



South West Connections

South West Cumbria United Area

Charity Registration Number 1141404

Methodist and United Reformed Churches Working Together

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The people of South West Cumbria United Area are committed to proclaiming in word and action that we have a 'God for All' and to giving everyone we have contact with the opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose in their lives.

From the United Area Mission and Discipleship Policy

MINISTER'S LETTER



Out of the Ordinary shares the wonder of how God's love is revealed in the ordinary... How a seemingly ordinary birth becomes God's out of the ordinary world-saving event through Jesus. How every day, ordinary acts of kindness can break through to the extraordinary.

This is the Good News:

We all face turmoil in our lives, in society, in nature. In the midst of this, God is birthing peace and shalom. We should engage in seeking justice in partnership with God. And we need to let go of things that belong to the crumbling, old order: power, violence, wealth, contempt for others. They have no place in the new kingdom that is emerging.

Can you remember a time when you learned something; what did the process feel like? Jesus challenged people to change their minds. Do you find change easy or hard?

So, in the midst of all this change, what can we do?

We can all tell our stories of our encounters with God. As we witness to the light, other people will be able to see God in new ways, see God more clearly. And as a result of these conversations, we can see God more clearly as well. Conversation about God is powerful.

We can act as an angel to others, they can act as an angel to us. Every day, ordinary acts of kindness can break through to the extraordinary.

So, a prayer for Advent and Christmas – as we prepare to change and be changed, we remember that God is with us, God is in us:

Our box of decorations stands ready to be explored.
 We reassess the treasures in this bulging cardboard box.
 Let's sort the treasure from the trash,
 the needed from the not.
 Advent God,
 challenge us today.

Our living is refocused with preparations underway.
 Our ordinary and everyday
 will be challenged along the way.
 Letting go of stuff to do God's will, is here to stay.
 Advent God,
 challenge us today.

Jesus born for us, each and every one of us.
 Not just for shepherds and for wise men,
 not just for those he knew then,
 oh yes, for them and us and evermore.
 Emmanuel,
 God is with us, God is in us.

The extraordinary transforming the ordinary.
 The extraordinary making sense of the ordinary.
 The extraordinary giving purpose and meaning.
 The extraordinary making me and making you.
 Emmanuel,
 God is with us, God is in us.

Grace and peace,
 Rev Helen

With thanks to the 2023 Methodist Advent and Christmas resources



REFLECTION

Placing the spotlight on Titus 2:11-13

I suspect the majority of readers if asked to come up with a biblical passage about advent or Christmas would automatically default to the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John or perhaps the prophecy of Isaiah, but few if any would identify the letter to Titus which is our focus for this newsletter.

The majority of the letter is focused on giving advice to Titus the young pastor at Crete; however, in verse eleven of chapter two the writer slips in a real a gem of a sentence, *The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people*. By verse 13 we are reminded that we *wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, while verse twelve reminds us that God's grace teaches us *to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions and live..... upright and godly lives*. In three short verses we are presented with the first coming of Christ; the transformation the gift of grace can have on our lives; and the second coming in glorious majesty.

Quite simply we are reminded that through the coming of Jesus we have by God's divine plan the means of salvation and are able to leave our old life so that we can live the new life in Christ to His glory, while at the same time we are able to look forward in blessed hope to the return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This trilogy of verses offers us **3L's** for living life in all its fullness: **Leave, Live, Look for**.

As we move through advent and approach the Christmas celebrations I would invite you to consider these verses which succinctly challenge us this Christmas to thank God for the gift of salvation through Christ so that we are able to be alive in Christ in the glorious hope of eternal life.

Charlie Mills

CHAPTER AND VERSE

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

My first memory of this passage was at secondary school, where it was one of our end of term readings. As a teenager growing up in a town relatively isolated from other towns, coming to the realisation that I was part of something much greater than my own congregation was truly amazing! It took a while for the enormity of this to penetrate – but it did. The passage goes on to assure us that each person is just as valuable as the next to Christ, that society is wrong in valuing one person over another. In Christ we are united, we are one.

This made me think about denominations, that they were a peculiar human invention! So much so that I refused to become a formal member of any church (although I always attended church, and was involved wherever we lived) until I was 28, when I became one of the first group of people in England to have joint C of E and Methodist membership, neither of which were the denomination in which I'd been brought up. Christians are one body.

The comparison with the many and varied parts of the human body made me think then, and still does, of the value of all people to Christ. He loves us, whatever our skills, whatever our failings, and that's something that has stayed with me, that I have tried to live by, and I hope always will.

Sue Millard

SPECIAL REPORT

On a Saturday in late September, I joined in with an afternoon of singing and prayer at St Mark's in Barrow. Called Spirit Works it was run by Roger Jones and Christian Music Ministries.

Having been involved in other Roger Jones musical activities such as Saints Alive I looked forward to spending time with God in music. But the event was much more than just an afternoon of joyful, prayerful singing, ably led by the musicians, and certainly wasn't just for those who might call themselves musicians.

We did indeed enjoy singing together and worshipping. But we were also guided through times of reflection inviting us to notice the Holy Spirit warming us, encouraging us and perhaps helping us see something we might seek healing for or support with.

There were 2 workshops to choose between: spending time discerning the Spirit's voice for others in prayer and the one I joined in with. We were asked to seek words of scripture that spoke about the people in the small groups we created – writing them on a folded list – rather like consequences. Scripture prompts were available if needed. Then in pairs we were each given an image and without showing them to our partner we shared with them how this might speak about them. These were new ways of prayer for me, and it was very moving to receive words and encouragement for myself and to offer these for others.

The afternoon ended with delicious cake and drinks ensuring our bodies were well fed alongside our spirits. I would recommend these afternoons to all who seek time with God, to be encouraged and strengthened by the warmth and energy of the Holy Spirit.

Kate Hunt

Thank you again for your generous gift of a National Trust gift card to mark the end of the two years when David was again officially part of the United Area staff team. You were clearly aware of our liking for National Trust tea shops. We thought you might like to see some evidence that your kindness was not being wasted. This photo was taken by Alison at Anglesey Abbey close to her home near Cambridge while we were all together enjoying a lovely lunch.

Much appreciated.

David and Hazel



Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things He has made. Romans 1:20

Eco Church is an award scheme run by A Rocha UK for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth.

All our United Area churches are encouraged to care for the planet which God has entrusted to us and to work towards becoming Eco churches.

The information about how to do this is given on the website: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

The first step is to take the Eco Survey, which has 5 sections: Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community and Global Engagement, and Lifestyle.

Congratulations to Dalton Community Church, who have gained a bronze award. Here they tell us some of the ways in which they achieved this:



In May Rev Kate and Gill began to complete the application.

The Worship and Teaching section went straight to gold status, so we were very encouraged.

Our building was fully refurbished in summer 2022, an old single skin addition at the back was demolished and the original Sunday school room which was down 2 large steps was brought up to a level floor with the Church and converted into toilets, a storeroom, a kitchen, meeting room and plant room.

All our water heating comes from solar panels and can be boosted if need be in colder months. However, we used preheated water from the kitchen

hot water boiler for washing up in the duller months.

As far as the land is concerned, the garden is managed each year to encourage wildlife, supporting pollinators and seed eaters by growing a variety of flowering plants and by leaving patches of grass to grow during May allowing native plants to thrive. We anticipate carrying out surveys here, like the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, to see what wildlife we can find. We are encouraging people to use the garden and look forward to developing this space as a place for contemplation. Harmful chemicals aren't used in the garden and some fruit is grown here.

We are now at silver award status for our building and land, so many thanks to Bob (buildings expert) and John (gardening enthusiast).

We now have more investigations to carry out and more questions to ask as we aim for the full Silver award!!



Beacon Hill have also gained a bronze award.

Our eco journey began in January 2012, when Karen Edmondson came to speak at a meeting about the Eco congregation award (as the scheme was then known). We gained this award in 2015.

It seemed fitting that we should ask Karen to present the new award at our Harvest service in September. This was also a Parade service attended by the Cubs, some of whom had helped us gain the award by making bug hotels and planting wildflower seeds in the garden area of the car park.

FROM THE AREA TRUSTEES

The Cumbria Methodist District has been concerned for some time about duplication of effort, and has recognised that the membership is dramatically smaller than when the present Districts were first conceived, and is likely to become smaller still should present trends continue. The governance burden of current structures is disproportionate to our size. It is challenging to fill the offices, lay appointments, and meetings. The desire is to release energy and personnel from maintaining the present District structures, to enable Circuits better to focus on mission in their localities.

The Conference agreed to the establishment of a new District incorporating the present Cumbria, Lancashire, Liverpool, Bolton and Rochdale, Manchester and Stockport Districts. The new District will come into being on 1 September 2024 and will be called the North West England District. This is effectively coterminous with the URC NW Synod. As of 4 November, Rev'd Dr James Tebbutt has been voted on as Chair of the new District.

There was also a District Gathering Day on 8th July 2023 – for people to consider the possibility of a county wide Circuit. After Synod in September, it was agreed that a proposal for a county wide Circuit would be taken to Circuit meetings (Area meeting) and Church councils / church meetings for consultation. Information has already been shared (**let your stewards know if you would like a copy**), and the intent is that we have time to pray and ask questions before voting in Spring meetings. All members in the Area can vote; everyone can be heard.

The reasons behind this proposal are similar to those for a larger District; centralisation of admin, and localisation of mission, so that churches can concentrate on being Church. In our ecumenical county, this looks like:

Follow Daily – Helping each other to follow Jesus more closely

Care Deeply – Listening to our communities to serve them and to challenge injustice

Speak Boldly – Sharing our faith in Jesus in everyday ways, with all people

Tread Gently – Protecting God's creation, seeking to sustain and renew the life of the earth

Our ecumenical colleagues are fully engaged with this process; the proposed new Circuit will be effectively coterminous with the URC Cumbria Missional Partnership (which has replaced the governance that was previously delegated to the United Area).

Please pray for this proposal, and let your church council reps know if you have any questions or comments.

Grace and peace,

Helen Hooley

NEWS FROM RE:NEW

Well, Christmas has come round quickly again this year and so far our appearances at coffee mornings and Christmas fayres are being so incredibly supported so thank you for that! Yet again this year we have appeared at Grange-over-Sands but this year we have managed to appear at Ulverston too. We have managed to appear ecumenically as well by attending events at St Mary's on Walney, St James in Hindpool and Spring Mount in Barrow. The best sellers this year have been the round Ceramic decorations. If you've not yet seen these then please pop in and say hi.

Please continue to pray for the future of the shop and the direction in which we are going, and please consider coming to join our amazing team of volunteers. Even if all you can do is a morning a month any help would be gratefully appreciated. Also, if anyone is able to help with the clearing out of the old shop with tip runs or when we have a moving date to help with transporting between shops then please do get in contact.

We are currently really short of ladies' handbags and men's clothing so if you're having a clear out then please spare us a thought.

Thanks, and blessings

Tim Jeffries

Pour into our hearts, O God, the love that casts out fear, the truth that sets us free and the grace that is sufficient for all our needs. Though you are unseen, do not be unknown. Though you are hidden from our eyes let us rejoice in your beauty at the last.

*Louisa May Alcott (1833-1888)
From the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2023/2024*

FOCUS ON MILLOM

A short history

Millom Methodist Church is an amalgamation of several churches that used to serve the town of Millom and Haverigg village. Many migrants came from Devon and Cornwall to work in the town's mines.

The current premises occupies the small school room which was the first building built in the 1860's.

This building was added to in 2008 when an extra room in the style of the 1860 build was constructed.



Queen Street Methodist Church



St John's, Haverigg

Two churches originally in Millom, both with ministers, were found on Queen Street and Newton Street. The Newton Street church was a branch of the Bible Christian Methodist Church whose founder members originated from Cornwall. It closed in 1970 and was later demolished.

In Haverigg, St John's Bankfield Road Chapel was erected in 1881. It was used as a place of worship until 1991, but was later closed and demolished.

In Millom, Queen Street Wesley Chapel was erected in 1872-3. An organ was installed in 1884-5. The insertion of a gallery at an unknown date meant that it could seat 1000. In contrast to Newton Street, most of its founder members were from Devon. The last service in this church was Harvest Festival in 1993.



The church in disuse



Selling the interior fittings

The church had two schoolrooms. The large schoolroom was used for the South Cumbria Music Festival but closed in the 1990's.

Coming to the present, church services are held each Sunday at 11am.

There is a coffee morning on a Thursday and we host a community lunch every 3rd Sunday which often has up to 30 people attending. There are children's craft days, with a light lunch, for families to attend on dates in the school holidays, and various music groups providing entertainment.

The building is used by various groups:

Monday morning Knit and Natter; Mix and Mingle Thursday afternoon; Brownies on Thursday evening; Millom Hospital League of Friends quarterly meetings.

FROM OUR CHURCHES

Contributions to **Methodist Mission Funds** for the 12 month period ending 31 August 2023:
 World Mission Fund – 4 churches made a contribution. JMA £575.95, General Fund £270, Total £845.95.
 Mission in Britain Fund – 2 churches made a contribution. Total £463.50.

Trinity

The summer period has passed quietly. Our monthly coffee mornings have continued, and are enjoyed by all. In October we held our regular Christmas Card and Gift sale. Eleven different charities attended. There was also a cake stall and a raffle, lots of coffee drinking, lots of chat, and much buying of cards and gifts.

In January our coffee mornings are moving from the second, to the third, Saturday each month.

We've also begun a new time of worship. It's called The Good Book Club, and is held on the first Monday of each month at 2.15pm. It's a time to think, pray, listen, enjoy music, reflect and more. All are welcome at this gathering.

We have begun our Eco Church journey, and are working gently towards the Bronze award.

Sue Millard

Vickerstown

Vickerstown celebrated Harvest with a Church Parade on Sunday September 24th; plenty of tins and packets were gathered in for Barrow Foodbank. A few cash donations, along with the proceeds of our October coffee morning, have been sent to the Methodist-run charity the 'Fund for Human Need' following an appeal at the autumn District Synod: a total of £100.

The Area Bonfire Party at Vickerstown – held on Halloween this year; we hope to be back to Nov 5th as normal next year – raised £100 for the Fund for World Mission. A smaller gathering than usual, probably because of the change of date, enjoyed food, chat, a fire and plenty of our own fireworks on a relatively dry evening. We hardly missed our usual excellent view of displays across the town!

Karen Edmondson

Hartington Street

Harvest Festival

HST celebrated Harvest Festival on 1st October. Our call to worship was “With God, all things are possible” Matthew 19:26. This linked to the Tearfund campaign for Harvest, and, as a church, we decided to give our harvest gifts to the support groups discussed in the Tearfund film clip. To date, the offering stands at £245. During the film, Hester, who has benefited from Tearfund support, talked about ‘rising up’ out of poverty. As a congregation, we used the symbolism of ‘rising up’ to shape dough and bake bread. Our bread creations reflected times and experiences in our lives when we felt God’s presence.

Messy Church Light Party

On Saturday 28th October Messy Church returned with a bang! Together with their parents, children made lanterns, glow jars and decorated star biscuits to symbolise Jesus’ light in a sometimes dark world. The craft activities were followed by games and a sausage and mash tea which was an excellent time of fellowship and sharing.

Lois Kavanagh

Beacon Hill

We were very pleased to welcome four friends from Ramsden Street to our Monday evening fellowship meetings in September.

Our Harvest Festival morning service was led by Karen Edmondson and Lisa Frankland. It was good to welcome Lisa to her first service with us and we look forward to hearing from her again. This was also a Parade service and we received a large contribution of tins and packets of food from the uniformed organisations. An equally large donation was given by the ladies of the Monday Magic group. The food was donated to the homeless shelter. In addition £152 was collected for the Foodbank.

Our Chapel Anniversary service in October was led by Ron Wilson, accompanied by Denice, who joined us for a faith meal after the service.

Lilian Wood

Askam

The funeral collection for Mary Willan raised funds which were divided between the work of the church and Duddon Inshore Rescue. Margaret and Alan presented their Station Officer, Ian Standing, with a cheque for £60.

Alan Mason

**Ramsden Street**

We were pleased to have the Synod Moderator – Rev Clare Downing – lead worship on October 1st followed the next week by Rev Lis Mullen from Windermere.

Several people attended Synod where the theme was Anti-Poverty and a resolution was passed that the United Reformed Church North Western Synod becomes a member of the “Let’s End Poverty” Campaign.

Soup lunches have been held on the last Friday of each month following the coffee morning and prayers for our community led by Kate in the Church.

Harvest was celebrated on Friday October 20th beginning with a pea and pie supper, and a Harvest themed Baptismal service for Abigail Walker was held on Sunday October 22nd. Both of these lovely services were led by Kate. Generous donations mean that we can twin all three of our toilets.

Anne Stevenson

Kirkby

A quiet August and September but we still held Coffee and Company and Craft and Chat each month. Also it was lovely to welcome Hayley back into our Family.

October started with our Harvest Service led by Bob. All items donated went to the Foodbank.

We ended the month with our Craft Fair which included a Soup lunch. We were really encouraged by all the people who came including some from Ulverston due to Hayley. Thanks to everyone who supported us.

Beryl Hollowell

I had a dream that I was standing on a hillside,
And all the lights of town were shining far below.
When up in the air beautiful voices
Sang a new song, let everyone know.

Oh and love shone down
Over the hills and over the valleys,
Oh and love shone down over the world.

Andy Piercy and C S de Whalley
Singing the Faith number 203

Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us (Ephesians 5:2)

WEBSITES

United Area: <https://swcua.uk>

Regional: www.cumbriamethodistdistrict.org.uk
www.nwsynod.org.uk

National: www.methodist.org.uk
www.urc.org.uk

The next issue will be published in **March 2024.**

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Deadline for contributions: Sunday 4 February.