



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

Dear Friends,

It feels like a lot has happened since I wrote in the September issue of South West Connections as I rejoined the United Area after two years away training for ministry. I've enjoyed getting to know the congregations and churches I'm working with more as well as renewing the relationships I already had across the wider United Area, we've celebrated Christmas and Easter and I've completed the first stage of my probation period as a minister. As I look to the second stage of my probation I'm aware that many things are changing. We are moving into a new District, the North West England District, from September 2024 and at the final Cumbria District Synod held at Beacon Hill at the end of April Cumbria voted to move to a single Cumbria circuit from September 2025. There's more information on both of these changes in this edition of South West Connections. As a United Area we're also facing changes as we are moving our Re:new Charity shop to new premises on Dalton Road. As part of this change, we are increasing our offering in Barrow town centre to include not just second-hand items, but also a gathering space with refreshments provided for individuals and groups to use for mission and outreach, and a wider range of Christian products.

Change can be unsettling and often makes people anxious, but change can also bring about wonderful things. If God had not wanted to change things he would never have sent Jesus to earth to be our saviour, and if Jesus had not wanted to change things he would not have sent the Holy Spirit to us at Pentecost. Without change it is hard for us to learn more about God, to see him in new ways and to deepen and grow our faith. There are two Bible passages that I turn to when I am struggling to accept a change and to look positively to the future. They are Psalm 121:1-2: 'I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth' and Philippians 4:6-7: 'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

God is always there to support and guide us through whatever changes we are facing, and when things feel unstable if we give our worries to God in prayer, he helps us to find his peace in all situations.

The seasons are also changing as we move from what was quite a wet spring this year into a (hopefully) dry, sunny and bright summer. We live in a wonderful part of the world, as I am reminded by the views every time I travel out of Barrow to Kirkby, Broughton and Millom. The Vice-President of the Methodist church also commented on this when she visited us at the end of April. I really believe God is moving in us and in our churches here in South West Cumbria. I think the questions we have to ask ourselves are: are we ready to listen to God's direction for us and are we willing to embrace the changes that that might bring? If we have the courage to, I'm convinced we can achieve great things for God in this area.

With prayers,

Rev'd Hayley

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

REFLECTION

Placing the spotlight on Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.”

In August this year we will have the opportunity to watch on our TVs the best athletes in the world compete in the Paris Olympics. I have no doubt that each has prodigious talent but underpinning this are years of training, commitment and an eye fixed on the goal. I guess that few reading this article will consider themselves to be athletes; however, the Bible on more than one occasion (see 2 Timothy 2:5, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Philippians 3:13-14) likens the spiritual journey of Christians to the training top athletes receive in their desire to be the best they can be. Our verses from the letter to the Hebrews are written to early Christians who were wavering in their faith because of the persecution they were receiving. They were beginning to think they had lost everything by accepting Christ. Earlier in the letter the writer explains to them that they had started well on their Christian journey but their progress had been slow, and self-pity coupled with mutual self-indulgence wasn't in their best interests. In chapter 11 he reminds them by name and description of the great people of the past who had travelled difficult faith journeys and in chapter 12 he refers to these legends of the past as a “cloud of witnesses” from whom the Hebrews should take encouragement as they “run with perseverance the race marked out for” them. The implication is that the baton has been passed on to them. In this sense we should envisage the race not as a short sprint where only one gets the prize but as a marathon where all who cross the line are celebrated and enter eternal life with Jesus.

Just as athletes are coached the writer offers advice so that the Hebrews can reach their optimum performance in the journey to eternal life. It is advice which is equally relevant to us today as we also travel towards the same destination:

Get rid of hindrances (distractions) which slow us down

Avoid sin which trips us up

Persevere – not giving up when the road becomes challenging – and

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

In August we will see hundreds of athletes who are determined to be the best they can be. As Christians God wants us all to be the best that we can be through the power of the Holy Spirit which he supplies in abundance to us. The challenge for us is to be able to have the discipline of the athletes we see on the track and in the field as we fix our eyes on Jesus.

Charlie Mills

CHAPTER AND VERSE

John 15 v12 *“This is my command: love one another as I have loved you.”*

Whilst I am not the type of person to remember or hold on to particular Bible verses, certain points, sermons and challenges have and do stick in my mind; one that I wrestled with when I was younger was the message of the second half of John chapter 15. The command to love sacrificially “to love as I have loved you”. At work, this week, it is my turn to lead the staff reflection on John 15 v9-17, so again it has become a focal point.

In a world that dictates that every aspect of life is measured we are commanded to contemplate and give the unmeasurable. The example is very clear and our commission as Christians is to love as Jesus loved. No matter how hard we try we will fall short. Putting the verse in context, in the first half of the chapter Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches demonstrating the interconnection between God the Father, Jesus and us and perhaps showing the way love works. God's love as the model for Jesus' love of his disciples and Jesus' love as the model for the disciples' love. The command “Love one another as I have loved you” – because God loves us, our response in love is to keep his commandment. To do anything else would be to fight against God.

Moving forward to verse 16, “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you...” Jesus says he has already chosen his disciples and directed them to love as he loves them. At this point there is an intimation of prevenient grace in Jesus' relationship with his disciples. As disciples we are chosen and therefore appointed to love others and share Jesus. For us the key to loving others is to be firmly based in and remain in God's love, “As the father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love (John 15 v9). If we are rooted in a relationship with the source of all love, then the love we need to love sacrificially, “to love one another as I have loved you”, is found in that life with God through Jesus. As disciples we are set apart and all appointed to love others; when we fulfil our calling then our lives are identified by the features of Jesus' life and will grow in the fruits of the spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...” (Galatians 5 v22-23).

Mark Mills

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

On 24 June 2023 a new initiative was launched paying tribute to King Charles III's long-standing commitment to the natural world and the environment – Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature.

Organised by The Wildlife Trusts in partnership with Incredible Edible, Garden Organic and the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the scheme encourages people and communities across the United Kingdom to live sustainably and help wildlife recover by growing food and creating space for nature in gardens, on balconies and in shared green spaces.

This is a three-year programme, which hopes to enthuse millions of people to grow their own food in wildlife-friendly gardens by providing advice and an opportunity to pledge their garden on a map.

The five features of a Coronation Garden for Food and Nature



Grow healthy food to eat

This could range from herbs and salads through to vegetables and fruit trees depending on the space you have.

Plant pollinator-friendly blooms

Butterflies, moths, bees and hoverflies all need sources of nectar and pollen to thrive. As they travel from flower to flower, they also pollinate them, enabling plants to set seed or bear fruit.



Create a water feature

It could be as simple as a submerged dish or as involved as digging a pond, lining it and oxygenating it using native plants such as hornwort.

Leave a patch of long grass or pile of logs

This low maintenance step is the perfect way to create shelter for wildlife, including natural predators such as hedgehogs and frogs.



Go chemical and peat free

Avoid using pesticides, weed killers and peat!

UPDATE ON CUMBRIA METHODIST DISTRICT AND POTENTIAL CIRCUIT

The last Synod of the **Cumbria Methodist District** took place at Beacon Hill on Saturday 27th April. Thank you to all who helped make this a successful day, which was described by the Synod Secretary, Janice Rusling, as “one of the best we’ve had.”

There will be a Cumbria District Celebration Event on 14th July at Penrith Methodist church, starting at 3:30 with a service at 6pm. Booking is not required, but it would be helpful to the organisers to have an idea of numbers; look at the latest “Circulation from the District” emails for information (or ask a steward/trustee).

There is also a launch service for the new district on Saturday 31st August, at Bolton Victoria Hall; an opportunity to celebrate as 5 districts become one. Starting at 2:30pm, the event will include the welcome service for Rev Dr James Tebbutt as the new District Chair.

The new district will consist of 4 Mission Areas, or groups of mission-focused circuits, each supported by a Mission Area Lead (who will also act as Deputy District Chair).

Many of those in similar roles in the current districts have expressed an interest in continuing in the new district, though the hope is that fewer people will be required overall.

Representation from circuits and churches (i.e. how many people attend) is still under discussion, as we aim to give fair representation to smaller and larger circuits and churches. There is still the intent to have more lay representatives than ordained (as in current synods).

There is a NWED Facebook page, which has more information; a new website is under construction. There are monthly information and discussion evenings online, which are recorded for those who can’t attend; look out for the EQUIP series on Zoom. Or contact your minister.

The first synod of the new North West England District will be on Saturday 14th September 2024; more information to follow.

Consultation on a single Cumbria Circuit

Thank you to the United Area meeting and the church councils who have considered this during the course of the year. The results of the voting were carefully considered by the District appointed Cumbria Circuit Group and the District Policy Group and a recommendation made to the Cumbria District Synod. The Synod considered the matter carefully, and heard representations from different perspectives, before voting to recommend to the Conference that the present circuits (in our case the Methodist part of the United Area) in the Cumbria District should become a single Cumbria Circuit from September 2025 (voting 66 in favour and 7 against).

We recognise that this will please some but not others, and the Cumbria Circuit Group has wanted strongly to continue to engage with those who may disagree with the decision, in order to listen and respond to any concerns, so if you would like a conversation about this tell your minister, who can relay the request to the Cumbria Circuit Group.

A report to the Conference is being prepared, which will also be available when ready. The matter is now in the hands of the Conference to make a final decision about this.

What this means for Cumbria is that (subject to Conference) the new Mission Area will also be the Cumbria Circuit; this is intended to streamline admin and enable local mission. It should also largely maintain existing structures and relationships, as the new Circuit Meeting will look very much like the current District synod. Conversations have already begun on what should stay local, and what can be done more effectively centrally (for example, local preacher training is already co-ordinated at Cumbria District level, rather than by each individual circuit; circuit stewards and circuit treasurers meet as a District). From a URC perspective, the new circuit will be co-terminus with the Cumbria Missional Partnership, which has already taken on the governance that sat with the United Area.

At a local church level, our relationships with ecumenical partners will continue, and the United Area trustees are exploring how to continue to support local churches. Having worked together for a number of years we will still maintain our close ties with the United Reformed Church; with Ramsden Street URC, Methodist churches from Vickerstown to Millom and the LEPs at Trinity and Dalton continuing to work together.

Rev Dr Helen Hooley

NEWS FROM RE:NEW

Hello to you all once again.

As I write this I'm currently on a train back from Milton Keynes where I was supporting my partner in the Milton Keynes marathon. The finish line to that marathon is within the Stadium:MK so you can imagine the crowds.

It's true what they say, that if a runner is struggling to get to the finish line then the crowd goes wild as if that person is going to actually win the race. I experienced this when a lady who was being supported by two other people was determined to cross the line, even with a first aider who had a wheelchair right behind her that she collapsed into as soon as the line was crossed. You might be thinking "Gosh, this shop message sounds like a sermon" but you'll understand I promise.

As you all know we have closed the previous shop premises at Cavendish Street and have moved into a new bigger and better premises on Dalton Road. You all know how long and stressful that journey has been and how right at the end I myself was finding it really hard. But your support and cheering from 'the sidelines' helped to encourage me and to spur me on to keep going as I can only assume it did for the rest of the shop team.

At Milton Keynes there were also two huge milestones being celebrated: a lady who was on her 100th marathon and also a gentleman (Steve Edwards) who entered the Guinness World Record book for being the fastest person to complete 1,000 marathons (43 years at an average of 1 marathon every 13 days). So the crowd went wild in celebration too. I can only assume that those who have followed the progress from the start of the journey of re:new are 'going wild' joining in our celebrations as we get ready to open. So thank you from the bottom of my heart for being our cheering squad.

Thanks also to all those who hosted us at Easter events. We made new friends and met up with friends we've known for a while. We also had meaningful conversations over meaningful chocolate and once again we appeared at churches all over, and not just United Area churches either. Thanks especially to all those who ran stalls for us when we couldn't run them ourselves.

In our new premises we have a small café style area where people can come in, grab a drink, grab a biscuit from the biscuit barrel and have a sit, and maybe have a chat with someone who's there to lend a listening ear. Could you be that person who lends their ear to someone? All the drinks and biscuits will be free of charge but if you'd like to make a donation that will also be appreciated.

We will also have free WiFi accessible, so if you would like to come and do some work at our new premises for service preparation or anything else we'd love to accommodate you!

We still also need help with the shop side of the new project. Would you be willing to come and help out with sorting, steaming or just serving customers? Whatever you're able to help out with is totally appreciated and whatever time you can give is always appreciated and can sometimes lead to meaningful conversations which can be beneficial to both sides.

Current requests for the shop are general books and bric-a-brac.

We are also hoping to grow our Christian books and products area as sadly by the end of July Cumbria will be down to only one official Christian book shop which is located in Whitehaven as Kendal is closing.

Don't forget we can order in if you can't find what you're looking for so don't be afraid to ask.

We have moved our telephone number to the new premises (01229 230859) so if you do need to get hold of us that's still the number to use.

Our new premises will be open from 8:30 in the morning until 4pm currently. In the future however the shop may be open longer as we hope to be able to host events and maybe even Bible studies and prayer groups etc. So if you have a group that you would like to bring into the town centre to try and reach more people or if you have any ideas on groups that could benefit the community then please do get in touch and we will see how we can help you out.

I also feel it's right to now say thank you to Helen, Kate, Stephen, Lynne, Kathryn, Colin, Simon, Bob, Yvonne, Sheena, Lesley, Glynis and Mark for all your help in getting us through the paperwork, the set up, the manual work, the transportation and just general volunteering and any other jobs that have been done. If I've forgotten anyone I do apologise but please be assured you're just as appreciated!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart as without all of your help, love and support this would not have happened.

So as one of the older ladies from America on social media that I watch says – "Shine for Jesus".

Bless you all.

Tim Jeffries

FOCUS ON BROUGHTON



Broughton chapel was built in 1875 with money from Nathaniel Caine who lived in Broughton and was part owner of Hodbarrow Mines in Millom. He was Baptist, but he was concerned the religious facilities in the area were inadequate. He founded a number of Nonconformist chapels between 1860 and 1870.

Broughton cost £2,500 to build and is made of Kirkby stone.

Coming closer to our own time, around 1975 Sheila Huck was asked to take on children's work by the Anglican Church and she started Monday school for 4-11 year olds. It was a great time and had so much support. From there we had Under 18's, then Crusaders came along, followed by Youth Club. We had lots of Social Events, Burns Night Ceilidhs, Victorian Teas to celebrate Royal events and so much more. Lots of joining up for Circuit activities including music, dancing and sleepovers.

Unfortunately, as people got older and/or moved away the congregation reduced in number and couldn't continue to run the building and all the activities. In late 2016 Broughton Church stopped being a worshipping community, but the building was retained by the United Area to become a place for Christian outreach and to support ecumenical work.

When the members of the congregation were no longer able to run a weekly coffee morning, they were offered a weekly reserved space in the Square Café. A group still meets every week in the café, which includes people from Broughton, Millom and Dalton, and not only do they have coffee but several of them now also stay for lunch. Anyone is welcome to join them from 10.30am on Tuesdays.

The church building is now used by Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Cubs weekly during term-time. It is also used weekly by a Bible Study/Home Group and monthly by the Prayer & Vision group from Broughton's St Mary Magdalene Church.

As well as this, with support from the Methodist Church and the Church of England, Network Youth Church Furness runs a weekly term-time Youth Drop-in on Thursday evenings from 7pm – 8.30pm. This is supported by the United Area staff and attended by children over the age of 11. The Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, attended this during her visit to Cumbria recently, and she said "What I experienced at Broughton is a great example of what it means to work ecumenically and share the resources each partner church has."

Our links with children in the village are also growing as Hayley is leading collective worship monthly in Broughton school.

We're working to continue to improve the facilities by changing the lighting to LEDs, improving storage and working on getting Wi-Fi installed. We're hoping this will help bring more groups into the building.

BROUGHTON
Youth Drop-in

@ Broughton
Methodist Church

Thursdays
7-8:30pm

Age 11+
Games

Tuck Shop
Cake & Hot
chocolate

For more information
contact Revd. Vic Sekasi
tkbdchurches@gmail.com

FROM OUR CHURCHES

Trinity

During Lent a number of our members took part in the Lent Pilgrimage Walks. This was a series of six walks, visiting, and praying for, the churches in Barrow. This ecumenical group was led by Gary Rushworth from Trinity, who planned the route, and led us in prayer. We attended the Maundy Thursday service at Beacon Hill, the Walk of Witness and Good Friday service at the Salvation Army, the sunrise service at the cenotaph, and our own services on Easter Day, one at 8am and our usual 9.30am service.

As part of our working towards the Bronze Eco Church Award, we raised enough money to twin six toilets. We've also been looking at ways in which we can personally reduce the negative effect our lifestyle has on the world's climate. We're well on our way to achieving this award now!

Our Coffee Mornings have moved to the third Saturday each month, still from 10-11.30am, but now featuring a popular 'Bring & Buy' stall.

Sue Millard

Vickerstown

We were pleased to open our doors to the hardy few who participated in the first of the Saturday Lent walks in Barrow, on a thoroughly wet day in mid-February, and appreciated their prayers for our church community as they started on a journey that would visit all of the town's churches (of all denominations). It was good to also contribute a prayer station on the theme of Gethsemane at the Salvation Army during Holy Week, as several churches came together to create a reflective space journeying through the biblical events of that week, open to anyone to visit.

Those who were at the Area Maundy Thursday service, and possibly others who were involved with their own churches, will know that the Area's churches were invited to take one or two from a set of A3 'Stations of the Cross' posters and ask groups using the church, or linked to it, to colour them in and return them for use in the service. At Vickerstown we got a bit carried away, taking one poster initially then getting a whole spare set when the Cubs and Brownies reacted enthusiastically to the idea, ending up with 16 completed posters. It was good to then get these back in time for display around the walls at Vickerstown on Easter Sunday and for a few weeks afterwards, long enough for the Brownies to see them in place after the school holidays. They have been put away carefully and may come out again in future years! We also had a lovely Easter cross entirely decorated with greenery and flowers from our own garden, which everyone at church on Easter Sunday helped to put together by adding daffodils as they came in, and used the cross on the bank (visible from the Promenade) to display a purple robe and crown of thorns on Good Friday and Saturday then a gold cloth from Easter morning onwards.

We're pleased to have had a few more people using our building in recent months, welcoming a weekly dance class since March and with a yoga class due to start in May – plus duty as a polling station for the PFCC elections.

Karen Edmondson

Hartington Street

The final Messy Church of the season focused on Pentecost – the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples after Jesus' Ascension. Not an easy subject to tackle with anyone, let alone children, but, led by Rebekah, the team literally 'stepped out' in faith and delivered an outstanding session! Crafts included a gingerbread biscuit in the shape of a dove, and a giant community craft. This involved taking off your shoes and socks, standing in a trough of yellow paint and walking the length of a giant strip of wallpaper. Once you had left yellow footprints behind you, it was time to enter the water trough for a quick wash of your feet before repeating the process with orange and finally red paint. The strips of wallpaper were dried and crafted into a dove and flames to symbolise Pentecost and are displayed on the church wall.



Lois Kavanagh

Beacon Hill

During our series of Lent meetings on the Stations of the Cross we visited Holy Family Roman Catholic Church for a service led by pupils from St Bernard's, and were made very welcome.

At the end of April we hosted the last Synod meeting of the Cumbria Methodist District. A memorable aspect of this was the presence of a vast crowd of claydough figures representing the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Apparently that number of figures had been made, but we didn't have space to display them all. As well as the usual refreshments there was a special cake made by Helen, which tasted as good as it looked.

Lilian Wood

Ramsden Street

The Come and Create for Lent groups took place over 6 Tuesday afternoons when knitting, colouring, jigsaws and craftwork helped us reflect and prepare for Easter. Several of us joined in the Lent walks on six Saturday afternoons when every church in Barrow was visited and prayed for.

World Book Day saw us enjoying the company of several favourite characters when the children read to us from their story books and showed off their costumes! Greengate Junior Choir led us in a simple Easter service on March 22nd and were joined by several members of the adult choir.

We hosted Flashbacks on the 4th and 5th March. This is when the children from the local primary schools come to visit us and learn more about the life and times of Jesus.

Anne Stevenson

Dalton

Since we last contributed to the Area Newsletter Dalton has certainly lived up to its Multi Functional Room concept. In the last 6 months we have hosted a myriad of events. We have held 5 fund raising weekend events ourselves, 8 organisations have held Coffee Mornings, 4 people have held parties and 6 other organisations have hired the room – this included The Green Doctor, the Local History Society and CPR /AED training (more on this later).

We have also sadly held 4 Funerals and hosted a Community Meal around Christmas time.

We host Serendipity (the parish Mother and Toddler group) every Monday morning and the Stroke Club monthly on a Monday lunchtime. Our own Cuppa, Chat and Company meet every Wednesday and a local midwife runs Antenatal classes regularly. Combined with our weekly Worship this is a lot of furniture moving. You would think that by now our furniture would be able to move itself.

Returning to our CPR /AED training. We have a magnificent relationship with our local Councillors and following a casual conversation Dave Taylor managed to procure a Defibrillator to fix to our outside wall. This will be a great asset to the people of Dalton; hopefully, like insurance, it will never be needed.

Over the Christmas period we raised funds towards 'Toilet Twinning'. We are now twinned with 2 toilets and 2 clean water projects.

To sum up we are busy but happy and can justly claim that we are indeed Dalton COMMUNITY Church.

Bob Mantle

Kirkby

A few of us joined the Anglicans for a Shrove Tuesday special event and on Wednesday 6th March we held our Lent Lunch with donations to the Food Bank. Two of us joined others on Maundy Thursday for a service at Beacon Hill. We all took our colouring of the Stations of the Cross and gave a short talk about our Church. It was a lovely event ending with a meal and meeting friends from our larger family.

Some of us went to Ulverston on Saturday 13th April to meet our Minister Hayley and hear the story of her life, leading up to her work for Christ today. It was so interesting and we found out so much we didn't know, especially her love of Formula One. We are so lucky to have her and Simon in our Area. Thank you LORD.

Beryl Hollowell

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 2024**.

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Deadline for contributions: Sunday 4 August.