



South West Connections

South West Cumbria United Area

Charity Registration Number 1141404

Methodist and United Reformed Churches Working Together

ISSUE 7 June 2023

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

For this letter I thought it would be good to reflect on Eco matters. I am part of the URC North Western Synod's Eco Network, encouraging all our communities to become Eco churches – seeing this as part of God's mission to treasure creation and alongside this to transform communities, seeking to bring justice to those suffering most from climate change. We are steadily getting churches across the Area registered with A Rocha – surveying how our churches, our grounds, and our lifestyles nurture creation, and to see how we can make positive changes – many are already doing simple actions that reduce their impact on the earth and support the beautiful diversity of God's world that is essential for earth's survival. We congratulate Vickerstown who already have achieved a Bronze award and look forward to celebrating as others join in.

Some in the Area joined in with Eco Lent studies. The meetings on Zoom allowed us to come together across the North West and to hear stories from different communities, how they were involved in Eco church in their corner of the world, swapping ideas that we could all learn from. We had opportunity to lament, to confess, to find practical actions including protest, and to celebrate the wonder of God's beautiful creation as we considered scripture, statistics, and different people's experiences. What has struck me most is that it is the poorest in all our communities across the globe who suffer most and contribute least to climate change. We are all seekers of God's kingdom of justice, we are moved to make necessary changes – but to do this together – doing what each of us can and supporting one another through the resources and gifts each of us have been given. You may have heard me talk about this as part of the service on the screen where we looked at Matthew 25:31-40. Jesus describes the sheep and the goats. In the context of global climate change, we see that sometimes we are reaching out to those who are far away – our feeding, refreshing, and caring may not just be those on our doorsteps. But we must also remember our localities – where lack of trees in streets can raise temperatures and reduce the quality of the air we breathe, poor insulation creates cold homes, increased fuel bills and wasted energy.

I recently attended a seminar by Cumbria Action for Sustainability. It was about coastlines, covering saltmarshes and seagrass, wind turbines and flooding – there are other talks about local issues on YouTube. It was fascinating to hear through work done by Cumbria Wildlife Trust about the importance of coastal plants in the locking in of carbon, the need for us to map where they are to promote protection and record their effectiveness. We heard that sea-based wind turbines are the most economical green energy producers but that questions still exist about their effects on biodiversity. Local groups set up to look at flood management in their areas have a big impact on how those communities are affected by flooding. Sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. These talks point to things we can do here on our doorstep and may help us find ways of joining in with God's mission to treasure creation locally. In May we had Christian Aid week. We can learn from their projects how interconnected we all are, all of us dependent on others' actions. As we support their work we are transforming all our lives – bringing justice across the globe as well as here in Cumbria.

God Bless

Rev'd Kate

REFLECTION

Placing the spotlight on Revelation 17:14 King of Kings

Tradition, religion, pageantry and ceremony certainly came together at the coronation of King Charles III. For some I have no doubt that the interest was in the procession, for others in the continuity of a thousand years of Kings and Queens and for others in the quality and variety of music. Whatever the high spot I suspect most people would agree that it was a memorable occasion. At the heart of the ceremony however is the covenant made between the King and God witnessed by the people. Following the most sacred moment in the service – the anointing of the King – he was, among other items, given the orb to symbolise the sovereign’s power; readers may recall it was placed on the late Queen’s coffin at her funeral. Unlike other orbs this precious symbol is mounted with a cross to remind monarchs that their majesty is nothing compared to that of Jesus, a king nailed to a cross who they are called to serve.

The Archbishop’s words at this point are powerful: “Receive this orb set under the cross, and remember that the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our redeemer.” The words are spoken directly to the King but in essence they are a timely reminder to all of us that, while we are citizens of an earthly sovereign, as Christians we are also citizens of the King of Kings and belong to His heavenly Kingdom. Our British citizenship usually comes to us by virtue of birth: our heavenly citizenship, in the words of Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3:3, comes through being “born again” and is by reason of God’s great love for this world. It is a citizenship which begins through faith and which has assurance of eternal life for all who believe.

Our heavenly citizenship was bought with the price of Jesus’s blood shed on the cross for the sins of the whole world and is offered to us as a gift which we can accept or reject. The acceptance is the first step in a journey which acknowledges Jesus Christ as King and our citizenship gives us the right to be a child of God. With all rights come responsibilities and in this respect our responsibility as citizens of the heavenly kingdom is to be part of making Christ’s kingdom come on earth or, put another way, living a life which honours the King of Kings.

As you reflect on your recent memories of the coronation of King Charles I would invite you to reflect on the words from Revelation “King of Kings” and His claim on your life so that He takes His rightful place in your heart so that you become more like Him through His power working in and through you for good.

Charlie Mills

CHAPTER AND VERSE

Matthew 6:19

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This is a very well known passage but for me it holds a special place in my heart. Many of you will know by now that unfortunately I lost my mother at the age of 12, and this was the scripture that I chose for her funeral. Not only was it part of the last sermon she heard on earth but it spoke to me too. I later rewrote this passage to say “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where sickness and old age can destroy and where death breaks in and steals, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither sickness nor old age destroys and where death cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

For many of us our family and in particular our mothers can be a treasure, and this passage holds as a reminder that my treasure (my Mum) is being kept safe in heaven until we can at last meet again and my heart and my love are with her.

Tim Jeffries

THE COLLECT FOR PEACE

O GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed: Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

WORKING WITH OTHER CHURCHES

In 2016 Churches Together in Cumbria began a project to make every church in Cumbria dementia-friendly, with the aim of having a Dementia Enabler in every church or group of churches in the county.

This project came to end in 2020, but its work continues under the banner of **Anna Chaplaincy**, an ecumenical, community-based chaplaincy promoting the spiritual welfare of older people.

The following information is taken from the leaflet produced by Churches Together in Cumbria.

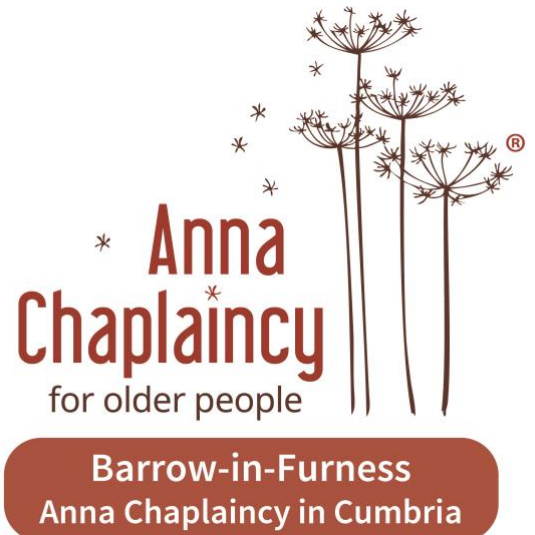
Named after the faithful widow Anna, who appears with Simeon in Luke's gospel, Anna Chaplaincy is a community-based network that supports older people with their carers, working across many denominations. 'Anna' means grace: Anna Chaplaincy is a gracious offering from the church to local communities.

Our goal is to link people who share a passion for working with older people, creating opportunities to learn from each other.

Anna Chaplains work in care homes, private homes, churches and community groups, and are there for people of strong, little or no faith. Male or female, lay or ordained, each works within their local church context. Anna Chaplains may motivate volunteers to work side by side with them, often known as Anna Friends.

Anna Chaplaincy Cumbria is part of a national Anna Chaplaincy movement, www.annachaplaincy.org.uk

This is supported by a national team based at the Bible Reading Fellowship www.brf.org.uk



From the **Anna Chaplaincy Barrow** Facebook page:

Anna Chaplaincy Barrow is sub-licensed to the network and has an ecumenical Steering Group with representatives from a variety of churches. We want to see the needs and welfare of older people being met across our town, no matter whether people have a faith or not.

Across Barrow we partner with other organisations, who share our aim in 'making a difference' in some way. We firmly believe that linking people who share a passion for working with older people, especially in the churches, will create opportunities to learn from each other and further enrich what is already happening here.

Members of the team are involved in leading worship in care homes and preparing craft packs for them, singing therapy at Abbey View, Furness General Hospital, Vintage Thursday at St Paul's and the dementia-friendly tea service at Holy Family. Some members of our United Area churches help with some of these activities.

There is an Anna Chaplaincy Barrow YouTube channel, where a service of worship is posted every month. This is made available to care homes, but is also suitable for anyone who prefers a shorter service, as it lasts 20-25 minutes.

There are 2 Anna Chaplains in Barrow, Babs Lowes and Janis Preston, who lead and encourage a team of Anna Friends, Dementia Enablers and Volunteers in accompanying older people on their journey through life. We warmly welcome new people to our team!

If you feel you would like to know more or get involved in some way, please contact: Babs Lowes, Anna Chaplain, mobile 07854 185053, email: babs.annachaplaincy@gmail.com

The Anna Chaplaincy Prayer

Faithful God, you have promised in Christ to be with us to the end of time.
 Come close to those who have lived long and experienced much.
 Help them to continue to be faithful and, within the all-age kingdom of God,
 to find ways to go on giving and receiving your grace, day by day.
 For your glory and your kingdom.
 Amen.

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork Psalm 19:1

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. There are questions in each section, for which points are awarded. A bronze award can be gained by scoring 25% of the available points, silver by scoring 50% and gold by scoring 75%. Enough points have to be gained in each of the 5 categories.

How to begin

Visit the website: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk> to look at the survey questions, which can be printed off. It may be easier to complete the questions on paper, but **applying for an award can only be done online.**

As an example, given below are the questions in the first and shortest category:

Worship and Teaching

The optional answers refer to how often activities are carried out: annually, quarterly, monthly etc. There is also a Not Applicable option.

1. Special Sundays relating to caring for God's earth (eg Creation Time, Environment Sunday, Rogation Sunday etc) are celebrated in our church
2. The hymns and songs (and liturgies if used) in our church services enable us to celebrate God's creation
3. Our church prays for environmental issues
4. Caring for God's earth is preached in our church
5. Our church hosts guest speakers from A Rocha UK or other Christian environmental organisations (eg Christian Aid, Tearfund, Green Christian, The John Ray initiative) to talk about environmental issues
6. Caring for God's earth features as a teaching theme in our church's youth work
7. Caring for God's earth features as a teaching theme in our church's children's work
8. Caring for God's earth features as a focus of small group study in our church
9. Our church's communications (eg newsletters, service sheets, magazines, social media etc) include items relating to the theme of caring for God's earth
10. The leadership have made a formal commitment to improving the environmental credentials of our church by endorsing the undertaking of work towards an Eco Church Award

Register on the website and enter the answers to the survey questions and the number of points scored for each question will be shown.

Resources are available on the website relating to each category, giving simple ideas of actions that can be taken to increase the number of points gained.

Vickerstown church has already gained the Bronze Eco Church Award.
You can see a presentation about how they achieved this on the Area website: <https://swcua.uk> under Our Values/Eco Church.

NEWS FROM RE:NEW

Hello once again!

Well, Easter was a HUGE success for the shop.

Many thanks to all the churches who hosted us at coffee mornings, where we did a brisk trade in Easter eggs, chocolate bars and cards. We couldn't have done it without your support. The 'pop up' stall at Barrow market on Easter Saturday was also a success with good community engagement. We now have a small range of Divine Fairtrade chocolate at £1 a bar, or four for £3.50, along with a range of Fairtrade cafetière coffee blends from the Kingdom Coffee company. These are £5 a bag.



Don't forget that we also have a selection of Christian products and books available for purchase – or we can order items for you too. Last year we ordered in a handful of Methodist diaries and this year I've been in touch with the URC book shop to order some of theirs for 2024. So, if you would like to place an order for either a Methodist or URC Diary, please let me know.

With the decrease of shops in our town centre, it's getting harder and harder to see a future; however, a future there will be. Many of you by now will have heard of our plans for expansion. Back in January/February, we were exploring a larger building to move into on the main street of Barrow, but unfortunately that one fell through – or so we thought. The estate agents have since come back to us and asked if we would like to reapply for it; so continued prayers for the building situation are much appreciated. As there will be a small seating area in the new shop, we would also like to invite any groups in the churches to come and use the space. So if any knit and natter groups, Bible study groups or prayer groups would like to join us – and hopefully encourage other visitors to join in with the conversation! – please get in touch.

If we get accepted for this building, we will be coming to you with requests for help: to help us clear out the new and the old shop, to get the new shop ready, to transport items from one to the other, to volunteer for the new shop and possibly to become a befriender as well. So please pray about it all – and for the helpers, of course there will be cake and coffee provided! Looking further into the future, there may be an opportunity for us to be involved in a bigger ecumenical project in larger premises as part of a new town centre development.

In the meantime, we have recently opened upstairs to the public as a ladies' boutique (sorry gentlemen!), due to us receiving all of the remaining stock from a high end local shop that has sadly closed down. There is something there for everyone, from casual tees to 3 piece wedding outfits. So why not come on in and have a look to see what you can find.

Tim Jeffries

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

1. Father of everlasting grace,
Thy goodness and Thy truth we praise,
Thy goodness and Thy truth we prove;
Thou hast, in honour of Thy Son,
The gift unspeakable sent down,
The Spirit of life, and power, and love.

2. Send us the Spirit of Thy Son,
To make the depths of Godhead known,
To make us share the life divine;
Send Him the sprinkled blood to apply,
Send Him our souls to sanctify,
And show and seal us ever Thine.

3. So shall we pray, and never cease;
So shall we thankfully confess
Thy wisdom, truth, and power, and love;
With joy unspeakable adore,
And bless and praise Thee evermore,
And serve Thee as Thy hosts above:

4. Till, added to that heavenly choir,
We raise our songs of triumph higher,
And praise Thee in a nobler strain,
Out-soar the first-born seraph's flight,
And sing, with all our friends in light,
Thy everlasting love to man.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

FOCUS ON DALTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

A short history

The building in Market Street, Dalton now used by Dalton Community Church set off life in 1868 as a school built by Congregationalists in the town. They intended to build a church as well, but this never materialised. At the time of building they were worshipping in The Old Grammar School on Becksie Road (now a residential property). The first service in the new building was held on 23 March, 1869.

The main body of the church is built from limestone and incorporates a series of Gothic-style windows with pointed arches. The land cost £242 and building costs were just over £1,000. Originally it was heated by an open fire at the back of the church and lit by oil lamps. In 1870 a gallery was added, gas lighting was installed and the church was licensed for marriages. A hall was added to the main building in the 1870s, and this was heated by a central iron stove.

Much later a small flat-roofed extension was also added to the back of church to house the kitchen and toilet.

In 1971 Dalton Congregationalists voted to become part of the United Reformed Church, which was formed in 1972 by Congregationalists and the Presbyterian Church of England. In 1981 the URC were joined nationally by the Reformed Association of the Churches of Christ and this led to the congregation of the nearby Church of Christ (on the corner of Queen Street and Ulverston Road) moving to the URC building in Market Street.

In 2016, Dalton United Reformed Church and Dalton Methodist Church joined together in a formal Local Ecumenical Partnership, and a Sharing Agreement was put into place for the Market Street building. Pooled resources, generous grants, loans and pledges plus a lot of fundraising have enabled a comprehensive refurbishment to take place which has given the building a warmer feel and a brighter look from 2022 onwards. Many finishing touches are still required, but we are pleased to represent the presence of God in the heart of Dalton.



Church social events

We hold Coffee, Chat and Company every Wednesday afternoon and we have registered as a Welcome Space. We also host around 6 Coffee Mornings on Saturdays together with some Craft Fayres and a Christmas Fayre. The final Saturday before Christmas is 'Coffee and Carols' when Dalton Band pop in to play while the folk eat free mince pies and drink coffee. We also hold fairly regular concerts due to Margaret's many contacts in local music circles.

We host the Stroke Support Club on the 2nd Monday of the month, late morning. Most Saturday mornings of the year various charities host Coffee Mornings to raise funds. These are a focal point for many Dalton folk. We are also available for children's birthday parties and other bookings.



The United Area Seder meal and service held on Maundy Thursday

FROM OUR CHURCHES

Lebone Village

In April a donation of £2030 was sent from the United Area to Lebone.

Trinity

In April we celebrated Easter in a number of ways. Members attended many services, including Dalton's Seder service, the Good Friday Free Church service at Beacon Hill, the walk to the Abbey afterwards, and the Sunrise Service at the cenotaph. Our own services included an 8am Communion service, followed by breakfast, and an invitation to join the Baptist congregation at 10.30am for their Easter Day service, when one of their members was baptised.

Our monthly Coffee Mornings continue on the second Saturday each month, but our Free Friday Film Nights have stopped now, until the nights become darker. We're still organising a Warm Space with lunch and activities on Mondays and Thursdays, which are well attended.

Sue Millard

Vickerstown

Throughout Lent we joined with St Mary's for the Barrow Mission Community's suggested Lent course on prayer, meeting at St Mary's, instead of our usual fortnightly Bible Study at Vickerstown – it was good to meet with a few more people and hear different points of view and faith experiences. We are pleased that St Mary's (and St John's on Barrow Island) now have a vicar again, with Helen and Karen able to attend the licensing/welcome service for Rev Stuart Silk and his family on April 22nd. We look forward to getting to know Stuart, his wife Kathryn and their four sons, and working with them on Walney.

Monthly coffee mornings continue to be a valuable social gathering, helping to connect a wider range of people to our church, and we are trying to get a few more people from the Vickerstown community involved by putting extra posters out locally. We have resumed our 'Food & Fellowship' lunchtime gatherings, which had been largely on hold since Covid, meeting every other month now rather than monthly – in February we shared pancakes and were able to donate £70 to Christian Aid for their Turkey/Syria earthquake appeal, and we also had a smaller gathering in April. On Sunday May 7th we were delighted to formally welcome Rebecca as a member at Vickerstown, and to mark this special occasion with cake to accompany the usual tea and coffee after the service!

Karen Edmondson

Hartington Street

Easter Sunday saw HST breaking more new ground as we embarked on our first ever Lego Church! Our service began with the whole congregation participating in an Easter egg hunt and we continued our worship as Charles Wesley intended by singing Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! Maureen, Glenys' sister, led us in prayer and then the entire congregation built Holy Week out of Lego bricks! The Sunday school worked on the floor, a natural habitat for Lego building, and everyone else worked on tables to produce some fantastic models to represent the Easter story from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. We had cockerels to symbolise Peter denying Jesus, Golgotha scenes for those who wanted to reflect on Good Friday and some awesome empty tombs complete with boulders being rolled away. Following the show and tell section of the build which revealed what aspects of Easter were important to our congregation, we sat down as a church family and watched the Easter story animated in Lego. This proved to be a thought-provoking point in the service where those who hadn't yet made it to the foot of the cross could do so and therefore fully appreciate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday morning.

Coronation celebrations got underway early at HST and our last messy church of the connexional year became a coronation party! The church was decked out with union jack bunting and our crafts included beefeater guards made from lollipop sticks, a door wreath in red, white and blue created from the children's hand prints (a very messy operation!) and decorating crown-shaped ginger biscuits – most of which were devoured on site! And, finally, making a golden crown to wear during our coronation meal of bangers and mash! The tables looked fantastic with red or blue tablecloths, union jack serviettes and matching paper cups.

This year the team have benefitted greatly from the ministry, love and care of Jonny and Kat, the Salvation Army leaders. Their ministry will take them to SA Headquarters in London from September and, as is our tradition at HST when God takes people's lives in new directions, we prayed Jonny, Kat, Grace, Esther and Martha on the journey that God has already mapped out for them.

Lois Kavanagh

Beacon Hill

Our Monday Magic Group is a social group intended for all but is currently ladies only. We meet once a fortnight on Mondays at 2 pm, and start the meeting with half an hour of armchair exercises led by Nicola from the Leisure Centre followed by a speaker or an afternoon of puzzles or a quiz.

Our speakers are varied to try and cater for all tastes; a recent highlight was a visit from Newbarns School choir. Since Lockdown our numbers have grown and we celebrated the Coronation with Afternoon Tea for 42 ladies, which all seemed to enjoy. We shall have a break for summer and reopen in September.

Elaine Pears

Ramsden Street

Our soup lunches have been appreciated in the winter months and we now intend to serve some light lunches on the last Friday in May and June.

Some of us were pleased to join Beacon Hill for their Lent Bible studies.

FACTORS made decorations for Palm Sunday and Easter Day which were admired by all.

On Saturday April 22nd we met to chat about our Church and the community around us. After bacon butties there was plenty of discussion in groups and notes were taken to share the following day during our morning worship where we considered different ideas and the life of our Church. The third part of this 'Finding our way together' to reflect about what we feel God is calling us to do here at Ramsden Street was included in our worship on May 14th. A special Coronation Tea was held on Friday April 28th when everyone made a crown to wear and joined in a quiz and game before enjoying a lovely afternoon tea.

Anne Stevenson

Kirkby

In March we extended our Coffee and Company with a soup Lent Lunch, with donations to the Turkey/Syria Earthquake Appeal. We raised over £400, and some people came only to make a donation, which was great. We even had 2 ladies who came after playing Pickleball in Broughton. Thanks to everyone who supported.

On Easter Sunday breakfast was enjoyed by all, including Rev Kate and her sister, before our service.

Beryl Hollowell

Millom

Over the last three months Millom has experienced highs and lows, the obvious lows being the death of Bryan Mason, closely followed by my husband Robert, and we continue to remember and mourn for both of them. Also Gladys Brockbank has had to move into St George's residential home and of course we are all getting older, with some of our members becoming frail. But Myrna is at home, having been in hospital for a long time, for which we give thanks. Another low is not always having a minister, along with everyone else, but we are running our own services, which is interesting.

For a small church we have a lot of highs, especially within the community. We have our weekly coffee mornings, which are also a warm hub, on Thursday mornings. We have also held an Easter coffee morning and an afternoon tea. Community lunches are held monthly, each third Sunday, hosted by our church and organized by Ingrid, and these are very successful.

Brownies are being held in the church at present as we cannot use our own hall and this has worked out really well. Lucy has held two children's holiday craft days, which are becoming talked about and eagerly anticipated.

The Lakes Gospel Choir came to Millom and sang in the Baptist church as ours is too small, and this was fantastic. It is good to work with the Baptists; we are holding the Knitted Bible exhibition in conjunction with them in June.

Liz Watson

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 **September 2023**.

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Deadline for contributions: Sunday 6 August.