

Ponteland Methodist Church Cornerstone



February 2024

MINISTER'S LETTER

This month our family will celebrate two significant events. At the beginning of the month Onyx will turn 17; a milestone which means they can start learning to drive, so look out when you are out and about! We'll celebrate this with a family meal with food, drinks and gifts.

Then at the end of the month I will celebrate a certain birthday milestone. As part of the celebration we're planning to catch up with friends and family by having a party. However, I suspect Helle might have one or two other things planned!

We mark and celebrate all kinds of life events: births, baptisms, birthdays, marriages, anniversaries, graduating, retiring... and so many other things. These events give opportunity to gather with others, be generous with our gifts, and show others they matter to us by our very presence.

We know that Jesus celebrated at least one significant life event when he attended a wedding in a town called Cana, which we can read about in John chapter 2. This tells us that God wants to join in our joy and celebrations at these key moments of life.

This shouldn't be surprising as God cares about every aspect of our lives.

In fact, at that wedding in Cana, Jesus turned water into wine.

This is the first miracle recorded by John...

Water is ordinary yet amazing stuff - it brings life and growth, it cleanses, it nourishes and hydrates. Water brings life. But, for John, wine is a symbol of something else. Wine represents joy, abundance and celebration. We can conclude that one of the lessons of this miracle is that Jesus can take what's already good and turn it into something even better.

As we think about milestones and celebrations perhaps we need to trust God a little more with the water of our lives, and trust that he can turn the good and ordinary into something that can bring joy and abundance to the world. Perhaps we also need to trust God a little more with the water of our church, believing that transformation into something more wonderful is possible.

Give thanks for milestones and celebrations. Give thanks that God cares and celebrates with us. Can you trust God more with the water of your life, and of our church?

God Bless,





REUBEN TELLS TALES

Old Reuben was talking to the youngsters gathered round his stool on the cool verandah of his house in a village not far from Baghdad. His tales of long ago, of the start of everything, of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the great flood, captivated them.

Young Enoch had been talking to his friends in the village, some of them local lads and some from foreign families, victims of the expanded Babylonian Empire and its policy of exile for the defeated.

"They have all sorts of different tales of how the world was made," he said.

Reuben remembered the old prohibition about being separate from other nations and their gods and gently suggested that the boys should keep apart from all other nations.

Enoch was growing up and getting rebellious. "My Dad says the prophet Jeremiah has written to us in exile that we should settle into houses and businesses and seek the welfare of all the people wherever they have been taken to."

Reuben thought about this. Was he too old-fashioned, prejudiced against all foreigners and especially the proud Empire that had taken over so many lands and exiled so many peoples? Yet they were people of God's creation too and Abraham had been told that all nations would be blessed through his descendants. Could it be that even in exile, Israel had a mission of blessing? Had the Lord God no word of promise for all the descendants of Noah?

"Be careful about what you learn from foreigners," he advised the lads. "Their gods are not like the Holy One of Israel. Their gods are wicked and unpredictable and play with the lives of men and women as if they were of no account. The Lord God has taught us to see how He loves the people He has made and guided them through patriarchs and judges, prophets, priests and kings. What went on before them, we just have the stories our forefathers told to each. Now we have Moses and the prophets to tell us how to live under God's good rule."

“All people have tales of the start of things, but we have learnt differently. Their stories also tell of happenings long ago, floods and disasters, but we have learned that the Lord God is a loving creator who really speaks to those who obey Him and guides them the right way. We learn from Him about right and wrong, crime and punishment, national conduct that God has praised or condemned, about covenants made for our blessing.”

“My Dad says we are living here because we had wicked kings and false prophets and God is punishing us for all that,” said Dan.

“It looks like that,” Reuben replied. “I am sure that God will restore us again in His good time. While we are here we must learn wisdom so that when we get back to our own country we are ready to change everything for the better. ‘*Righteousness exalts a nation*’, remember. Now let me sit and rest in the evening sunshine and you go away and play.”

Genesis, Jeremiah

John M Gill

MEN’S FORUM SHOREBIRDS OF THE NORTHUMBERLAND COAST

This is the title of the presentation at 7.30pm on Thursday 8 February. The talk will be by Richard Willis who is the Senior Wildlife Ranger employed by ‘Space for Shorebirds’ being the name of the Northumberland County Council’s coastal wildlife ranger service. When booking we were informed that the talk is very interesting, learning for example how the Arctic Tern travels 22,000 miles around the world returning each year to breed at the same spot in Beadnell Bay. The rangers are also responsible for conserving the flower rich dunes along the coast. ‘Space for Shorebirds’ have a very good website you may like to view, but we hope you will also be able to come to Richard’s presentation.



Alan Groves

GRAEME DANBY CONCERT



The show is coming to Ponteland Methodist Church on Saturday April 13th 2024 at 7pm. The show is called The Donkey, The Whippet and The Giant Leek. It celebrates the life and music of the composer Eric Boswell who lived in Northumberland until his death in 2009.

Tickets on sale from Alison, Syd, Angela, Brenda and Pauline for £10.

Graeme Thompson

CHRISTIAN AID ECUMENICAL LENT STUDY

Act on Poverty
19th February - 25th March

This will meet in our Church throughout Lent, and follows the long-standing tradition that we had prior to lockdown.

We plan on meeting from 2.00 - 3.30pm weekly on Mondays, starting on 19th February. There will an opportunity to share in soup at Open Door from 1.00pm, prior to our meetings.

An open invitation is issued to friends from all our churches.

Leadership will be shared.

Do come along and support us if you can.

Further information will follow.

Chris Cogan

WOMEN TOGETHER AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2.00pm AT CHURCH

Feb 8 – Members Afternoon

Feb 22 - About Lent - Geoff Orrock

ALL LADIES ARE WELCOME.





Ponteland Calendar 2024

SOMETHING

On Monday 22nd January the first service for the week of Christian Unity was held in the Methodist Church and storm Etsy was in full force in our car park and I found myself being blown towards another member of our Church. So Andy our Editor and I had an unexpected conversation, needless to say about the weather! Andy used the opportunity to ask if I would submit an article for our next Cornerstone and in turn I promised to submit “something”. So here follows “something”. So many people find January a very trying month and certainly the cold snap we experienced was quite a challenge. However my own weather notes recorded –17 degrees in 1975/76 when Ponteland was cut off and heavy snow was experienced. Many homes discovered their central heating was non-functional as pipes had frozen. With two open fires blazing away, we had lots of fun with having open house for frozen friends and neighbours and running cold water.

Already Christmas and the festive season of 2023/4 have begun to feel to be happy memories. All the decorations in my home have taken flight upstairs but the actual packing and putting away is still to be done. This new year’s diary has been dealt with as all the set-forward days are now entered and encouragement has been found at looking at all the lovely dates which this time of year offers.

First up is Burns Night on 25th January. So neeps and haggis at the ready! The first meeting of the Strollers group is scheduled for Saturday 3rd February, meeting at our carpark and walking to Dobbies for date planning over coffee.

On February 12th I’m taking a party to Grange-over-Sands - already fingers crossed for reasonable weather. March 1st is St David’s Day, also World Day of Prayer. Also early March on the 10th we celebrate Mothers’ Day, followed by St Patrick’s Day on 17th March. Then an exciting few dates come—Spring Equinox on 20th March, Palm Sunday 24th, Good Friday 29th March with

Easter Sunday on 31st, ending with British Summer time beginning also on Easter Sunday.

Because I'm away week commencing 12th February I haven't actually noted Shrove Tuesday on 13th February.

So lots and lots of notable dates and great excitement already as snowdrops are in flower and the winter Aconites are providing bright yellow stars in the borders. They are so cheerful and so hardy—just a joy!

Here endeth my contribution of “something”.

Keep well everyone and enjoy the sun when it shines.

Jean Tweedie

BOUNCY CHURCH

For 18 months now Bouncy Church has continued to thrive and as a team we have been very grateful for your vital support. It has been an encouragement to us and meaningful for families to witness your presence with us at the short services, or even in the Hall where all the noise and bustle takes place! January is often a lean month when cold weather, snow, wind and rain deter venturing out. As this new year progresses, however, we ask for your continued prayers and your practical support. Families need to see who we are: that we are united in our welcome simply by being present with them when we possibly can.

Bouncy Church is held on the first Sunday of each month. If you are able to join us at our **20 minute service at 9.40am**, please enjoy breakfast or a snack with tea or coffee either before and/or afterwards. **The second service is at 10.30am.**

Our next Bouncy Church is on **Sunday, February 4th**.

We hugely appreciate your support.

Isobel Hindle

OPEN DOOR BIBLE STUDY

Our next meeting will be on **19th February** when we start a six-week **shared Lent Study**, compiled by Christian Aid. This ends on **25th March**. It will be held from **2.00 - 3.30pm**, as usual. We look forward to meeting with our friends from the other churches. Further details will follow.

Chris Cogan

GRANDMA MAGIC (A VILLANELLE)

As Grandma walks along the winding way
to let her new baby granddaughter sleep.
In gentle breeze the branches calmly sway.

The air feels bright and fresh on this spring day,
Soothing her nerves, this peace will calmly keep
Grandma's walk along the most winding way.

The child resting before she wants to play.
Dappled sunshine warms though the path is steep.
In the gentle breeze branches calmly sway.

Quiet space gifts a peaceful time to stay
watching the contented infant asleep.
Grandma walks along the most winding way.

Listening to birds sing in their cheerful play,
watch how the river waters flow so deep.
In the gentle breeze branches calmly sway.

And you my friend, can chat about your day
when we both meet, to share a nifty peep.
Grandma's walk along the most winding way,
in the gentle breeze, branches calmly sway.

Rosemary Gray



World Day of Prayer Service
in St Matthew's Church on
Friday 1st March at 2.15pm.
Tea and coffee in Church hall afterwards.



THE OPEN DOOR

This soup proved to be very popular at Open Door. Thank you Pauline for the recipe. If you don't like smoked cheese you can just use strong cheddar.

Judith

Potato and smoked cheese soup

4oz smoked streaky bacon, cut into short lengths

1 large onion, thinly sliced

1 oz butter

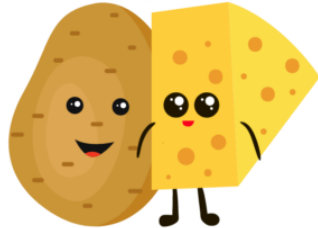
3 large baking potatoes, cubed

2¼ pints water

6oz strong cheddar cheese or a mixture of cheddar and smoked cheese, grated

Chopped chives for garnish

Salt and pepper for seasoning



Fry the bacon until crispy and set aside.

Melt the butter in a large pan and fry the onions.

Add the water and the potatoes and cook for 15 - 20 mins.

When cooked blitz together.

Add the cheese and stir until melted.

Just before serving add the bacon and chopped chives.

SKILLS FOR SENIORS

The ability to speak several languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless.

Be decisive. Right or wrong, make a decision. The road is paved with flat possums who couldn't make a decision.

Happiness is not having to set the alarm clock.

When I get a headache, I take two aspirin and keep away from children just like the bottle says.

Just once, I want the prompt for username and password to say, "Close enough".

Becoming an adult is the dumbest thing I've ever done.

If you see me talking to myself, just move along. I'm self-employed.

We're having a meeting.

"Your call is very important to us. Please enjoy this 40-minute flute solo."

Does anyone else have a plastic bag full of plastic bags, or is it just me?

I hate it when I can't figure out how to operate the iPad and my tech support guy is asleep. He's 5 and it's past his bedtime.

Today's 3-year-olds can switch on laptops and open their favourite apps. When I was 3, I ate mud.

So, you drive across town to a gym to walk on a treadmill?

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row.

I decided to stop calling the bathroom "John" and renamed it the "Jim". I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning.

Old age is coming at a really bad time.

If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would've put them on my knees.

Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.

Why do I have to press one for English when you're just going to transfer me to someone I can't understand anyway?

Now, I'm wondering . . . did I send this to you, did you send it to me or have I only seen one copy?

The Commandments for Seniors.....

You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pissing you off.

Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.

"On time" is, when you get there.

Even duct tape can't fix stupid – but it sure does muffle the sound.

It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for 10 minutes, then come out wrinkle-free...and three sizes smaller.

Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.

Anonymous

Coming Soon

We'll shortly begin the process of
looking for a new Chair for the
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Methodist District
Will you pray with us?



PRAYER FOR THE CHAIR

Loving God, You have placed us in the centre of Your creation to love and serve each other with humility and grace. We pray, knowing that all of our days are in Your hands, and that You have a plan for Your people to flourish, Your kingdom to grow and for all people to be reconciled to You.

So, Lord God we pray for the new Chair of our Newcastle upon Tyne District. We know that You go ahead of us in this process, and that you have already been working in the hearts and minds of those who have the right character and skills to fulfil this role. We pray for those who are discerning Your will, that they may respond with clarity, enthusiasm, and commitment, being guided by Your Spirit in all wisdom and truth.

We pray for the nomination committee who will meet with candidates. May they too know the guidance of Your Spirit leading them in all wisdom, truth, and compassion. We pray for open minds and a sense of clarity for those who will interview, assess, and support candidates through the recruitment process. We pray that they would clearly recognise Your will and identify the right person to take on the role of District Chair and lead the people of this District in its next phase.

Loving God, Your will be done, Your Kingdom come.

Amen

MEN'S FORUM
Thursday 7.30pm
PROGRAMME 2024

Thursday 8th February 'Shorebirds of the Northumberland Coast' - Richard Willis from 'Space for Shorebirds'

Alan Groves

WHAT'S ON

February 2024

Monday 5th Westerhope. 10.00 a.m. Oasis coffee morning. The church is open for quiet prayer and reflection.

Monday 5th Westerhope. 1.00 – 2.45 pm Little Treasures. Birth – five years accompanied by carer. All welcome.

Tuesday 6th Denton Burn. 2.00 pm Tuesday Fellowship. Tony Stephenson - 'Denton Burn'.

Tuesday 6th Lemington. 9.30 am Clothes bar.

Wednesday 7th Westerhope. 2.00 pm Women's Fellowship.
Speaker: Mrs. Barbara Lanyon.

Thursday 8th Ponteland. 2.00 pm Women Together. Members' afternoon.

Thursday 8th Ponteland. 7.30 pm Men's Forum – 'Shorebirds of the Northumberland Coast'.

Thursday 8th Westerhope. 1.30 – 3.15 pm Carpet bowls.

Thursday 8th Westerhope. 2.00 pm Craft Group.

Saturday 10th Ponteland. 9.30 am Meanders - meet in the car-park.

Saturday 10th Westerhope. 3.00 – 5.00 pm Messy Church.

Pizza Friday

16th February
5-7.30pm





Fairtrade Fortnight 2024 date change

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2024

This is the time of year when I publicise Fairtrade Fortnight, remind you of options to buy Fairtrade goods and invite you to join a Big Brew to raise money to fight trade injustice. However, 2024 is going to be a bit different.

2024 is the 30th anniversary of the FAIRTRADE Mark and in order to fully celebrate its life-changing impact for farmers and workers across the world, events will be happening throughout the year leading up to new dates for Fairtrade Fortnight, from 9th to 22nd September. That isn't an excuse to do nothing until the autumn; Fairtrade goods are available all year round and maybe 2024 is the year for us all to add an extra Fairtrade item to our weekly grocery shop or to explore purchasing different Fairtrade items such as clothing or cleaning products. Please continue to think about the items you buy, where they come from, whether their producers are paid and treated fairly, and how the way goods are produced affects the environment.

There are many firms which have a sound ethical basis for their business. Find out more from the Fairtrade Foundation at <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk>

Bev

GARDENING FOR FEBRUARY, 2024

Happy Gardening New Year. The weather will need to change (writing 22nd January) and the storms stop - for the first time we have damage to a greenhouse with a top pane blown out last night. Rainfall in 2023 was the highest I have recorded at 30 Callerton Court (over 26 years) at 43.5 inches. It only put the average up to 33.83 inches but was over 10 inches higher. The wettest month was October and the driest February. Rainfall in the second half of the year was more than 76% of the total for the year. If this pattern is to continue gardeners will need to look at the most suitable crops and flowering plants to grow, the timing of sowing/planting and the husbandry. It has been almost impossible to work on the cropped area of our garden since the end of August. We will also have to consider crops that can be harvested before rats and mice eat them – they damaged most of our beetroot last year. If the pattern of recent spring is going to be repeated we will be considering leaving cultivation work until the spring rather than attempting to clear in the autumn months. I have nothing to offer on best value composts yet but you can be assured that Which? will only have been testing peat-free so if you will be looking for composts containing peat I suggest you start now. Halls of Heddon had the best selection of peat-containing composts of the centres I visited last year.

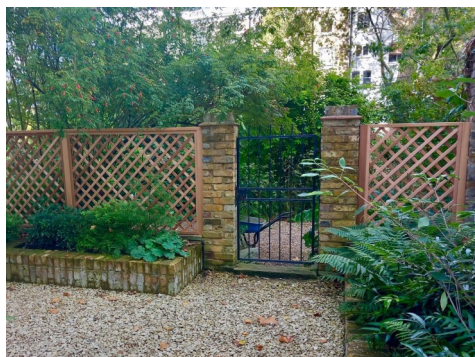


The plant Gunnera (the South American giant rhubarb) can grow to a height of two metres and is to be completely banned. Gunnera Tinctoria was banned in 2019 as an invasive species similar to Japanese Knotweed. However, Gunnera Manicata was deemed safe and has remained widely available – and widely planted in people's gardens. But a research project led by the Royal Horticultural Society

(RHS) has found that almost all of "safe" plants are in fact a cross with the banned species. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra, for whom I worked in 2000 on Foot & Mouth eradication) have said "Members of the public who identify this plant growing in their garden do not need to take action. However you cannot intentionally plant, sell, use or exchange the species given its status as an invasive alien species." The only colony of Gunnera that I know of is on the side of road linking the

Scots Gap road to Wallington bridge. I have known of it for over 67 years and it does not appear to be spreading. The RHS points out that gardeners may still plant an alternative - *Gunnera magellanica*, otherwise known as the “devil’s strawberry” which it says “are great plants for wet soil on the margins of a large natural pond”. They grow to a height of about 50 cms.

As it continues to rain it will be a kindness to sodden lawns and borders to keep off them until they have had a chance to drain properly especially on heavy soils. Footfall compacts the soil and reduces surface drainage. Do only the minimum to allow spring bulbs to be seen. When you can, remove all the hellebore leaves and this should stop mice nibbling buds particularly near to wall bottoms. Repairs to trellis supports and fences should be on



your “to do” lists before thinking of digging and planting. Perhaps this will give you more time to concentrate on selecting the seeds you would like to sow (indoors then outdoors) and plants that you plan to buy. Seed from previous years can be sown if they have been carefully kept in their packets and in a cool dry place. I keep mine in

a cupboard in the garage and sort out the ones that can be sown. It is important to emphasise that “new unopened” seeds are likely to germinate better than those kept from previous years. With “home-saved air-dried seed” I have had better results with peas and beans than newly-purchased ones. However many of these can have been cross-fertilized so you do not get a “true replication” of the plants previously grown. This is very true of broad beans. Commercial growers will keep certain seeds chilled (fridge temperature) to “stratify” them for up to a month so that when they are sown they will respond more quickly to warmth and moisture. Sweet peas are an example of seeds that can benefit from stratification.

Good Gardening in 2024.

Syd Cowan

VILLAGE NEWS

Post Office on Broadway

This has been refitted and is now called Morrisons.

Land behind Rialtos Restaurant

In October 2021 Rialtos put in a plan to develop the land behind the restaurant to be called "The Orchard". Various revisions have been made since then. The plans have now been rejected by Northumberland CC: reasons for refusal included it would be out of character in the area, would make a potential increase in noise, harmful light and odour and possible increase in the risk of flooding.

Kirkwhelpington Quarry Plan

These plans should have been discussed at a Northumberland CC meeting in December, but this was deferred until March 2024. Plans can be viewed on the Northumberland CC website under 22/01909/CCMEIA. If the scheme goes ahead there will be even more traffic through Ponteland.

We are here for you

This event will be at the Library on Tuesday 6th February 10am-12noon.

Former Police Station, Bell Villas

An application was made to turn this building into a restaurant in 2021. The original scheme aimed to provide space for 100 diners with no provision for car parking. After two years the scheme was approved subject to more details about car parking. Now a more modest scheme has been submitted with the dining spaces reduced to 33 with 20 outdoor seats in the small bit of land next to Sainsburys car park. The first floor of the building is to be offices.

Auberge derelict bungalow on Callerton Lane

13/03462/FUL

An application has been made to demolish the old bungalow and replace it with a five-bedroom property. A five-car garage is also in the plans.

New Bus Service

Arriva has a new 777 bus service connecting Morpeth with Kirkley Hall, Ponteland, the Airport and Kingston Park. They hope to run the service seven days a week with an hourly service through the day and every two hours at night. It has started! It will stop at :-

Ponteland, o/s Hiddlestone
Ponteland Smallburn (S-bound)
Ponteland Police HQ road end (sb)
Ponteland, nr Ashbrooke Drive
Ponteland Coates Middle School
Ponteland, opp Thornhill Road shops
Ponteland Clickemin Bridge (near)
Ponteland, opp Cheviot View

Jennifer Hardy

FASTEST POSTMAN IN PONTELAND

New faster postal service in Ponteland. They have been equipped with an electric vehicle. The posties love it. It can do 90 miles on an eight-hour charge. There is easy access as no doors! Overall the driver was very pleased to be doing his round with the help of the new vehicle.

Andy Anderson



FAMILY NEWS

Joan Harrison is pleased to tell everyone that her eighth great-grandchild has arrived in Washington - Holly Joan, a little sister for Emmelia. Everyone fit and well.

Many happy returns to **Chris Cogan** who is celebrating a special birthday.

John Angel is in hospital. Please pray for him.

Ronnie Dunn is now at home recuperating after his recent hospitalisation. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all who sent get-well messages and also thanks to Bev, Chris and Jona for arranging transport for me.



Marion Danby's 90th Birthday party

My mum Marion turned 90 years old on Monday 15th January. Myself, Kristian and Sophie threw a right good celebration for her - in fact the whole day was just magical

from start to finish! She spent the morning with the hairdresser and lovely friends visiting her as well as a special visit from Jona which she loved. At 1pm the residents' lounge at Meadowfield Park was buzzing with friends and family. Thank you so much to everyone from Church who came to see Mum, she absolutely loved seeing you all and so did I. I am so lucky to have such a lovely Mum, still going strong at 90 years old,
Love to everyone,

Karen Cookson

Preachers February

4th 9.00am Woolley (BC)
6.30pm Sewell
11th 10.00am Albans
6.30pm Coulthard
18th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Woolley
25th 10.00am Small
6.30pm LA

DIARY DATES

5th Feb Pastoral Committee
7th Feb Finance & Property
15th Feb Church Council
1st March World Day of Prayer
13th April The Donkey, The
Whippet & the Giant Leek -
Graeme Danby

Saturday April 13th 7pm



Graeme Danby Concert

The Donkey, The Whippet and the Giant Leek
Tickets £10

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the March edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 23rd February 2024**. The editor's email is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*