

# Ponteland Methodist Church Cornerstone



**March 2023**

## **MINISTER'S LETTER**

March brings with it the bulk of Lent, the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day. (It's actually 46 days but the Sundays aren't included.) Traditionally Lent was a time of 'fasting', that means it was a time of giving things up. People traditionally might give up food on certain days of the week, or specific foods that were seen as luxuries. Today people might give up chocolate, alcohol, social media usage, watching tv, or any number of other things.

However, the purpose of fasting was never only about going without, which in itself can be good for us; but when fasting from food people were encouraged to stop and be thankful at mealtimes or whenever they experienced hunger. The point of the fast was to focus the attention on God and be thankful for what you had. I tend to think we've lost this focus in our Church and society.

Have you ever tried fasting or giving something up for Lent or any period of time? How did it go? Did it help you focus more on God? My own experience of fasting has varied between apparent 'success' and 'failure' dependent on my attitude, commitment, circumstances and walk with God at that time. Whilst I hang very loosely from definitions of success or failure in this context I don't let my previous experiences, good or otherwise, cloud my judgment going forward; fasting is something I have regularly returned to and will do again.

A few years ago Pope Francis encouraged us to think about fasting a little differently when he said:

"Fast from hurting words and say kind words.  
Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.  
Fast from anger and be filled with patience.  
Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.  
Fast from worries and have trust in God.  
Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.  
Fast from pressures and be prayerful.  
Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy.  
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.  
Fast from grudges and be reconciled.  
Fast from words; be silent and listen."

When I read these words again recently I found that a couple of the sentences really leapt out and challenged me. These are things I'm now reflecting on in my own prayer and quiet times. Which ones leapt out to me? Well, that's between me and God! I encourage each of us to consider the occasional fast and to prayerfully read the words of St Francis and see if any challenge you; then pray about them and seek, with God's grace, to be better....

God Bless,

*Jona*

### **EASTER SERVICES - APRIL**

Thurs 6th 7pm - Maundy Thursday Upper Room Communion  
Fri 7th 10am - Good Friday Service followed by the Raising of the Cross on the village green and refreshments back at our Church.

Sun 9th 10am and 6.30pm - Easter Services, both with Communion

**All Services led by Rev Jona Sewell**



### **TYNEDALE HOSPICE AT HOME**

I have attended the new Bereavement Cafe in Merton Hall and found it very enjoyable. I intend to go whenever I can. It's on alternate **first and third Wednesdays** of the month between **10am - 12noon** in **Merton Hall**. I found it friendly, warm and helpful: a happy support group----not at all morbid or miserable. You can just turn up, but if anyone would like to come along with me, or needs a lift, please let me know.

**Ann Cooper**

## FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Fairtrade Fortnight continues until 12th March.

Did you know cocoa, bananas and coffee could soon be much more difficult to find on our supermarket shelves? Climate change is making crops like these harder and harder to grow. Combined with deeply unfair trade, communities growing these crops are being pushed to the brink.

Saddick Abanga farms nine acres of land in Ghana for cocoa. He's been doing this for 18 years and it's getting increasingly difficult due to the climate crisis. Part of his farm lies high on a rocky, steep hillside, unfriendly terrain for cocoa plants. The co-operative to which Saddick belongs chose to invest their Fairtrade Premium in adapting to climate change. Saddick joined an agro-forestry project, which offers farmers training in methods to improve the soil, increase shade and attract biodiversity. He is now working on surrounding his land with trees. 'I didn't know I was punishing the land, now because of this project I've seen the benefits, there are more nutrients in the soil.'



Please help farmers like Saddick protect the future of products like chocolate, bananas, and coffee. More of us choosing Fairtrade means extra income, power, and support for those communities, as they work to build sustainable and prosperous

futures. This Fairtrade Fortnight why not add an extra Fairtrade item to your shopping basket? In addition, we can commit to learning more about just trading practices through organisations like the Fairtrade Foundation. We can support Transform Trade, the campaigning charity, by signing petitions and raising money.

At the Church Council on 16<sup>th</sup> February a commitment was made to maintain our status as a Fairtrade Place of Worship and on 12<sup>th</sup> March there will be a retiring collection for Transform Trade. Donations can be made via our Church Treasurer, Peter Michell, or using envelopes that will be available on the day.

Money raised at Ponteland's **Big Brew** will also be donated to Transform Trade. Please come along to **St Matthew's Church Hall on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March from 10am until 12 noon** where there will be fundraising stalls and a chance for a slice of cake and a cuppa.....Fairtrade, of course!

Thank you.

**Bev**

Photo: Chris Terry



### **METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN**

The Newcastle District of MWiB are to hold their **Minsteracres retreat** from **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023**. The title will be **'Treasures'** and will be led by **Ruth Parrott**, Connexional MWiB. The cost will be **£190 Friday 5pm to Sunday 4pm**. Payment by Wednesday 1st March. For further details, see the Church notice board. It is good that we have a number of people who go to these events.

**Kathleen Farquhar**



This is a very easy recipe for homemade tomato soup. Thank you to Val for passing it on.

**Judith**

## Tomato and Basil Soup

2 tbsp olive oil  
1 chopped onion  
1 garlic clove (crushed)  
2 (400g) cans of chopped tomatoes  
1 pt (500ml) vegetable stock  
4 fl oz (120g) double cream  
1/4 tsp sugar  
Salt and pepper  
2 handfuls fresh basil



Cook the onions and garlic in the hot oil for 4 mins.  
Stir in the tomatoes and stock and bring to the boil.  
Simmer for 10 mins.  
Add the basil and blend until smooth.  
Return to the pan, add the cream and reheat without boiling.  
Stir in the sugar and season to taste.

## Summer Opening Times

**From April 3rd**



**Mondays 2.00pm-4.00pm  
(Except bank holidays)**

Due to the unavailability of the hall we will meet in the foyer on 3rd April.



## LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET GO



Last time we talked about prophets - Amos it was, I think: I mentioned Hosea, a fellow Israelite, who has also begun challenging national policy. In some ways he is a traditional prophet like those we hear about who were listened to by Authority and trusted or ignored a century or more ago. Remember Zedekiah bar Kenaanah, the spurious prophet who flourished iron ox horns to predict victory for the two kings at Ramoth in Gilead? Any prop would do to emphasise a prophecy! (Though much good did it do to King Ahab!)

Well Hosea has used his own marriage problems to illustrate his point, compared excessive measures to retrieve an apparently totally-failed relationship with the way almighty God must be looking at today's spiritual situation. He compares Yahweh's take on our age with a state of frequent

adultery and desertion between a husband and a wife, the Lord being our husband and his people being a continually unfaithful and depraved marriage partner. I have never heard anything like it! Fancy airing a report of all your private troubles before us all! Who does that?!

It seems that this poor chap chose a partner unwisely, to say the least. Some folk say that he actually started off by actually choosing a whore, or perhaps that is not quite the situation. Whatever is fact, they had three kids together and then she took off and went back to her old ways, serving in a brothel. He went looking for her, found her again and took her back into his home, not to punish but to love her as before. The way he speaks of her, it is evident that he is still head over heels in love, can you credit that!

And then he goes on about Yahweh's love for His own people being just as powerful and forgiving. If we go back to Him, stop mixing our faith with the ignorant and often wicked ways of the religions and habits of other peoples, He will abundantly forgive. That parallel between Hosea's own marital history with the intense love he has for Gomer, a faithless woman, and the love the Lord has for all his people is a powerful image and an unusual one. Does Yahweh watch over us all like a loving husband

who is not going to let us go to the dogs entirely and for ever? Our two peoples, children of Abraham, have given ourselves over to idol worship or godlessness or even child sacrifice, and mingled it with a superficial orthodoxy, but the Lord, Hosea insists, will never let us go that way in the end. It is as if He is Love itself, a love that will not let us go. That's the unusual way in which Hosea would have us live and believe. Love will never change or let His loved ones be lost, whatever the depth of degradation that they are wallowing in at present. That seems to be what Hosea believes and declares. Wouldn't it be splendid if he is right!

**John M Gill**



### **MEN'S FORUM**

Please note: there has been a change to the published Men's Forum programme. Our next meeting on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March will now take place in the afternoon and will be the visit to Clark's Bog in Morpeth. We will see first-hand the nature conservation work that Pete Matthewson and his volunteers are doing at the reserve. This promises to be an interesting walk around the reserve, but don't worry if you prefer not to walk far – you can sit and observe from a viewing hut. Guests are welcome to join us for this outing. We will meet at the Church car-park at 13:30pm to travel to Morpeth for 14:00pm. If you would like a lift, please let Peter Michell know to enable planning (tel: 01661 871885 or email: [peter\\_michell@hotmail.com](mailto:peter_michell@hotmail.com)).

Lord Stevens will give his talk called 'A Lifetime in Policing' on the evening of Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at the usual time of 7:30pm.



## **SHEPHERD'S DENE: AN INVITATION**

I have visited this beautiful place over many years until Covid closed it temporarily. Recently I was delighted to be able to visit it once more. It is an attractive Edwardian house set in lovely gardens situated in the hills above Riding Mill. It is a retreat centre for the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle but welcomes people of all faiths or none. I usually write a Haiku while I am there:

### *February 2023 at Shepherd's Dene*

*Two good friends at rest*

*Winter sun on distant hill*

*Tranquil room is warm*

Post Covid the Director of Shepherd's Dene is working to build up visitor numbers and I promised her I would recommend this glorious place to others. You can find a programme of events if you Google 'Shepherd's Dene'. But if anyone would like to go with me I would be happy to take you. It costs £28 a day for morning coffee, lunch, and afternoon tea as well as use of the house and garden. Please ask me more if you are interested. Time away at Shepherd's Dene is like being pampered in body, mind, and soul. Haikus remind me that I have been there in all seasons, sometimes staying overnight:

### *Nov 2017 at Shepherd's Dene*

*Sun sets pale and sharp -*

*long shadows on sparkling frost.*

*Pheasant quickly hides*

### *June 2018 at Shepherd's Dene*

*Cool summer morning,*

*Clouds over trees and lush grass*

*Bird of prey circling.*

**I do hope you will consider my invitation to a wonderful day.**

**Ann Cooper**

# **Fairtrade Fortnight in Ponteland**

**St Matthews Big Brew 11th March 2023**

## **St Matthew's Fairtrade Big Brew**



At the "Big Brew" you can sample Fairtrade tea and coffee and you can find out about how Fairtrade works. There will be a Traidcraft stall selling lots of Fairtrade goods including tea, coffee, honey, chocolate, dates and cards and also a Grand Raffle. There will also be a Cake Stall, a Tombola, a Bottle Stall and a Bric-a-Brac Stall



## **BUY MORE FAIRTRADE PRODUCTS IN 2023**



**Awarded to  
Ponteland Methodist Church**

**On  
7th February 2023**

Next Renewal due:  
7th February 2025

**Michael Gidney**  
Chief Executive  
Fairtrade Foundation



**THE LAST TABOO – TALKING ABOUT DYING**  
**PONTELAND – 28th JANUARY 2023**  
**COURSE ORGANISED BY**  
**THE TRAINING & LEARNING DEPARTMENT**

I think I can speak with one voice in saying what a meaningful course this proved to be. It was helpful to share with friends from other churches. Three of our Church members attended. The course was very well led by both James and Elaine. Elaine, Chaplain for the Methodist Homes for the Aged for some years, has a wealth of experience on this.

The aim of the course was to help us to understand the dying process better, using our experiences as a baseline. We discussed coping strategies when facing both our own emotions, and our perceived inadequacies. Included was learning to be more open about both death and dying. We had very helpful discussion on this, to help to prepare us better to talk more openly. The importance of prearranging both financial and medical matters, of arranging both Powers of Attorney and ensuring that the wills are updated for all of us, preferably well in advance, was discussed.

We questioned why we don't talk more about death when there is an obvious need. Looking at the perceptions of the values we hold as life draws to a close is also useful. Talk around both care wishes and, if asked for, around funeral arrangements, can provide great reassurance.

The key factors in this process are both in listening and in communication. Through this we gain an important insight into the dying person's wishes. We then looked at how we could do things differently. The three key things that Elaine mentioned that the dying ask to be talked about are forgiveness, thanks and love. This is key.

The other request, which some of us don't mention as openly as we should, is asking if the person wishes to be prayed with, or for. Elaine stressed just how important this is.

We all came away uplifted, feeling better prepared for the time when we will inevitably face death again. This was one of the best courses that I have attended for some time. Many thanks to both Jona and Bev for organising this!

Often our first experience of death is when a close friend or rela-

tive dies. Gone are the days when the local community is involved. It was seen as an inevitable part of life.

Death is not shared as it was.

We began by discussing our experiences of death, looking at how we dealt with it, and what coping strategies we employed. Most of us arrange Powers of Attorney for both Health and Finance, and update our wills, but how many of us talk when facing the death of someone close about their feelings and wishes as to how they want to be cared for, and arrangements they wanted?

**Chris Cogan**

## **CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PONTELAND**

### **Monthly Prayers 2023**

#### **Always at 12.00**

Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	St Matthew's
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April	St Mary's (Easter Monday is on the 10 <sup>th</sup> )
Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> May	Ponteland Methodist Church
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> June	St Matthew's
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> July	St Mary's
August	No meeting
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> September	Ponteland Methodist Church
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> October	St Matthew's
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> November	St Mary's
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> December	Ponteland Methodist Church

Meetings consist of a brief introduction and prayers from the different churches. Usually no more than 30 minutes.

**Contact** John Doherty 01661 821013

## **CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE**

In February our latest Church Council meeting was held.  
The key things to share are:

### Appointments

Church Council Secretary – Sue Kirtley.

### Leadership Team Items

Bouncy Church – has gone well and we will concentrate on developing it. Feedback is excellent. 22 families now attend.

### Stewards

Care and Share charities were agreed.

### Pastoral Committee

Joan Harrison is retiring after over 60 years in the role.

### Care & Share

Future planned events are the Kathy Anderson concert (19/11), and the Christmas Fayre (3/12).

### Brigades

The Boys' Brigade with Girls' Association is slowly attracting some new members, including some girls!

### Finance

Peter predicted a deficit of about £10,000 this year. This is similar to last year when we managed to break even in the end. Increased giving by our members is to be encouraged.

### Property

New signs have been erected.

It was agreed that the hall floor should be revarnished at a cost of £3600.

There was a long discussion about sound boards in the hall to reduce noise level. This will cost £8000 and Open Door have agreed to pay for it.



### Safeguarding

The meeting agreed the updated Church Safeguarding Policy.

### Transform Trade

It was unanimously agreed that we continue as a Fairtrade Church.

### Churches Together

Party in the Park Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June. We need help.

Good Friday morning will see the usual Raising of the Cross on the Green.

There will be an ecumenical Songs of Praise at St Mary's on Sunday September 24th.

### Dates for the Diary

2 April Palm Sunday Bouncy Church

6 April Maundy Thursday Upper Room service at 7pm

7 April Good Friday service 10am and raising cross on green

9 April Easter Day

7 May Coronation lunch

21 May General Church Meeting

11 June Party in the Park

### AOB

The meeting approved the appointment of Tricia Rutter as a worship leader for our Church.

Dates of next meetings: 14 June and 12 October.

If you would like the minutes and reports from the Church Council or have any questions then please feel free to get in touch with Jona.

**Andy Anderson**

## GARDENING FOR MARCH 2023

February has almost gone (writing 22<sup>nd</sup>) and we have had very little rain and probably one of the warmest Februarys on record. I know it will have been an opportunity for many to do some clearing up especially after all the high winds. Margaret has had about ten big bags away to the tip. Collection of garden waste starts again on the week beginning 6 March so you can get your applications in at the increased price of £49.50. The collectors will empty the bins for the first two collections only if you have not got your stickers.



This month Which? is reporting on their trials with growing bags but restricting the results to peat-free contents. They list the Best Buy peat-free growing bags as Dalefoot Wool Compost for tomatoes and Dalefoot Wool Compost for vegetable and salads, £11.75 for a 30 kg Bag (39p/litre). If you only want a small number of these they might be a good

investment. I buy growing bags (and I will still be looking for ones containing peat - 'Clover' are sold by Halls of Heddon) at about £6 to £7 each for 40 kg. I tip the contents of the bag into large pots for growing both tomatoes and cucumbers. The problem with growing in the bags is getting the watering correct and you haven't got the opportunity to add some controlled release fertilizer to the mix. Growing bags with up to three plants in them don't hold much water so you may need to water up to three times a day in hot weather as we did last year. Plant haloes can add root space for your plants and reduce the watering a little. On colder days the bag is resting on a cold surface unless elevated on a pallet base and will not need so much water.

Going outside onto the vegetable growing area it could soon be time for planting onion sets and broad beans direct. I always start these in pots so I know that I have viable growing plants. Growing onions from seed is the cheapest option but these should be now growing on in pots ready for planting at the end of the month. Plants grown from seed can give you larger bulbs to harvest but over a longer growing period. Quality plants can be obtained from nurseries ready for planting and will give good results. When planting onion sets direct into prepared soil use a trowel rather than forcing them into the soil, firm and just cover

the tips (trimmed short) to discourage birds pulling them out again. On allotments it might be better to cover with a net. If environmesh is used it will shield the growing crop from the onion moth (prevalent in the south, rare in the north) laying eggs which hatch a caterpillar that burrows into both onions and leeks and can destroy the crop. Which? has tested onion sets and lists varieties Centurion, Hercules and Hysky as best buys with Red Baron next. Turbo, Stuttgarter Giant and Sturon, once very popular, are at the bottom of a list of 17 varieties. It is important to keep onions (and leeks) free from weeds as they compete with the rooting system, nutrients and light. We are still enjoying leeks,



brussel sprouts (variety Windsor) and odd savoy cabbage from the garden. Spring bulbs are beginning to make a show. This half-term week the public have been invited to help plant 100,000 snowdrops, in the green, by the National Trust at Wallington. Look out for a super show in February 2024. Crocus and daffodils are into

flower now, especially the early flowering daffodils – we have some out. By the end of the month it will be time to remove daffodils stalks, at their base and before flowers have completely dropped, so they don't waste energy making seeds. Never cut off or tie up green leaves (I've often seen them knotted) as the plant needs these to photosynthesise and to prepare for next year's display. I have no camelias (they take a lot of looking after with sighting and prevention of frost damage) – they and other acid-loving plants will benefit from controlled-release ericaceous food sprinkled around their base. Gently work it into soil (without disturbing roots) with a hard fork and then mulch with ericaceous (it used to be peat and sand mix!) soil-improver compost. Plan ahead, feed borders with general fertilizer (Growmore or other 7:7:7 or fish blood and bone) and remember to feed again, in say June, when much of the nutrients will have been utilized (or washed out if we were to get heavy rain).

Good gardening in March.

**Syd Cowan**

## **VILLAGE NEWS**

### **Former NatWest Bank, 2 Darras Road**

A number of proposals have been made for this building: the latest idea is to provide an ice cream parlour/pizza shop.

### **Gill's Fish and Chip Shop, Merton Way**

This business is to be refurbished, following a delay caused by Covid. There will be improved access for disabled people and a small seating area inside.

### **Memorial Hall Car Park**

It is reported in the Hexham Courant that the charges introduced in June 2020 are to be scrapped later in 2023 - but please note they are still valid at present!

### **Ponteland Manor Care Home**

Ponteland Manor has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

### **Alnorthumbria Vets**

This Veterinary Group has recently moved from the Meadowfield Estate into Dobbie's Garden Centre.

### **Change of use of existing agricultural shed into a mechanical workshop - land adjacent to Jackson Avenue**

This plan has recently been approved.

**Jennifer Hardy**

## **WOMEN TOGETHER**

Our next meeting is on **Thurs 9th March** at 2pm – Michael Gatherar – Notable North Eastern Women.

**March 23rd**– Spring Faith Tea

## FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to **Joan Harrison** on her very special birthday on 6th March.

Birthday wishes too to **John Gill** on reaching an amazing 101 on 7th March.

Welcome home to **Viv Whyte**, back after her convalescence with her daughter in Somerset.

### ALF SCOTT



Thank you so very much from myself and my family for the beautiful flowers and comforting sympathy cards I have received. Also the kind uplifting thoughts you have shared on knowing Alf . He would have been overwhelmed.

He was a farmer who loved ploughing the fields and scattering over many years, and besides the sheep, cows and pigs, the breeding of Hereford Bulls is what he loved - one of which was exported to The Argentine.

He was blessed he lived a full and happy life and enjoyed his 90th birthday party on 18th January at the Golf Club.

A celebration of his life will be held on the 3rd March at 11am in Ponteland Methodist Church.

Kindest regards,

**Ann Scott**

### **Preachers March**

5th 9.00am Bouncy Church -  
Sewell

6.30pm Orrock

12th 10.00am Cunningham

6.30pm Albans

19th 10.00am Sewell

6.30pm Woolley

26th 10.00am Brooks

6.30pm Sewell

### **Women Together**

9 Mar – Michael Gatherar –  
Notable North Eastern Women

23 Mar – Spring Faith Tea

### **Men's Forum**

9 Mar – Clark's Bog trip 1.30pm

13 Apr - Lord John Stevens,  
former Police Commissioner  
'A Lifetime of Policing'

## **EASTER SERVICES APRIL**



**Thursday 6th** 7pm - Maundy Thursday  
Upper Room Communion

**Friday 7th** 10am - Good Friday Service  
followed by the Raising of the Cross on the  
village green and refreshments back at our  
Church.

**Sunday 9th** 10am and 6.30pm - Easter  
Services, both with Communion

**All Services led by Rev Jona Sewell**

### **From The Editors**

*Don't forget that copy for the April edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 24th March 2023**. The editor's email address is [andrew73anderson@gmail.com](mailto:andrew73anderson@gmail.com). The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*