2022 - 13 Jan, 10 Feb, 24 Mar, 14 Apr, 19 May and 9 Jun.

Andy Anderson

Focus are planning to start meeting on 9th September at 2pm.

Women's Fellowship are hoping to start on 21st September at 2.30pm.

Boys' Brigade

We are scheduled to restart BB on Tuesday 14th September. Our last night for this session is Tuesday 6th July. It will also be our awards presentation night.

Les Dodd

CORNERSTONE IN BENWELL

The new community café project at Cornerstone, previously stalled due to Covid restrictions, finally became operational at the beginning of June, which marked the end of the hot meal deliveries which the kitchen had been used for up until this point. Currently open on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 8.30am and 2pm, the café offers a good range of affordable meal options, and includes a separate children's menu. This seems to be proving quite popular. A partnership with FairShare helps to provide some of the provisions used in the café. The main 'hall' area was decorated in May and now looks very smart.

The shop continues to stock clothing and other items, which are available to anyone who needs it for a nominal price. It seems to be gaining in popularity, and typically takes £50-60 weekly.

The shop is currently open one day a week (Wednesday).

Amy Proud continues to do a great job in managing Cornerstone, and raising awareness of it in the local area. It was the subject of a recent article in the Chronicle (6th June).

A new trustee member, Claire Lewis from St Margaret's Church Scotswood, has come onto the board of trustees, which we're very grateful for, but more Methodist representation on the board would still be appreciated too.

Future projects under consideration:

- Computer Sessions - collaboration with West End Refugee Service and the national lottery
- Collaboration with Life Vineyard - Grassroots Project - Summer 21
- Benwell Pantry - Collaboration with NCC - Autumn 21
- Out of School Club - Collaboration with St John's - September 21.

Tim Woolley

The amazing Benwell volunteers deliver affordable meals to those in need. These hardworking volunteers are ensuring food is on the table for the vulnerable in their community.

Across the North East, our communities rely on the kindness of volunteers offering their time to help those who need it most.

We visited Cornerstone Community Centre in [Benwell](#), Newcastle, to mark this year's Volunteers' Week, to find out the difference that volunteers have made to them.

Cornerstone is a hub of vital resources for the area, housing a community café that serves affordable hearty food for visitors, and a shop full of pre-loved donations where anyone in need can buy items from just 50p.

The centre also has a pantry full of dry and tinned food, for those who are struggling to buy groceries. All of these essential services are run by volunteers.

Speaking to the Chronicle, Amy Proud, the centre's coordinator, said: "Volunteers are absolutely vital to helping us here.



"They're worth their weight in gold - we absolutely could not manage without them."

The centre has just reopened its café after Covid restrictions were lifted.

"It provided a lifeline for the local community during lockdown, when the team rallied around to deliver food to the most vulnerable and isolated in the area.

"I enjoy giving back to the community - that's what I enjoy about it the most," community café volunteer Lesley Render said.

"And knowing that for the people - especially during the pandemic who couldn't get out - we were still being part of a family, to reach out to them by delivering food."

REACHING THE UNREACHED DURING COVID

Over a number of years many of you have generously supported RTU and must be wondering how it has survived during this pandemic, now of 15 months' duration.

India has been particularly badly affected because of its huge population of 1.4 billion and overcrowded living conditions. Tamil Nadu, the State in which RTU is placed, has a population of almost 68 million and has been one of the worst-affected areas.

Government legislation meant that the children in RTU had to return to any relative who would take them. For those who did have someone to go to (and a number had no one), it meant returning to very poor, marginalised, remote conditions.

Lockdown prohibited the poorest from getting any kind of work, thus there has been immense suffering and misery.

Without the intervention of RTU, these families would have had little food or support available. In one month alone (as an example) it distributed dry rations to 803 families, giving health support from its mobile medical unit and encouraging vaccination to a people generally reluctant to have it.

RTU's outreach work has been amazing with its continued commitment to reach the unreachable. Nor can it have been easy. Many of the staff and children who remained on site (because they had nowhere else to go) contracted the virus. They remained quarantined and separated from the rest of their community but thankfully none was seriously ill or needed hospitalisation.

Education has also been a problem. With no access to a computer, students have been given a learning kit to enable them to self-teach and continue their schooling. They are so eager to learn that self-motivation enabled them to keep up to date with their schoolwork and to pass their end of year exams. RTU has continued to make provision on site too. Christian services have been regularly held, a treadmill machine has been installed in the physiotherapy department and in April, the grade 12 pupils all passed their final exams.

In conclusion, RTU has been immensely proud of many of its expupils who, having trained in nursing, have committed themselves during these past months to specifically caring for

those suffering and dying from Covid. One of these young nurses said, 'I am so grateful to God for the care RTU has given me that I want to thank Him by caring for others'.

Recovery from this situation will take a long time but RTU will continue its activity on site and its outreach work in support of a desperately needy people.

Isobel Hindle

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Way back in the 15th century a huge Gothic Church occupied the site which now is occupied by All Saints. The original Gothic Church was big enough to hold a congregation of 2,000!

During the very bad winter of 1771 the building suffered severe damage and parts of the structure began to develop severe cracks and as repairs would have been extremely costly, the church was closed and the last service held there on 9th July 1786.

The current Church was consecrated in 1789 but the tower was added around 1796 at a cost of £27,000. These monies were raised by public subscription and various levies on tenants and landlords. All a good indication of the prosperity of the quayside at that time. It stands as a beautiful landmark, an important feature in the backdrop to the regeneration of Newcastle Quayside.

The interior of the church is magnificent. The woodwork is solid mahogany with box pews and a curved gallery.

Before the Tyne Bridge was built in the 1920s the church was generally regarded as the most dominant feature of the Newcastle Quayside.

Unfortunately the fortunes of the church faded: by the 1800s many repairs were required and despite a series of appeals the church fell into disrepair. In 1961 sadly it was deconsecrated. In 1984 the building was converted into offices and an auditorium for a charity and whilst it is so sad that it is now no longer fulfilling its purpose as a place of worship it is at least serving a purpose and is fittingly restored to its former glory.

Jean Tweedie

HELLO FROM ALISON

This is a sad letter that I write, and with a heavy heart, that I have to say goodbye to you all here at Ponteland Methodist Church.

I have been back at work since the middle of May as much as has been possible. In that time I have been attending Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Thursday Toddlers and doing assemblies at Richard Coates COE Primary School.

I have already said goodbye to Richard Coates having done my last assembly there, it was emotional and I will certainly miss working with the staff and children, taking assemblies and lunchtime clubs, along with supporting them in some of the projects that they have done over these last three years. On the



same day I said goodbye to the Girls' Brigade as we had to finish due to work commitments of the leadership. We ended on a party night and the girls loved playing the games and really really enjoyed the arrival of the ice cream van. (No one was more excited than me I love ice cream). It was a very emotional evening as all the girls have been amazing over these last

three years, watching them grow, watching them develop and watching them grow in their own faith has been an amazing privilege to have been part of. I want to thank all of the leaders including both past and present for all your support and love during my time with them. I have always felt a real part of it since the first time I went and I am so going to miss all the girls and especially the Fellowship of the leaders.

I am currently still attending the Boys' Brigade and the Thursday Toddlers through into July where I expect it will be just as an emotional goodbye to them as well. I want to say thank you to all at the Boys' Brigade, Captain and leaders for welcoming me into their group and allowing me to have input into the Brigade on a spiritual level. Thursday Toddlers has been a real time of

sticking and glueing and painting and singing and dancing and playing (phew). Getting alongside the children and more importantly their parents and guardians has been an absolute privilege to share in the community, sharing in conversation and support. Thanks to all the team at Toddlers, from the ladies in the kitchen to all those who help.

I am so grateful to all at Ponteland Methodist Church for the love, support and encouragement that you have all given to me over these last three years. Especially for the support when I lost my sight and thought that might be the end. However you as a congregation and as the body of Christ looked for ways to enable me to continue within this post. That has meant the world to me and has given me confidence to know that even though I'm no longer fully-sighted I can still contribute and have a part to play within the church as well as the confidence I have in the big wide world. Thank you to all those who supported the events that I have run while I've been with you and especially those who committed to Christmas and Easter journeys and also the holiday club and the fun days that we have had.

Without you none of these events could have gone ahead and the feedback we've had from the schools attending Christmas and Easter journeys has been amazing.

I have laughed, cried, been frustrated and sometimes even a little bit angry, however throughout all I have known the love and presence of God throughout this time. He is our rock and our salvation and in Him I put my trust. I wish you all every blessing as you continue forward to reopen to get back to what will now be normal and to share the love of Christ in Ponteland and the surrounding area. May you all continue to know His love and peace in your lives as you journey onward.

With lots of love and blessings

Alison Maynard



NEW PRESIDENT

The Revd Sonia Hicks and Barbara Easton were inducted as President and Vice-President at the Methodist Conference on Saturday 26 June 2021.

The Revd Hicks has served as a Circuit Superintendent in three connexions: Britain, the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas and the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI).

Sonia's commitment to oppose all forms of injustice began when she was a member of the Youth Exchange to Zimbabwe. She has since been Convenor of the World Relief and Development Committee for MCI, and has served as a Trustee for both *All We Can* and *Christian Aid Ireland*.

The Revd Hicks has also served on the South East District Synod Planning Group, on the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group and on the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

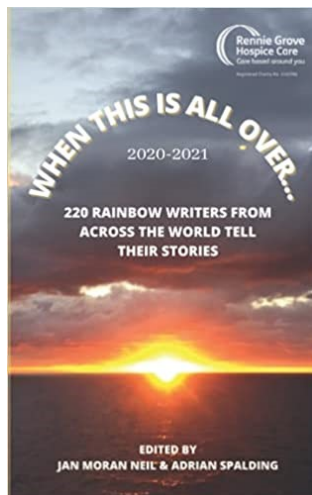
ROSEMARY'S POEM

I have just found out that a poem of mine has been published in an anthology. It is called "When this is all over" and is about the Covid epidemic.

The anthology **WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER** ... for the Rennie Grove Hospice Care is now available to purchase on Amazon.

<https://amzn.to/3xi8iay> All services have been given free of charge and Creative Ink has paid the printing costs as part of its donation to the Rennie Grove Hospice Care. The anthology costs £8.34p with all profits after Amazon takings going directly to the RGHC Head Office account.

Please purchase as many copies as you can afford! And if you enjoy the anthology please leave a review on Amazon and spread the word for sales. Especially if you have Instagram, Facebook and Goodreads accounts.



Rosemary Gray

STAIRCASE SWIMMING

Have you ever tried to swim
uphill against a relentless tide?
When all is crashing on your head
look up beyond and see the light.

I've watched incessant problems
tumble into my life, throwing
their multiple worries my way
and blocking out joyful beams.

It's tough to swim up those stairs
of life, but if you just take one step
at a time, you'll reach the top, when
you least expect, then comes such joy.

So hold on tight to the guide rail,
the friends and family you trust,
live one day at a time when things
are tough and you'll find contentment.

Watch out for those who stumble
more, take care of the weak,
befriend the lost and wavering
to keep us altogether on track.

Whatever you seek, believe in its
truth and hold firm to your faith, as
you climb your ladder of ambition
to your heavenly goal in paradise.

Rosemary Gray

MEANDERINGS

We are planning to do a Meanders Walk on **3rd July** with details of the walk below:



- Ponteland to Kirkley Café and back. The total length of the walk is 9.9 miles.
 - There are three fields with tall grass and one field with a knee high crop. These are fine to walk through but if it is wet, trousers/legs will get very wet. So depending on weather on the day it may be advisable to wear/take waterproof trousers.
 - There are 16 gates and 14 stiles, two of which are broken so need to be climbed over. There were three fields with cows in but may be different on the walking day. There are nine stepping stones to cross the river but they are high above the water and easy stepping distance apart. If we have torrential rain there is an alternative way but it would add another mile to the walk. We walk a short distance on Berwick Hill road, there is a path cut on the grass half the way, the rest is long grass but staying in single file we will be well visible.
 - We can have our lunch at the tables outside the Kirkley Café as long as a few of us buy some refreshment there. The owner said it may be busy Sat lunch time but there are lots of tables/benches so I think we should be ok.
-
- Meet in **Ponteland Methodist Church Car Park at 10am**

The Walk Leader will be Ann Reid.

If you wish to come you must confirm by emailing myself – mscsquared@hotmail.com.

By going on the Walk, you confirm that you have read the Walker Guidelines.

Matthew Cooper

PS The plan is to offer a shorter walk (Midi) on 17th July.

TALE OF TWO CITIZENS

Yes, I'm Julius; served for thirty years and now have this small holding near Rimini. I knocked about a bit in the service: Tenth Legion, "The Bears". Retired as senior Centurion.

I remember clearly the time you ask about, when I arrested Paulus and eventually got him all the way to Rome. You don't forget your first visit to Rome easily. Fantastic place, and what a journey!

Our detachment of the Tenth was sent down to Jerusalem for Passover duty and we'd been on the lookout for any disturbance as the place was crammed with Jews and their hangers-on from all over the place, as usual at one of their major feasts. You could scan the Temple courts pretty well from the Antonia Fortress. We saw something kick off down in the outer court and the tribune and I took a snatch squad and ran down the stairs into the court at the double and managed to grab this little chap just before they finished lynching him.

For some reason, the tribune let the fellow talk to the mob from the steps and he had the nerve to give the crowd a speech in their own lingo which quieted them at first but then the whole shemozzle started up again and we had to drag him up the stairs and into the fort. Fabrizio, our tribune, said: "Examine him under the lash," and left it to me to carry out the order.

We stripped our prisoner of what rig the crowd had left on him and I sent for a ranker who knew a thing or two about flogging for a confession. When I saw that bared back I could see we weren't the first there: the old scars spoke volumes about previous beatings, some professional and others eloquent of the thirty-nine rods of Jewry. "We have an old lag here," I said to the team.

Just then Paulus spoke up, polite-like in good Latin and the cultivated voice of a real gent: "Is it now Roman Law that allows you to flog a Roman citizen?"

"Hold off!" I told our whip-master. "We could be in trouble here!" and I went to Fabrizio and warned him of our danger. Rome is very jealous of the rights of citizens.

Now Fabrizio was the most junior of the six tribunes of the Legion; the others were all patricians from noble families, the usual set of younger sons playing at soldiers, but this tribune of

ours had won his promotion the hard way with distinguished service in the military. His old Dad had been a Freedman who'd made a fortune in trade and Fabrizzi had spent most of his inheritance in buying his citizenship. This meant he prized the right a lot more than his patrician comrades.

Fabrizzi said "let him dress and bring him to me." When Paulus was in front of him the tribune asked "Are you really a citizen? It cost me an arm and leg to buy my citizenship!" "But I was free born!" said Paulus. Apparently he came from a Colony, Tarsus in Cilicia.



Well, that put a different complexion on things. A Roman citizen trumped a Jewish priest any day. We had to see what could be done to settle the situation.

There was still the disturbance to look into and whatever the accusation was that had been made against our prisoner. Fabrizzi arranged a preliminary hearing of the case. Being a citizen saves from the lash, but isn't a free pass to criminality. It's just that the penalties can be dif-

ferent; he can't be crucified, for instance.

The Jewish Court, the Sanhedrin they called it, assembled and we took Paulus down to them under escort and handcuffed. He certainly had the gift of the gab! In measured tones he gave them a potted history of his life. He was one of them! A Pharisee, educated in their college in that very city, though that didn't stop them slapping his face there in the court! These foreigners have no idea of the proprieties. Paulus reacted sharply, calling their Priest a 'white-washed wall', which I thought was pretty appropriate for the way in which that wicked lot were pontificating. There was no doubt Paulus knew what he was about, he could see difference in the court, two opposing parties, and used it effectively. You had to admire his nerve. Pharisees believed in resurrection and in the Spirit, just like our chaps in the Legion that followed the Syrian god Mithras, a favourite god for the mili-

tary. Another lot in the court didn't hold with resurrection, and Paulus was exploiting this difference and the two groups were shouting at each other. I could see that there might be another lynching and we were responsible for him. I sent one of the escort back to Antonia for a rescue squad and we took our prisoner back to the Fort before the row turned violent.

Later that day a message came to the tribune from the Sanhedrin asking for a further opportunity to examine Paulus. Fabrizio said he'd think it over.

Acts ch.22,23

John M Gill



CLOTHES BAR REPORT

The Clothes Bar is continuing to support families in need in Lemington and the surrounding areas. Each week we have 8-15 clients all looking for clothes for one or more children.

The Clothes donations keep pouring in and there is a plentiful supply. Socks and toiletries are in short supply so are bought from the Clothes Bar account.

Unfortunately we are not able to offer toast and beverages yet. During lockdown we have functioned under covid safety guidelines and look forward to lifting restrictions and having the opportunity to have meaningful conversations over a cup of coffee. Understandably, volunteers have been in short supply but as lockdown eases we hope to see the return of those who helped before and would welcome more volunteers to continue this valuable Christian outreach.

The Clothes Bar will take a break over the school holidays but volunteers will take this opportunity to sort all donations and make school uniform available during food bank hours for the two weeks prior to the reopening of schools.

Appreciation is extended to everyone who assists in this continuing work.

Alison Bates (Administrator)



THE OPEN DOOR

An easy to make traybake. This recipe uses peaches but it also works well with nectarines or pears. Tinned fruit can be used as an alternative.

Judith

Peach Melba Squares

3 peaches cut into 8 slices each
110g raspberries
250g margarine
300g sugar
1 tsp almond essence
3 eggs
200g SR flour
50g ground almonds
Handful of flaked almonds



Grease and base line a traybake tin approx 20x30cms.
Heat oven to 180C/160C fan.
Cream the butter and sugar.
Beat in the eggs and almond essence.
Fold in the flour and ground almonds.
Pour the mixture into the tin.
Lay the peach slices evenly on the top.
Scatter the raspberries and almonds over.
Bake for approx. 1hr, covering with foil after 40mins.
Test with a skewer.
Cool in the tin for 20mins and then lift out onto a cooling rack.
When cool cut into squares and dredge with icing sugar.

We are hoping, when allowed, to restart Open Door. If you would like to help either serving on a Monday afternoon or by baking or soup making please contact me.
Judith Orton tel 01661872891 email john.orton1949@gmail.com

GARDENING FOR JULY/AUGUST 2021

There was a welcome 11 mm of rain deposited last night (writing Friday 25 June) after only 2.5 mm previously in June and very little during the last week in May. Along with the lower temperature today many plants will be able to regain turgidity and, in our case, not just waiting for water from the hose on the planters. The summer flowers are looking good other than the begonias grown from corms which have been much slower to leaf this year after a dormant spell in winter.

On the vegetable front we continue to eat Spring Hero spring cabbage, more than adequate lettuce and mange-tout peas in abundance. We have had the first cauliflower. Broad beans are podding after nipping out the growing points, runner beans have reached the tops of the canes and courgettes are ready to pick.



We will not be trying potatoes yet as they have only been planted nine weeks and were very slow to emerge after the very cold weeks of April. I have just planted out dwarf French beans, have Savoy cabbages in pots and spring early-sprouting broccoli just germinated. The wallflowers are ready for potting up and the spring bulbs and seed catalogues are arriving.

As some of you know the whole of our plot and garden is on a slope and the vegetable area is set out in beds mainly measuring 4 feet (1.22m) across. At ground level I find this is the maximum distance to reach across when planting without stepping on the cultivated area. The purpose of having beds (and raised beds) is to avoid walking on the bed and compacting the soil. On our clay-based soils in the Ponteland area I am not an advocate of winter digging unless the vegetable cultivated area is very well drained. When No. 29 was built the first purchaser oversaw the building and the layout of the garden (he was a champion dahlia grower). He arranged for the back garden where he was to grow dahlias to be land-drained into a large deep sump hole filled with aggregate (the largest at the bottom) and the drainage is still functioning although the present owners only have lawns and wide flower borders. We have no inserted drainage and have to rely on natural soaking away after floods. So in the Spring I try to cultivate the beds just before planting and rely on natural drainage during the winter.



There has been a fairly recent strong interest in gardening “raised beds”! This is nothing new as gardeners on steeper slopes than ours terraced their gardens so as to have level surfaces for planting. I am disappointed to see photographs shown by the media and even promoted as “raised beds” just plonked down, sometimes in the middle of a grassed area with little thought given to layout. There are advantages to raised beds - not least that they warm up earlier in the spring. The sort of standard width quoted is 1.5 m (nearly 5 feet) which is too far to reach across other than when the raised bed is at waist height. The first basic principle in setting up is for the raised bed to be level when filled. Secondly drainage ought to be planned. If the growing medium is to be in contact with the garden drainage may be needed. If not, suitable drainage is needed at the base of the construction. If there are going to be more than one raised bed suitable pathways (width of a barrow or a wheelchair or electrically-operated movement – follow Mark Lane on TV). The pathways can be grass, gravel, wood chip etc but other than permanent paving slabs or concrete will attract weed growth. We have grass between beds which is cut with a strimmer. Although raised beds do not need to be permanent (living in rented property or allotments) the construction needs to be more substantial the deeper they are. Sort of “just raised” (Monty Don) can be made from scaffolding boards held together with struts at the corners (even driven into the soil) whilst deeper ones are sometimes shown using sleeper equivalents in hard wood, or brick or concrete block. Before raised beds are planned and constructed it is vital to ascertain what they will be filled with. Our vegetable garden has been worked up from a basic very high proportion clay soil over 43 years. It will remind you that there is clay beneath cultivated area if you dig too deep but I use a Mantis tiller and don’t deep dig. Most “top” soils you can buy in bulk are sourced from materials that are likely to be low in plant nutrients. In raised beds you are looking to have a friable, easily worked loam type growing medium so please don’t set about constructing raised beds before you know what you are going to fill them with. Enjoy your garden and gardening this summer.

Syd Cowan

VILLAGE NEWS

Breast Screening

The mobile unit is now here at Dobbies. For those not getting an automatic invitation, the number is 0191 2820202 to request a screening.

Honour Health, Bell Villas

This dental practice has won “Dental Team of the Year” at the national dental awards 2021.

Rialtos, 1 Main Street

There was a new application made that I told you about in May Cornerstone. Another application has been made. Part relates to the timing of the sale of alcohol. They are also asking to have live music outdoors 11.00-20.30 Monday to Thursday and 11.00 -21.30 Friday to Sunday and Bank Holidays. Comments are due to Northumberland CC Licensing Department, County Hall, Morpeth by 15th July or www.northumberland.gov.uk .

Housing Development on the site of the former Northumbria Police HQ

Streets on the site have been given the names of fictional detectives – Barnaby Way – Rebus Close – Wycliffe Close – Alleyn Gardens – Vera Drive – Dixon Close – Taggart Grove – Lewis Close – Frost Grove – Wexford Place – Dalgleish Road – Morse Crescent – Holmes Row.

Northumberland Local Plan

Work on this has been ongoing since 2013 and is very delayed. Comments are invited on the latest version, to be found on the examination website, which is linked from www.northumberland.gov.uk/localplan. Comments can be submitted using the form provided on the website or sent by post to Planning Strategy, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF. The deadline is 4th August.

Use of GP patient identifiable data

A new scheme which would allow the NHS system to extract patient data from GP surgeries was due to start in July but has

been delayed amid concerns around privacy. The programme - GP Data for Planning and Research – would put the medical histories of all patients into a new database. Information can be accessed by organisations “which will legitimately use the data for healthcare planning and research purposes”. There appears to have been very little publicity about this proposal. I read an item in a local newspaper. It may be a good idea but why have we not been informed? We can “opt out” of the scheme – see by filling in a Type1–opt-out form. I have paper copies of the form we would need to send to our GPs before 1st September.

Jennifer Hardy

LOCKDOWN HUMOUR

To cheer myself up during this lockdown I've ordered myself brand new walking boots plus socks, new walking poles, a new rucksack, a thermal woolly hat and matching top of the range waterproof trousers and jacket, a new tartan thermos flask, plus...



Sorry..... I'm starting to ramble!

Geoff Lisle



SCOOTER FOR SALE

Ron and Bev have a City Free Rider mobile scooter & charger in good condition surplus to their requirements. All the money will go to the Church. Please contact them on 01661 822506.

FAMILY NEWS

We wish **Jenny Lewis** a happy birthday.

A big thank you goes to **Matthew Cooper** for his regular quizzes throughout the pandemic. They certainly kept some church folk on their toes, and were a very welcome diversion from lockdown.



CHARITY CHAMP BRUCE GRANT

A Ponteland charity champion who became a regular sight with his collection tin at Broadway has died aged 94. Bruce Grant began fundraising in 2010 through church and built momentum at his favoured spots in Ponteland, Morpeth, Hexham, Kingston Park and Eldon Square in Newcastle. He raised more than £100,000 for good causes over the following decade, including Newcastle People's Kitchen, West End Food Bank, West End Refugee Service, Benwell Cornerstone Project, Children North East, Percy Hedley Foundation and the Great North Air Ambulance Service. In 2019 Bruce was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his work with Pont Charity Group.

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



Garden Service
Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday 25th July 2021 in Church or in garden

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the September edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 27th August 2021**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*