

Ponteland Methodist Church Cornerstone Happy Easter



April 2022

MINISTER'S LETTER

At the moment it's impossible to avoid the current national, international and global news: there's war in Ukraine with the horror of indiscriminate shelling and countless killed, we're facing a 'cost of living crisis' as energy, fuel, food and clothing prices all rise sharply, we're facing environmental challenges as the Arctic and Antarctic both recently recorded temperatures 40° above average, and in the North-East poverty is rising and the local foodbank is busier than ever. Where will it end!

It would be easy, perhaps even tempting or understandable, to look at all that is going on and lose heart, and to ask some big questions about God and faith in the midst of it all. Over the last few weeks I've heard people ask, "Is this signalling Christ's return?", or "Where's God in it all?", or "How much worse will things get?"

Sometimes I have an answer: No-one knows the day or the hour.

Sometimes I can begin to form a possible answer: there's something of God in the response of the Ukraine's neighbours, in people opening up their homes to refugees, and in the generosity of people across Europe and the wider world. There is something of God in the donations given to foodbanks and clothes bars, and in local people volunteering to help others in need.

And sometimes I have no answer: I haven't a clue how much worse things will get but, it seems, they may get worse before they get better.

What I do know is that I would rather be living today with my faith in God than without. My mind has been regularly returning to the song:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' name.

*On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When darkness seems to hide his face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.

On Good Friday things got as bad as they could get with the execution of the Son of God. In fact, we're told, things were so bad that the whole country went dark as a sign. But Easter reminds us that darkness, suffering and death are not how things have to be; there is resurrection, light, life, transformation and hope. All found in God, all freely offered by God and all things in which we can share if we trust, follow and serve. I may not always have answers to the world's problems or understand where God is in the midst of it all, but I cling to the God of resurrection, I stand on the solid ground of Christ. I do this so that I may know the light and hope that I so desperately need in my life and, by grace, carry it to others who don't yet have His hope and comfort in their lives. Easter is a season of life and hope. Where do you see life and hope in the world and in your own life? When have you known these things in God?

Happy Easter.



EASTER SERVICES

Maundy Thursday, 6pm - Upper Room Communion
Good Friday, 10am - Good Friday reflections
Good Friday, 11am - Raising of the cross
Easter Day, 10am - Easter Day Celebration with Holy Communion
Easter Day, 6:30pm - Easter Worship

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PONTELAND

Ecumenical monthly prayer meetings have resumed rotating in the three Ponteland Churches as follows – Spring Dates shown.
Monday 11th April 12noon here at the Methodist Church
Meetings will last approximately 30 minutes.

John Doherty

JULIUS DISCHARGES HIS TASK

Most of us had a difficult night of it as the heavy seas battered us and we could hear the ship's timbers creaking and groaning and splintering, too. Clearly, we might even sink without reaching the shore line which was being revealed to us as dawn broke. Only Paulus and his friends retained their faith in his predictions.

I could now see the shore and some sort of bay, and the skipper declared that he would slip his anchors and drive for that beach. A foresail was prepared and hoisted and the rudders manned, heading us landwards with all the power of the gale in that canvas. If we beached safely, we had a good chance of survival for all the two hundred and seventy-six of us on board. What a blessing it was that I hadn't let the sailors leave us! We needed them now. That was Paulus or his God coming to our aid, good man.



The waves were coming together ahead of us and the skipper cried out that there were dangerous cross-currents and no sooner had he said that than we were carried into shoal water and grounded with a jerk that threw many off their feet. Our bows were wedged into the ground and we were stuck fast, while the gale brought tremendous waves pounding our stern. The ship was about to break up.

My sergeant came to me shouting above the uproar: "We

mustn't let the prisoners escape and get away free. Shall I do the usual execution drill?" This put me on the spot, for I had been strictly ordered to see that Paulus appeared before the Emperor. So I said "No, you should have no difficulty in rounding up any that survive the surf; the skipper thinks this is an island we're hitting."

I ordered that anyone who could swim must jump overboard and group for counting when they had reached the beach. Those who couldn't swim must find a float or one of the timbers which the seas were rapidly breaking off the stern and use that to support them through the surf. The gods be praised! Not only did we have a full head-count after emerging dripping from the surf, but no-one was injured, either, and not a prisoner ran off.

A number of locals had spotted our vessel the night before and were on shore ready to help us all out of the sea. They told us we had hit Malta and they lit a big fire to dry us out, brought us food and offered to find us somewhere to stay until the shipping season restarted. Clearly we were going to be stranded there for the rest of the winter.

The prisoner Paulus showed his mettle once again, helping to feed the fire that was drying us and encouraging those who were distraught after this wild fortnight in wind, darkness and storm and its catastrophic finale. One incident says it all. Despite his age and innate leadership, he had busied himself collecting bundles of sticks to keep the bonfire going when a snake came out of one of them and fastened on his hand. The locals, sure that the bite was venomous, expected Paulus to die any moment. I heard some of them say, "That man must be a murderer and the gods have their vengeance, even though the storm did not do it for them". But he casually shook the creature off into the fire and carried on! I saw these pagans waiting around for a long time to see Paulus fall down dead! Finally they let out a cheer and hailed the miraculous fellow as a god! Simple folk, these islanders, but hospitable, for they made room in their villages to take care of all the company for three months, until we could all sail on towards Rome in the Spring.

There were civilised people on Malta, of course. I reported my presence to the Prefect of the Island, Publius, and explained my duty in respect of Paulus; he arranged billets for me and my

men and a secure barrack for the prisoners. Paulus himself and his friends and I, too, had the pleasure of a three-day visit to the estates of the Prefect and it was on this occasion that Paulus learned that the father of this official was suffering from dysentery and fever. So Paulus and Dr Luke attended the old man and prayed and laid hands on him and he was healed. When this became known in the island other sick people came to them and were healed too. I had never seen anything like it. Clearly this Jesus is a living power, even though invisible. More food for thought.

The winter passed then with reasonable comfort for us after our appalling voyage and shipwreck. In the harbour all winter was “The Twins”, an Alexandrian vessel, and I arranged for my prisoners and escort to have passage to Puteoli. As soon as the weather permitted we set sail and made Syracuse where we were for three days before following the coast to Rhegium where we had another day awaiting a south wind, which duly came and took us to Puteoli on the west coast of Italy. I was getting used to finding groups of Paulus’ fellow Christians and their amazing hospitality. So we had a splendid week with them before setting off overland to Rome. We were fifty miles short of there when we were met by a welcoming band of Christians and had their company all the way to the Capital. Love flowed freely from all these blessed men and women. I joined them when I’d served my time.

Acts 27, 28

John M Gill

A NEW MOVEMENT

Try to look for nature's breath in the picture,
impressions of mood over moving waters,
emotions whipped up by rolling seas.
Warmth of relationships colour the view.

Wild things' movement will never be tamed
as we go outside for fresh expressions
and see a golden ball of sun in stippled water
reflected across the waves darkening.

Trees sway in that music on the breeze
as autumn leaves fly free across opening
fields and manicured parks play with
new meaning and colours of creation.

Darkness of winter pricked with stark
naked branches, remind us of cold
days, sadness and loss, mirrored
moods of lonely lives, disconnected.

Cherry blossom will spring up to flower
the scene with pale fresh pinks, delicate
strokes signal revival and fresh hope
to lift the sombre mood with dancing.

Boats on the Seine, dappled waters dipped
by long oars, lazy days beneath orbs of sunlight,
streams of golden ribbons warm the souls
of strolling workers, parading their day off.

As time passes burnt orange and brown
colour the scene once more as autumn's
rich palette shouts before winter with
audacious reds to warn of the cold coming.

Rosemary Gray

CIRCUIT THANKSGIVING AND MEMORIAL SERVICE AT WESTERHOPE ON SUNDAY 20TH MARCH 2022

Rev Juliet Wrigglesworth led the service. The address was given by Rev Jona Sewell. Friends from throughout the circuit attended.

Time was given to commemorate each individual who had passed away during the pandemic. Someone knowing that person then stepped forward to add a carnation to the altar vase, as an act of remembrance.

Thanks were given to the work of both NHS and care staff, and also to the local community, for their response to the pandemic. Appreciation for the ongoing vaccine programme was also expressed.

All in all it was a joyous celebration of the lives of the many friends we lost.

Chris Cogan



OPEN DOOR BIBLE STUDY

Open Door Bible Study Group now plans on holding our fortnightly meetings in Church again, rather than on Zoom. Our next meeting will be on **11th April at 2.00pm**. You would be very welcome to join us.

Chris Cogan

MEANDERS WEEKEND IN THE LAKES

We have a vacancy for two people to join us for the Annual Meanders long weekend in the **Lake District**. It is for three nights, **12th - 15th May, cost £150pp** including three Breakfasts and two Dinners. You do not need to be a walker to join us. If you are interested, please contact **Gaye Templeton** gaye.templeton@sky.com or 825648

MEN'S FORUM

Advanced notice of our April meeting which will be an afternoon visit to the **Victoria Tunnel on Thursday 14th April**. We will meet at the Church car park at **1:15pm** so that we can share cars. The two-hour tour includes a presentation on the history of the tunnel. Afterwards there's an opportunity for refreshments in the **Hotel du Vin** - which is near the tunnel visitor centre in Ouse Street. If you wish to attend, please let me know by **10th April**. I need to confirm numbers in advance of the tour. The cost is usually £12 - but, just for us, a 25% discount reduces it to only **£9 per person!** We are extending the invitation to non-Forum members, so wives and friends are welcome.

Peter Michell

COFFEE SHOP STROLLERS

After the decision made at the Meanders AGM, a new group has just started.

The first Coffee Shop Stroll was a success. On Saturday 12 March, eight of us met at the Church Car Park and we took two cars to Saltwell Park in Gateshead. Matthew met us there. We enjoyed coffee and treats at the Saltwell Towers, a beautiful building pictured here. Then we meandered around the park. There was plenty to see including a lake (see picture), a Japanese garden, a rose garden and pets corner.

It was a lovely sunny day and so we hope to enjoy similar days out once a month and welcome anyone who fancies a short stroll around an interesting place with a coffee shop base.

Our next stroll is on 9 April when we plan to visit Kirkharle. Do join us at 10am in the church car park. All are welcome including dogs.

Rosemary Gray







Something a little different for Easter. The meringues can be made a few days in advance and kept in an airtight tin. When it comes to decoration I have given you an idea but use your imagination.

Judith Orton

Easter Chocolate Meringue Nests

225g/9oz caster sugar
4 medium egg whites
1tbsp cocoa powder
300ml double cream
1tbsp malted milk powder
or drinking chocolate

To decorate

Grated chocolate
Mini chocolate eggs



Heat the oven to 140C/120C fan.

Whisk the egg whites to a soft peak.

Add the sugar 1 tbsp at a time, whisking to the soft peak stage each time.

When the mixture is thick and glossy quickly mix in the cocoa powder.

Draw 8x7cms, well-spaced-out rings on baking parchment on a baking sheet.

Repeat this on a second baking sheet.

Put 1 heaped tbsp of meringue in the centre of each circle on the first baking sheet and spread to make flat circular nest bases. Fill a piping bag with a rose nozzle with the remainder of the meringue and pipe 8 circles onto the second baking sheet for the sides of the nests.

Bake the meringues for 1 hour, then turn off the oven without opening the door and leave for a further 3 hours.

Transfer the meringues to a wire rack to cool completely.

Whip the cream with the malted milk powder, until it holds its shape. Use this to assemble the nests and decorate with grated chocolate and mini eggs.



UKRAINE COLLECTION



Seeing the news of the war in Ukraine and seeing people like you and me leaving their homes in such a hurry has been devastating. I sat in my home one afternoon in early March and read about a collection taking place of goods to be taken to the people of Ukraine. From this, I felt a strong desire to help in any way I could.

I contacted the priest from the Polish centre and advised that I could set up a collection within our own community. With the assistance of a friend, a couple of local collection points at our homes were set up. A member of St Mary's Church arranged for further collection to be arranged there.

The donations were given in high numbers, and I felt truly humbled by the generosity of our community. I visited the Polish centre daily along with various local people to help with these donations. We were dropping car-fulls.

My first visit to the Polish centre was so overwhelming a few of us shed a tear. The realisation of the basics that people no longer had easy access to felt devastating. Each day, the donations were flooding in from all areas of Newcastle which all required sorting. I met some amazing people at the centre from all backgrounds and nationalities. Seeing the lorries being loaded and knowing the items were heading directly to Poland was so moving. The love from Christ was truly evident.

Thank you to every single person who has donated and to those who helped deliver or sort through items.

Sue Kirtley

The Polish Centre



SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

We are all concerned about the situation in Ukraine. One of the youngest of our Church family has been upset about the children in Ukraine and decided she wanted to do something. Heidi Rutter, Mum and Granny invited some friends and family to a coffee morning at their home. Heidi had been busy with Mummy and Granny making cakes, scones and biscuits.



Heidi and brother, Jamie, greeted their guests with broad smiles and seemed so happy to see us. We had an enjoyable morning and were able to admire a mass of golden daffodils in the garden. Heidi was delighted that £203 was raised and will be sent to the Ukraine Emergency Appeal. Thank you Heidi, Kathryn and Brenda.

A further £200 was raised by sale of cakes after Church on Sunday.

Jennifer Hardy

THE ISLAND ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Jona's letter in the March Cornerstone issue opened with a reference to St Kilda, the island deserted in 1930. I was staying on Harris in the Outer Hebrides some 10 years ago and had the opportunity to join a party to visit this remote and beautiful island.

Our journey was by adapted lifeboat and took some four and a half hours at speed. It was extremely choppy and virtually everyone was seasick. We were not certain we would be able to land as conditions were tricky owing to the wind more than the tides. We did in fact reach the landing stage but couldn't get near enough to disembark and each passenger was man-handled into a tiny craft and then deposited into the hands of willing visitors to climb the steep and slippery steps.

The houses are arranged in a crescent shape and we were taken to visit them, one of which was a tiny museum. One of the intriguing items was an x-ray of a foot which showed the long big toe. This feature is unique in the menfolk of St Kilda as it had developed over many years as a result of their skilled climbing on the cliffs to retrieve birds' eggs, which was a staple part of their diet. These men were recognised as the most skilled cragsmen world-wide.



Each deserted house had a tile on view with the names of the last residents and the actual day, time and date of their departure. The ranges used for cooking as well as warmth were laid with peats ready to light and a basket of refills placed to the side of the hearth. Each home had placed a bible on the

table and one felt that at any moment, the last resident was going to return.

The skipper of our vessel had one young man acting as crew and he was born and bred Hebridean with family connections to St Kilda. He took me to the graveyard which was a circular enclosure. The wall surrounding it was dry stone dyking and quite high in order to keep the sheep out. There weren't any grave

stones of a conventional design, simply a boulder often not even boasting an inscription. My guide remarked that life was far too hard for such niceties but every family knew its own boulder. There were one or two brand new headstones placed there by family members who had returned to visit their original homes. The sheep are strange little creatures—more like goats. They are dark brown and have long silky hair and are very inquisitive. Their breed is Soay and they have been on St Kilda since the time when Vikings were a marauding force. They aren't managed but simply roam free and evidently there are 300 to 400. They provide wool of exceptional quality, also milk for cheese making and mutton.



Scattered over the hillside are countless cleits made of stone which were incredibly thick with a hide-away inside where birds were hidden for winter food. Sea-birds played quite a big part in the residents' routines as they were plucked and the feathers then taken to the mainland for feather beds and eiderdowns. The meat

was boiled when fresh and eaten with potatoes and cabbage for a main meal. Cleits are unique to St Kilda—without them life would have been impossible.

Gannets are very much in evidence everywhere on St Kilda not only providing feathers but also oil used for lamps and also trading for rent payments and essential supplies from the mainland. Fulmars too were prolific and again the flesh and oil provided food and light. The birds were split lengthways and filled with salt for preservation. However salt was expensive so the cleits were skilfully built and facing in the best direction for air flow to keep the birds dry and the use of salt lessened.

There was a tiny village school still looking complete as though the children were returning. A bookcase held exercise books belonging to the pupils, beautifully written and with their names on the covers. These children neither spoke nor wrote English,

so they were in Gaelic but the world maps on the wall were in English.

The Church too was tiny and very basic—hard pews, no heating and without a resident minister, it relied on visiting missionaries. The manse would then be occupied but in 1870 one missionary remained for two years with his wife. At that time the floor was earthen and absolutely no seating was available – meaning ceremonies were performed by the missionary or minister and the wedding ring was a twist of white wool on the “wedding” finger. The clerical staff were always fluent Gaelic speakers, though sometimes their wives were not but gained friendship through teaching knitting and baking etc.

The island was almost decimated when any serious illness was brought in by a visitor or ship’s crew. Smallpox, leprosy, cholera, flu all caused serious problems and the island had to be repopulated by requesting help from the Inner Hebrides as well as Harris, Lewis and the Uists.

The island was owned for many generations by Sir Reginald MacLeod and in 1930 he was extremely sad that the island was to be deserted. Shortly afterwards it was gifted to the National Trust, finally completing the transaction around 1956.

When the last residents departed in 1930 they were offered work and housing. The work for the men was mainly tree surgery - a completely new experience as on St Kilda there wasn’t a single tree and most had never seen one. It was extremely difficult for them to settle as they missed the neighbourly togetherness which was their normal daily lifestyle. Many accounts of their departure claim that they were willing and ready to go but many accounts expressed by those concerned did tell of rather different sentiments.

It is only just over 90 years since this event took place but as I was writing this, my visit was brought vividly back to mind as a most extraordinary and moving experience with sad emotions mixed with the positive side of this piece of history.

Jean Tweedie

THREE NOTICES

As we continue our post-lockdown journey towards understanding how best to live with Covid we are now requesting that masks be worn when entering, exiting and moving around the building. When sat, or during worship, masks may be removed if you choose to do so. Please be considerate of those around you as we seek to continue to care for each other in love.

Jona and the Church Stewards

GENERAL CHURCH MEETING

Our annual General Church Meeting will be held after worship on Sunday 1st May. At this meeting we appoint our church stewards to serve for the coming year, this year we will have two vacancies and so are looking for two new stewards. If you would like more information about what this entails, would like to consider putting yourself forward for this role, or wish to nominate someone to take this on then please speak to me or one of the current stewards (Pete Cowey, Alison Bates, Di Small, Judith Orton, Rosie Brown, Ann Cooper).

Jona

VACANCIES

Further opportunity to serve the Church: if stewarding isn't for you then we also have vacancies in the following roles: Church Council Secretary, Finance & Property Committee Secretary, Door Stewards. For more information speak to me or one of the stewards.

Jona

GARDENING FOR APRIL 2022

With this continuing period of dry weather (writing on 23rd March) it has been necessary to get the outdoor water switched on and hoses operating to water our 200 or so planters. The numbers are at their peak with all those planted up with spring bulbs. These are providing a wonderful show with little recent damage from wind and rain. These are all hardy so are unaffected by the ground frosts. The grass has started to grow with the soil warming from temperatures rising in recent days. Margaret cut the grass last weekend. The mower started on the second pull even though there was residual petrol in the tank from last year (shook it up before adding more). I use the “best” petrol hoping that it is better than the newer blended petrol most people use in petrol-engined cars. With the sales of petrol- and diesel-powered cars set to be banned by 2030, could petrol-powered gardening tools be next? Unlike cars, petrol-powered gardening tools do not have catalytic converters – they would make them too heavy and be too costly. The current regulations in the UK for gardening tools aren’t as strict as for cars. Garden machinery manufacturers now appear to be focussing their attention on cordless tools – is this the future? Perhaps if you are considering changing your mower now is the time to check out performance and cost of replacing with cordless or what about a robot mower? Have a great looking lawn with little effort? Our Church has a robot mower and I am sure you would be able to arrange to see it



in action with Andy Anderson. There are set-up costs as a perimeter wire has to be installed along with a “docking” charging station. There are no clippings to collect as they are chopped finely and returned to the lawn which aids fertility.

As I have mentioned previously Mr Trugreen manages the growing of our grass and does two mechanical treatments to the lawn areas. He was here in March to aerate the ground using a scarifier. These machines have fixed knife blades attached to the cylinder. These remove moss and thatch and on the lowest setting, cut into the soil and help to aerate it. Most gardeners have a lawn rake that combs the lawn pulling out moss, thatch and horizontal grass stalks. This can be done every couple of months during the growing season (say April to September).

You can use muscle with a spring-tine rake and have a vigorous workout! Mr Trugreen uses the lawn raker in September and over-seeds any bare patches that it might cause.

A law condemns certain “injurious weeds” (they are docks, nettles, two varieties of thistles and ragwort – 1959 Weeds Act).

A study has found that three of them – ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) and two thistles (*Cirsium arvensis* and *C. vulgare*) are very popular with a diversity of pollinators visiting them about double that of wild flowers recommended by Defra. Thus there is a call for tolerance of reasonable quantities of injurious weeds in locations where they are doing real harm (of course they are biennials and are spread by seeds). When I lived on our farm (1945 – 1958) one job I did in the cow pasture was to cut off the flowering stalks of ragwort, collect them up and when they were dry they were burnt. Ragwort will kill horses and I diagnosed



two deaths during my working life. Sheep will graze ragwort in its first year vegetative state. For gardeners a wide variety of insects will be attracted by English bluebell, grape hyacinth, lungwort and wood anemone in the spring. For mid-season consider Buddleia (not if you grow Brassicas), heather, lavender, purple toadflax, verbena and wallflower. Late cornflower, French marigold, honeysuckle, ivy, common sunflower and red valerian can all be attractive.

Summer flowering bulbs can add much to gardens.

There are classes in Ponteland Flower Show for gladioli, dahlia and begonia. You can add to these with leatris, calla lily, canna lily, other bulbous lilies planted now, nerines and crocasema. We have pineapple lilies (need winter protection) in pots and the tall flowers tend to droop over the edges. Now there is a new variety called Eucomis ‘Maui’ of the Aloha series which is shorter and more compact than the common E comosa. It may not flower quite so well in the first year (grown in pots) but is more prolific in the second with flowers upright and lasting at least six weeks. They are available from Sarah Raven (about £11.50 for three bulbs), peak flowering is June-July and they need to be in full sun.

Good gardening in April.

Syd Cowan

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP - 1940s to 2022

Ponteland Women's Fellowship was founded in the 1940s and the following details were kindly given to me several years ago by one of our Church and Fellowship members. I'm sure you'll agree they are very interesting.

Founded jointly by members of Ponteland Methodist Church and St. Mary's Parish Church in the 1940s, a time when many men were away from the village serving in the forces or other occupations related to the war effort. Membership open to all. Devotional and social activities: a choir and drama group competed successfully in the annual circuit eisteddfods. Plays and concerts held in upper room - stage entrances effected by the outside (fire escape) ladder.

Young mothers went out to meet their children at school and brought them back to the meeting for the cup of tea.

The Fellowship flourished and its members grew up together. Over the years strong friendships were formed. Members joined from the URC and St. Matthew's. Many founder members remained members all their lives and a few survived to see the new millennium, though sadly none remain.

At one time over 70 members - numbers declined over the years but are beginning to pick up since the formation of the Friends of the Fellowship.

Fortnightly meetings in Church hall. Variety of subjects, but still retain devotional tradition that has been so important in the life of the Fellowship. Over the earlier years their drama group and choir had regular concerts, performances and coffee mornings etc etc which raised excellent funds which they donated regularly to many charities including the Children's Home in Ponteland (there was a close connection here as regular visits and birthday gifts were given to the children, as also done by Women's Focus), also Mother Teresa, education costs for a young Indian boy to name but a few!!

Donations were also made over the years to support Church Building funds etc. Many social activities took place - theatre visits, outings, summer garden parties etc etc.

There has always been and continues to be, a close connection with Methodist Women's Network.

In May 2003, the existing Women's Fellowship committee retired after many years' service! Their service was greatly appre-

ciated! The committee was replaced in September 2003 by a new format, "The Friends of Women's Fellowship", Kathleen and Iain Farquhar and myself (Joyce Davis) being co-ordinating secretary, treasurer and secretary respectively. "The Friends" included many Church members who arranged devotions, speakers etc for an allocated meeting.

The new format has worked very successfully and we'd all like to sincerely thank again all "The Friends" for their ongoing loyal support and for providing us with a wonderful variety of speakers and topics over the many years which has ensured the smooth running of the group! Very much appreciated by us all!! These thanks are also extended to everyone who has helped, or is helping or contributing to enable our group to run so well!!

We are also very grateful to all our Ministers who, during all these years, have given us strong spiritual support, fellowship and care. Grateful thanks to all our members too, for their loyal, regular attendance and support at our meetings despite sometimes very adverse weather conditions!!

We have a lovely wooden cross and reading lectern which were carved and donated to Women's Fellowship by Mr W Straughan in the 1970s and we still use these at all our meetings.

In 2011 - Dr Yomi Sobo very kindly brought us a length of cloth from Nigeria Women's Fellowship and Jean Tweedie was most





helpful and made two lovely tablecloths for us from this which we continue to use at all our meetings (see photographs). In Nigeria their members, after qualifying by a very good attendance, use this cloth to make dresses to wear at their meetings!! Our last meeting as “Women’s Fellowship” was Christmas Carols and Music, led by Kathy Anderson who gave us a lovely message and wonderful afternoon singing carols and watching a beautiful sunset under the twinkling Christmas lights!! A truly special start to our Christmas time of 2021!

We are now enjoying meeting with existing and making new friends from Women’s Focus as a new era begins for us all as “Women Together”. Our aim is to continue to be a caring, committed group and we offer a very warm welcome, friendship and worship to anyone who would like to join us at “Women Together,” Thursday afternoons, fortnightly at 2 o’clock.

Joyce Davis

FOCUS HISTORY - 1968 - 2022

TEMPUS FUGIT – AND HOW!

The founding of both Focus, and Women's Fellowship, has greatly enriched the lives of many local women. From the start the caring ethos of both groups has been a great source of support both within, and outside, our Church.

The first Ponteland Methodist group, for younger women, was founded prior to 1968. This was called Young Wives. The title was changed in 1969 to Women's Focus. Some of the original members still live locally, and continue to attend church here. It is interesting to note that the majority of cards sent by the then Social Secretary were given to celebrate the birth of members' babies!

From the start the group felt a strong commitment to support charities, and in particular those with a Church link. Links were also established with the other local churches, and with the national Methodist Women's Network, and with the Methodist Young Wives group. Times away at Minsteracres were also arranged regularly, and proved to be a good way of sharing our faith with women from other districts.

Issues affecting local families, like the reorganisation of education into three tiers in the early 70s, were discussed in an informative, helpful way. Imaginative annual programmes were established from the start, and outings were included.

The formation of the Church playgroup was initiated by members of the group in 1970. This ran successfully for many years. A Church Toddlers Thursdays Group continues to take place in our Church.

When Focus started Northumberland County Council ran a Children's Home on the site of the current Louisville flats, on the North Road. A scheme was developed whereby volunteer Focus members would visit with a birthday present for each child in the home.

We all enjoyed our annual outings visiting places throughout Northumberland, and sometimes beyond. Incorporating a delicious WI Tea on some outings was always appreciated.

Total annual funding for the group for the 69-70 Women's Focus session was £11. 9.7d. Subs were 5/- per annum + 6d for tea at each meeting.

Over the years both Women's groups have taken an active role in Church exhibitions, socials, stewardship, youth events and other activities, providing both social and catering support.

I speak with some pride in saying that not only have both our Church women's groups survived, but also that they have adapted to the many changes that have taken place over the decades since they were founded.

We really look forward to our new shared beginning as we amalgamate into a shared group called Women Together. We will continue to meet, twice monthly on Thursday afternoons at 2.00pm in the Church hall, and would be delighted to welcome anyone to come and share with us!

Chris Cogan

VILLAGE NEWS

Former Richard Coates Primary School, Thornhill Road

It has been agreed that this empty building will become a special school. Children who currently attend a special school in Seghill will move to Ponteland in September. As the Ponteland school is larger than the Seghill one, it will enable girls to attend in addition to boys.

Former Police Station, 20 Bell Villas

An application for a premises licence was made early in March. Northumberland CC and Ponteland Town Council have made objections to the proposal.

The Northumberland Local Plan

This plan lays out proposals and planning policies to guide development until 2036. It is expected to be adopted by the Council on 29th March. Work began on this in 2013 so we hope it is effective!

Bus Services

The X77 and X78 bus services from Newcastle to Ponteland are to be reduced from 30mins service to an hourly one.

Jennifer Hardy

FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to **Mike Fleet**, who has recently celebrated a special birthday.

Best wishes, and hoping that his recent injury is on the mend, to **Bryan Ashford**. He has a very special birthday in April.

Muriel and Yomi Sobo now both live in Orchard Mews, Bentinck Road (opposite the General). Tel: 03339998589. The family have asked me (Chris Cogan) to say that Muriel would love to see friends. In line with practice elsewhere a Lateral Flow test, done on the day of the visit, will be requested, and it would be advisable to pre ring.

Our thoughts and prayers go to **Rosie Brown**, as she awaits further treatment, following her recent spells in hospital.

Hazel Waddell is making good progress following her accident, and is now able to get upstairs, and manage with less help. We hope it won't be too many weeks before she and John can join us again. Please remember them in your prayers.

Good wishes for a speedy recovery to Chris and David Cogan's daughter, **Claire**, after her accident.

WANTED

Donations of empty milk containers (rinsed) required. Box can be found in the church foyer. Milk containers any size or colour. Lids needed.

For Party in the Park Boy's Brigade/ Girl's association tent.
Thank you!



Les Dodd

**Preachers
April**

3rd 10.00am Small
6.30pm Sewell

10th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Lanyon

17th 10.00am Sewell (S)
6.30pm Woolley (S)

24th 10.00am P Brooks

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**



Plant Sale
7th May 10.00am

Try and pot up a few perennials for the Sale then come and buy something that you haven't got!!

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the May edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 22nd April 2022**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com . The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*