



South West Connections

South West Cumbria United Area

Charity Registration Number 1141404

Methodist and United Reformed Churches Working Together

ISSUE 6 March 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

It's that time of year again! Did you enjoy your pancakes?! Lent has traditionally been a time of reflection, when we give up or take up something for 40 days (which, if you add them up, doesn't include the Sundays – which is why Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday is actually 47 days...). Historically, it was a tradition that adults would be baptised at Easter, and so the people of God were encouraged to join in with those preparing for baptism, as they were instructed in the Lord's prayer and prayed for by the Christian community.

So this year, local churches are joining together to offer The Prayer Course, at venues across Barrow, and on Zoom for those further afield (look for details on your church's communications). It's based on the Lord's prayer – which many of us know by heart. But the Lord's prayer is not just something to learn – it's an outline for all our prayers. It helps us to know what every prayer should be like. It teaches us to pray.

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.
When he finished, one of his disciples said to him,
"Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples"
(Luke 11:1)*

Maybe you could commit to saying the Lord's prayer every day, at midday, wherever you find yourself, throughout Lent.

And then wait. Trust in the slow work of God. Listen to what God is saying to you. Learn to recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd. Share what he says to you with trusted friends. Whenever God was about to do a new thing, he first mobilised his people to pray.

As each church reflects on their mission and ministry, let's start with prayer. Notice what God is doing, and join in. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever, Amen.

Helen

<https://prayercourse.org/home/>

<https://www.eden.co.uk/how-to-pray-a-simple-guide-for-normal-people-pete-greig/>

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 **June 2023**.

Please send all material to Lilian Wood,
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Deadline for contributions: Sunday 7 May.

REFLECTION

Placing the spotlight on 1 Corinthians 1:23

But we preach Christ crucified. (Read verses 18-31)

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth was written as a response to the difficulties the new Christians were having in their personal lives and in their church life. Paul on his second missionary journey had spent some eighteen months in the busy cosmopolitan city and alongside his day job as a tent maker in partnership with Aquila and Priscilla he carried out evangelistic work in the synagogues to mixed congregations of Jews and Greeks. The church which emerged was what might be termed the jewel in the crown of his labour; however, it was soon infected by the culture of the cosmopolitan city. It was alright for the church to be in Corinth but almost fatal when Corinth got into the Church.

Sadly, ungodly practices crept into the life of the members. The catalogue of issues included: divisions over leadership; members suing each other in heathen courts; arguments over marriage and spiritual gifts; behaviour at the communion table and the treatment of the poor. It is to this sad situation that Paul writes his marvellous letter. After a customary greeting he quickly gets to the heart of the matter and reminds them of what we now recognise as the worldwide symbol of Christianity – the cross. He reminds them that it was a stumbling block to Jews who expected signs of power from a Messiah and to the Gentiles a sign of foolishness. They were very much into intellectual pursuits and regarded with contempt the unscientific religion first taught in Nazareth, an unschooled corner of the world, by the son of a carpenter who had never studied in Athens or Rome. God, he tells them, chose what the world despises and considers weak as His means of grace to enable sinners to have a relationship with Him. Quite simply, the power which was released when Christ died on the cross and rose again conquered sin which separates humans from God and eternal life. Sadly, the Corinthian Christians in their self-admiration had allowed their intellect to be perverted, in their self-will had allowed their conscience to be darkened and in their self-indulgence had allowed their passions to be given full rein, and as a result they had lost the centrality of Christ and His work on the cross. It is for this reason that Paul says we proclaim *Christ crucified*.

As we begin our journey through Lent and focus on Holy Week the events of the first Good Friday progressively come into sharp focus and with them the sacrifice which was made so that we can become what the Bible calls "children of God" and have a deepening relationship with Him. No one ever leaves the cross in exactly the same condition as they came to it. The cross carries with it an invitation, which you either accept in the knowledge that you are separated from God through sin and that what Christ did on the cross is the only means of salvation, or you actively or passively reject it. The first choice carries with it God's promise of eternal life (John 3:16) – the second separation from God.

Paul did not preach Christ the conqueror or Christ the philosopher but Christ crucified. Many of you reading this page I have no doubt started your journey of faith some years ago, but if perhaps you have rejected or neglected the invitation to become *a child of God* I would invite you to stand at the foot of the cross and consider what Christ did on the first Good Friday.

Charlie Mills

CHAPTER AND VERSE

Psalm 139:1-6**God's Complete Knowledge and Care**

Lord, you have examined me and you know me. You know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions. Even before I speak, you already know what I will say. You are all around me on every side; you protect me with your power. Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding.

Does this passage fill you with comfort or dread? You might read these verses from the Psalms and associate them with the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell where "Big Brother is watching you" in a very negative way.

I find this passage a great comfort to know that God continues day and night to have an unfailing care for me despite knowing all my thoughts. I feel God's love knowing that he is "all around me on every side" and that has encouraged me through life to do things which I may have never attempted. God has given me that confidence to step out even when I have felt inadequate. Most of all though is the fact that God knows me better than I know myself and that means he knows exactly what is best for me. So as I make choices and decisions within my life, and that includes the everyday little things, I look to God for direction in all those things. It means asking and listening for the answers. In prayer it is so easy to come before God with a list of requests but it is also important to take time to listen to his voice. My life is enriched by God's daily presence and I would not want to be without it.

Yvonne Blackley

WORKING WITH OTHER CHURCHES

A number of our United Area churches have good relationships with churches of other denominations. We look at the various ways in which 5 of our churches work and witness with those from other traditions.

Vickerstown occasionally shares services with St Mary's, Walney's Anglican Church – in the last year and a bit they have joined us for midnight Communion on Christmas Eve 2021 and our Covenant services in January 2022 and 2023, and we have joined them on Palm Sunday and one Sunday during the summer. It is particularly good to share Covenant services with them, first done in 2020, as there is no direct equivalent service in the Anglican church and it's great to have a fuller church and more voices joining in the responses and hymns! Coffee mornings at either church are publicised and supported by the other and any Bible studies are usually joint. We look forward to meeting and working with the Rev Stuart Silk, due to start as the vicar of St Mary's and St John's (Barrow Island) in the next few months. Walney's Beavers, Cubs and Scouts operate as an ecumenical 'Walney Scout Group' formed several years ago when the separate groups at Vickerstown, St Mary's and St Columba's (Catholic) joined together, and the Walney Churches Choir meets through the autumn at St Columba's to prepare a Christmas concert. Messy Church was also run jointly until stopped by Covid; this has not restarted but perhaps that is something to work towards!

Karen Edmondson

At **Askam** we have been for many years trying to re-establish the links with our Anglican friends at St Peter's Ireleth. We had a positive working relationship with the last vicar of Dalton, St Mary with St Peter's Ireleth, Rev Canon Ruth Crossley, who has since retired. Our minister, Rev Kate Hunt, is now assisting Dalton Parish during their interregnum and we hope that this new working relationship will continue. Our last joint service was Harvest which we had arranged before the publication of the Sept/Nov plan and was the reason why we did not join in the United Area Service at Beacon Hill. We are hoping that some of the St Peter's congregation will join in our Reflective Service this coming Good Friday.

Alan Mason

Millom Methodist Church have been working with the Baptist Church and shared Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services (one in each church). Kate also led the Town Carol Service at the Salvation Army, which involved representatives from all the local churches. We hope to continue working with the other churches, and may have some shared services during the Easter period.

Catherine Clarke

There have been a number of ways in which **Dalton Community Church** and Dalton Parish Church have worked together. For many years we have joined together in ensuring joint services are held each day of Holy Week. Prior to lockdown regular meetings of representatives from the 2 churches were taking place with the intention of forming a Mission Community of churches in Low Furness. Out of these meetings came several social events including a ceilidh, quiz and flower arranging demonstration as part of the Moving Mountains mission in 2018. Since COVID restrictions were lifted, and with the retirement of Rev Ruth Crossley from the Parish Church, we have not continued with the meetings, but we still have some shared services including those on Christmas Day 2022 and New Year's Day 2023.

Margaret Harrison

Since the end of the lockdowns when groups were able to meet again, **Hartington Street** members have prayed in earnest for the messy church team to grow and to evolve. Last September those prayers were answered when, together with their 3 daughters, Lieutenants Jonny and Kat from the Salvation Army joined our ranks. Since their initial visit Jonny and his eldest daughter, Grace, have joined the messy church team, with Grace leading crafts and telling Bible stories to the children and Jonny leading the worship slot and speaking to the children and their parents about Jesus' love for us. The team have richly benefitted from Jonny and Kat's involvement and support and we are delighted that this partnership with the Salvation Army has developed.

Lois Kavanagh

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

To mark **Fairtrade Fortnight, February 27 – March 12**, all our United Area churches are encouraged to renew their Fairtrade status or to register for the first time.

In January an Eco fair was held at The Forum in Barrow. This was organised by Art Gene as part of the Low Carbon Barrow programme of activities.

A large number of stalls provided information on topics such as renewable energy, composting, soil quality, carbon footprints, energy saving, Cold to Cosy Homes, the impact of fast fashion, local nature projects and volunteering opportunities.

At the fair there was an emphasis on reducing waste and saving money.

A selection of information and useful websites:

Information from Love Food Hate Waste

At least a third of all edible food produced across the world never gets eaten – enough to feed 2 billion people. That's just over a quarter of the world's population.

The average family in the UK throws away over £50 of edible food every month. The equivalent of 1 in every 5 bags of food shopping is thrown away.

An average British family could save £840 a year if they stopped throwing their food in the bin.

If food waste were a country it would have the third highest carbon footprint after the USA and China.
www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Ulverston Repair Café is a new community environmental project that promotes repair as a green alternative to throwing things out. Damaged items can be taken to be repaired free of charge by volunteers.

Items that can be repaired include clothing, small electrical appliances, computers and printers, tools, toys, bicycles, furniture, jewellery and crockery – but not microwaves or very large items.

The café is held on the second Tuesday of each month, 6.30 – 8.30 pm at Croftlands Community Centre.

It can be found on Facebook at “Ulverston Repair Café” or <http://ulverstonrepaircafe.org>

Cold to Cosy Homes Cumbria provides free help and advice for those eligible. Apply at www.cosyhomes.org.uk or phone 01768 216500

Compost bin special offer from Cumbria County Council. Various products are available including a 220 litre bin for £10 plus £6.99 delivery charge. Order online at www.getcomposting.com or phone 0844 571 444 quoting reference CUM25L

In Cumbria general household waste does not go to landfill

Instead it is sent for mechanical biological treatment (MBT) at one of two waste treatment plants – one in Carlisle, which opened in December 2011, and one in Barrow, which opened in April 2013.

Materials that can be recycled or reused are taken out (eg glass and stones, metals, organic waste) and the remains become a Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) which goes to fuel things like cement works or electricity generation plants instead of them using raw fossil fuels.

More information on this process is available on the County Council website: www.cumbria.gov.uk

FROM THE AREA TRUSTEES

The Area Trustees have been reviewing the role of the Re:New charity shop. Trading conditions have changed, and there's a focus on pioneer ministry across the denominations.

We are exploring a new mission project in Barrow, to incorporate the current charity shop and Christian bookshop with a space where people can meet, talk and be creative. This would also mean relocation to a more prominent position, and a larger space. The vision is for a safe space, for people to have grace filled conversations, and to build community as we engage with some of the harder to reach people in Barrow. We have been inspired by the Re:Store projects in Penrith and Carlisle, and hope to share some of their learning eg training volunteers in listening. We see an ongoing need for a Christian presence in the town.

Please pray for this initiative

- for the right venue
- for volunteers, to talk to people and offer craft activities
- for the community; that we will be able to reach more people
- for funding and donations
- for helpers so we can be in place for Easter!

Helen Hooley

NEWS FROM RE:NEW

I know we are well into the new year now but Happy New Year to you all.

Well, Christmas was a HUGE success. Thank you to all churches who hosted us at coffee mornings or Christmas fairs. We couldn't have done it without your support. Next, Easter. If you would be willing to host us at any of your pre-Easter get-togethers then please get in contact. Once again this Easter we will be stocking the Real Easter Egg, Easter cards and Easter Gifts so why not pop along to our shop and see what you can find. We have milk chocolate eggs coming in at £4, dark chocolate eggs at £5, Easter Blessings bars at £3 and fun packs of 6 smaller eggs for £5. There's also an option for a large box of 20g eggs and leaflets containing the Easter story but these will have to be ordered in advance. They contain 30 eggs and 30 booklets. These can be ordered for £25. Perfect for groups.

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. We are growing in some areas whilst putting others on the shelf for future possibilities. There are many small local independent retailers in town that do amazing products and have a friendlier approach than some of the big national chains. It's true what they say – if you don't buy local then it's bye bye local. I have seen several small local businesses come into Cavendish Street only to close down around the one year mark due to lack of support from the community. When we first opened in 2018 there were 11 charity shops in Barrow town centre and now there are only 5 of us. 6 gone in 6 years. If there is one new year's resolution that I will be trying to stick to it is this – try to shop more local. Can you join me in that and try to support our small independent retailers in the town?

We are also really starting to struggle for stock. With the cost of living crisis at the moment people are keeping hold of their stuff for longer and who can blame them. However, if there is anything you are thinking of passing on then please do get in contact (in particular men's clothing).



Tim Jeffries

FOCUS ON ASKAM

A short history

The discovery of large deposits of haematite (iron ore) in our area resulted in the birth of Barrow, Roose and indeed Askam, and rejuvenated Dalton as well. Before 1865 there was nothing in Askam except the rabbit warren at Ireleth Marsh. The coming of the Furness Railway gave the settlement its name (as it did with Millom across the estuary). The mines and subsequent ironworks in Askam grew from nothing to a quite major development.

As the tin mines were closing in Cornwall, skilled miners migrated north. There had been a Methodist revival in Cornwall shortly before, and so many of the miners and their families were devout Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians, and each group founded their own chapel.

The Wesleyan chapel in Duddon Road was the first, with the foundation stone being laid on April 14 1870, and the Primitive Methodists were not far behind with an August laying of their stone in Beach Street. A chapel for the Bible Christians on the main street, which nowadays is known as the Rankin Hall, and a chapel for the Salvation Army on the same street vied with the chapel in Crossley Street belonging to the Church of Christ for the non-conformists, while the Roman Catholic congregation met in the Board School until they erected a small tin chapel on the site of Whinfield Place. The resident Anglicans were apparently not impressed, as they had only built a new church in Ireleth and as the mine owners were firmly Church of England, expected their workers to use the new church!

The new chapels were short of preachers (*plus ca change!*) and so an invitation was sent to my great grandfather, Lewis Olliver, in St Neot to minister to the growing population at Beach Street. He was the eighth child of thirteen and brought many of his family with him and produced fourteen children, all but one of whom survived into adulthood, thus growing the church exponentially, as did the Cain family from the Isle of Man who married into the Olliver family. This chapel was extended with a fine schoolroom in 1902.

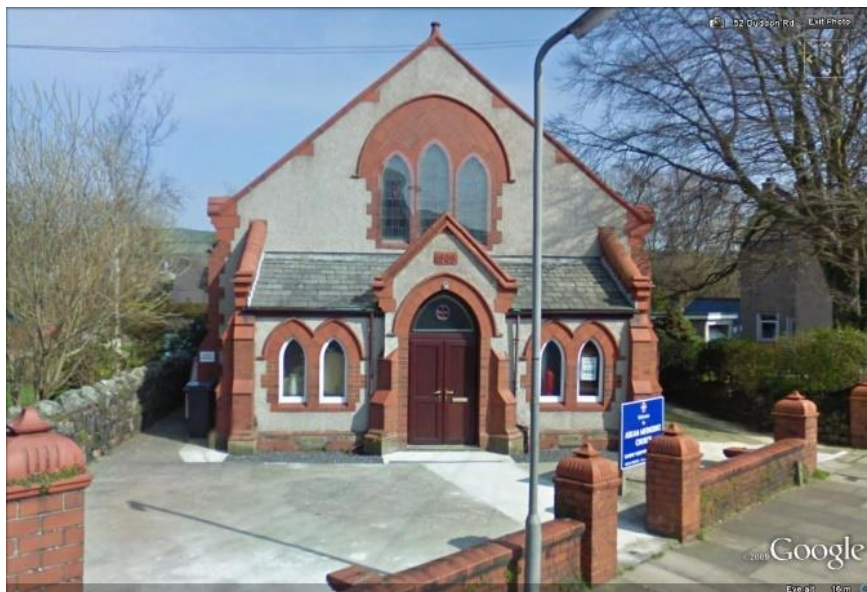
The Wesleyans also grew as a chapel and extended the original premises in 1909. The two buildings had a combined seating of 500 and were frequently full at anniversary celebrations. It was only during World War II and a coke shortage that they started to use one chapel on alternate Sundays and this continued until the 1980s when Beach Street became the Church Centre. The expense of two buildings on a declining congregation meant that Beach Street finally closed in 1992 and was converted into housing. Duddon Road was redeveloped and improved and the fine organ from Beach Street was installed.

We now meet at 4.00 pm every Sunday and sometimes have refreshments after the service in the hall – the original chapel of 1870.

During the First World War the ladies of England were encouraged to help the war effort by knitting for the troops as they were excused armed combat, and in 1915 the Askam Sisterhood was formed. This still meets, as it always has, on alternate Wednesdays at 2.30 pm.

Thanks to a Cumbria County Council initiative last year, we hosted fortnightly Monday Cuppa and Chat meetings to involve the local community in our building in order to encourage greater use of our premises, which are also used by the Local History Group, the Brownies and Rainbows and until this year the Askam Cub and Beaver packs.

This is an extract from a talk given by Alan Mason to the Askam and Ireleth Local History Group in October 2022.



FROM OUR CHURCHES

Vickerstown

Vickerstown raised an impressive £254 for the Methodist charity 'All we Can' over Christmas, writing one card each to everyone else in the congregation to also reduce our use of resources. The cards were displayed at the front of the church, then passed round once they had been taken down after Christmas, for everyone to read the greetings. We chose which of their catalogue of 'Extraordinary Gifts' we wanted the money to go towards as part of an Epiphany-themed service on New Year's Day, with everyone having a say – it's great to see that being over 80 doesn't stop people from wanting a bicycle for Christmas! In this case, the bike will help a child whose school is many miles away from their home to keep accessing education while still having time to help with household tasks needed by the family, and other gifts are designed to create livelihoods, to improve nutrition and to reduce disease by providing clean water and sanitation.

We were very pleased to welcome our uniformed organisations to the first Parade service we have held since before the Covid lockdowns, on Sunday December 18th led by Helen. There was a good turnout with the young people getting involved in elements of the worship, and we hope to have the next one in March (rather than waiting another three years). A trial 'warm space' through December and January attracted very little attendance so has been discontinued, but our Bible study group is going well and met weekly through Advent before resuming its usual fortnightly pattern.

Karen Edmondson

Ramsden Street

We enjoyed some happy times together over the Christmas period beginning with Greengate school choir coming to sing Christmas Songs and Carols at our Friday coffee morning on December 9th. Some parents and grandparents came along too. Love Barrow Families held a Christmas party in our Community room and we joined them to sing carols around the Community garden before they went home on December 21st.

Our Christingle Service on Friday 23rd December was something different for us and was appreciated by all those who came along. Rev Kate led the service and we all made our Christingles as the service went along. The Children's Society and Christian Aid charities were supported by our offering and also by donations given in lieu of sending Christmas cards to each other.

Our coffee morning on January 27th was extended to include a soup lunch and quiz in a nice warm room.

Anne Stevenson

Dalton Community Church

Here at Dalton things have been a bit busy since the last edition. We started off with the hugely successful Open Day and Craft Fair which attracted more people than we ever expected in our wildest dreams. Some of you may have been amongst the attendees.

We have also had the annual Coffee and Carols and community meal. The latter event continued our link with our local Councillors and culminated with me appearing on Cando Radio to talk about our new premises and our hopes and dreams for the future. Cuppa, Chat and Company moved back to Market Street and took on the mantle of a Warm Hub. Dalton Community Action Group gave us a kind grant for this event as did North Western Synod.

Over Christmas we had four services spanning the two weeks up to the great day led by Lynne, myself, Kate and Ann. We also had a splendid concert which Margaret organised with the Ghyll Singers. Unfortunately Margaret could not attend as she was struck down with Covid.

In the New Year we held a Coffee Morning and had our first booking for a children's party and very soon will host the Girl Guides Thinking Day. All of this has tested the new facilities which have come through with flying colours. In parallel with much of this our railings were adorned with multitudes of knitted poppies, a talking point in the town. The ladies involved are planning to celebrate the Coronation in a similar fashion.

Finally Wellington Street has been sold and by the time you read this completion will have taken place.

Bob Mantle

Kirkby

In November we held a Craft Afternoon making Christmas Door decorations, then in December our Carol Service was led by Rev Kate Hunt, who also took part in our Community Carol Singing around the Tree at Four Lane Ends. In January our Covenant Service was led by Rev Helen Hooley.

Beryl Hollowell

Hartington Street

Advent began a day early at HSt when the Messy Church congregation gathered for a busy afternoon of craft, singing, storytelling and worshipping together. The theme of the afternoon was preparation and preparing for Jesus coming into the world as a baby. On this occasion Rebekah spoke about Jesus coming as a baby as the greatest gift of all. The children were amazed when she literally unwrapped the manger before their eyes to symbolise this!

To keep HSt firmly in the 21st century and reach our wider church, Rebekah once again produced a morning advent reflection on Facebook, taking the form of humorous cartoons, challenging rhetorical questions, Biblical quotes in the shape of baubles and trees etc. A variety of formats and ideas were included to get you thinking about advent and preparing for the coming of Jesus. This was an excellent and valued piece of outreach that included those who don't necessarily worship each Sunday.

The 2nd Sunday in Advent saw a first for HSt: we made Christingles and learnt about the symbolism of the Christingle. This service was led by Pam.

What a fantastic afternoon of musical chairs, singing, dancing and craft the messy church Christmas party was! 50 children and parents gathered to celebrate Christmas at HSt. The fun and games were followed by a trailer of *The Star*, and the afternoon concluded with Christmas dinner.

The Hartington St Nativity took place on the 4th Sunday in Advent. This was a special occasion as it incorporated both members of the Sunday morning congregation and members of the messy church congregation. The focus of the Nativity was **following the star**. Last year the Shepherds led a 'hoedown' on Christmas morning as part of the nativity play so we honoured this new tradition this year and Joseph, after a spat with Mary, led the cast in a unique version of 500 Miles by the Proclaimers. The steps were a sort of line dance/Macarena mash up for all those keen to know how we executed such a task! When we say bring your dancing shoes, we really mean it! In a break with tradition, adults played the parts of Mary and Joseph and Rebekah and Pete fulfilled these roles – and yes, you've guessed it, the twins were in the manger together and we had 2 baby Jesus! Mark spoke on this occasion and challenged us to focus our minds on God's gift to us in Jesus.

During the course of Hartington Street's possibly busiest advent to date, all roads seemed to be pointing to the manger. Rebekah literally unwrapped our stage sized manger at the advent messy church, the nativity play focused on following the star in order to kneel at the manger and the advent Bible studies focussed on John 1:1-14, **'The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world'** – Jesus coming as a baby. With this in mind, the Call to Worship for Christmas morning worship was **"Let every heart prepare Him room"** from the carol Joy to the World. Members of the congregation were asked to consider whether, despite all their advent preparations, they had actually 'made it to the manger' to kneel and worship this Christmas. Each member of the congregation received a tree decoration of a very simple manger and they were challenged to gift it to someone else this Christmas – someone who hadn't yet heard the message that Jesus came to earth as a baby (and would later die for them) as the Saviour of the World.

On Sunday 15th January Rebekah and Pete brought the twins from Yorkshire to be baptised at Hartington St. This was a fantastic celebratory service led by Rev Martin Williams. Pew2 reformed for this momentous occasion with the addition of Glenys' sister, Maureen, making her debut as lead singer. The twins were baptised together and behaved beautifully.

Lois Kavanagh

Trinity

We're gradually settling down in our new home. Most of our congregation were able to make the move to a 9.30am service in Abbey Rd Baptist building, and we have some later services too. We have restarted our monthly coffee mornings, which are going well, and organise a Warm Space each Monday from 11.30am until 2.00pm. Our Christmas services included a Gift Service, when we brought items requested by Furness Homeless Support Group, Family Action Barrow and the Foodbank, a wonderful Nativity Service led once again by the children from Victoria Infants School, Carols by Candle Light, a Christingle service, a very well attended midnight Communion Service on Christmas Eve, and a service on Christmas Day. Before Christmas we were invited to Victoria Infants School where we helped almost seventy children learn about, and make, Christingles. That was a special time for all of us, and we look forward to working with the school again.

Sue Millard