

Around the Synod

July/August 2010

News highlights from the Northern Synod



General Assembly meets at Loughborough

Sadly I was prevented at the last moment from attending Assembly, so my intention of replacing our on-sabbatical moderator's usual pastoral letter with my own hard-hitting and insightful account of everything that had gone on there has had to bite the dust. Fortunately, as well as Rowena herself breaking her sabbatical for a few days, there were thirteen other representatives from our Synod who all seem to have made it there and back—so I'm depending on some of them to share their insights and experiences with us.

But at least this year it proved possible to follow Assembly from afar—thanks not just to pages put up on the URC website while Assembly was in session, but also to the Communications team's Facebook and Twitter pages. I learned from these that the proposal to end the Nestlé boycott had not been well received—and it was clear that the on-line community working through Baby Milk Action had been influential here. We were told as soon as the results were announced that Michael Jagessar and Lawrence Moore are to serve as moderators 2012-2014; and we heard that Westminster College are to launch a fund-raising appeal with Assembly's permission. And when Assembly adjourned, we read that it was with the intention of meeting next in Southport in 2012. I'll try to be there then—though I'm grateful for the work that was done by so many people to make those of us at home feel a little bit closer to what was going on.

Of course, there's really nothing like being there yourself—so over to those who were.....

John Durell *Synod Clerk*



Picture by Bill Ellerby

A very passionate speech by the new director of Christian aid, Loretta Minghella. She thanked the church for all the help it give through fund raising and said the URC was the largest church donor.

The passing of a resolution recommending that ministers work no fewer than 160 hours and not more than 192 hours within a four-week period caused some concern. How do we monitor this and what actually counts as work?
- Henry Gowland

The input from the children's assembly was excellent. It was great to have them with us occasionally, when we had discussions around the table. We should be ready to learn from them as they are often more realistic about situations than we are.

Gerald Kelly's Bible studies: As Christians we can have Spiritual Anorexia and be too afraid to move. As the weekend progressed it was obvious that if we took on board the message from the bible studies we could write a mission statement for the whole denomination.

Lowlights: Too much talking by a small minority which held up debates, increased the time reaching decisions and generally caused disruption to carefully timed sessions. We all left hoping that for the gentleman on Table *** this was his last assembly.

- Maranny Jones

The outgoing Moderator, the Revd John Marsh, explained his very many duties (a) to ourselves, (b) to the wider Church in the UK and Worldwide (c) to the secular world. He'd come back exhilarated from visiting 50 of our churches. He'd seen children everywhere, LEPs are thriving. Other statistics are 53 Sundays on Moderator duties, 208 weekdays incl. travel, 55 committees and interviews, c.18,698 miles in car, 36 train journeys, 3 flights and 146 nights away. This didn't include time spent in admin (letters, emails, telephone) or prep for worship, meetings, etc.

- Joyce Calcraft

Ed Cox deserved chocolate cake after the bruising round of discussions on Vision 2020. We all loved the Community Awards and the stories of hope and renewal that were woven into the various committee reports. I also enjoyed the moment when Assembly demanded, as one, to hear Lawrence Moore again speaking about the Identity and Marketing Campaign, when he was cruelly cut short by the red light and earlier speakers had been allowed to go on at length.

- Donna Moore

Visit the Synod Website for reporting back by our representatives in greater depth

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Elaine and Gordon Brown are extending their ministry from Gateshead to take in the three churches of the North West Durham Group: induction service at Christ Church, Stanley on July 23rd at 7.00 pm.

Kate Baxter will be ordained and inducted to a non-stipendiary ministry in the North Northumberland Mission Partnership on Saturday August 7th at 3.30 pm at Berwick.

Jo Merrygold joins us as our new Mission & Development Enabler at the beginning of August, and will be formally welcomed at a service at St James's, Newcastle on Saturday August 14th at 3.00 pm.

Methodist Minister **Heegon Moon** will be welcomed to the South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area (SENEA) at an Area Service at Stakeford on Sunday 29th August at 4.00 pm. He and **Sue Nicol** will assume joint pastoral responsibility for three Area churches, including Trinity Bedlington LEP.

Also joining the North Northumberland ministry team is **Bert Keller**— a minister from the USA who is to be with us for one year. His induction service will be at Wooler on Sunday September 12th at 6.00 pm.

Grant Wilson, an elder from Wooler, has been accepted for training for stipendiary ministry, and will start his course at the Scottish College this autumn.

We have been saddened by the death of **George Walker**, whose ministries included Jarrow (1947-58) and Low Fell (1958-71), and who returned to our synod as retired minister a few years ago. George was both the last surviving Clerk to the Newcastle Presbytery and the last surviving ordaining agent from the ordination of Ella Gordon, the first Presbyterian woman minister. We offer our sympathy to his widow Olive and all the family.

NEWS FROM HOLY ISLAND

August as usual will be exhibition time at the St Cuthbert Centre. This year the first two weeks (1st-15th) will be given over to sculpture by Jean Parker entitled *Good Grief*, exploring recovery from serious personal loss. Then Ronald Swanwick returns for the next two weeks (16th-29th) with *Great and Small*: bird and animal paintings in a variety of styles. Sadly the usual mid-August service at Brinkburn has had to be cancelled this year.

The Management Team has been heartened following a visit in April from members of the Assembly Accreditation sub-committee, who reported back warmly on all that they had seen and heard. This has led to acceptance of the request that the Director appointed after Barry Hutchinson's retirement next year should be a Special Category minister, not counting against the Synod's deployment target. It is hoped that the post will shortly be on the moderators' list, and will be more widely advertised if necessary.

NEWS OF CHURCHES

St Mark's, Newbiggin by the Sea is to unite with St Andrew's Methodist Church to form a new Local Ecumenical Partnership, St Andrew's and St Mark's Church. The church will meet in the St Andrew's premises, and the inaugural service will be held on Saturday September 4th at 3.00 pm.

Once again **St Andrew's Monkseaton** has run a very successful Granny's Attic—an empty shop in Whitley Bay that served as a church charity shop for a week. The church reports not only financial success, but has also valued the community spirit which the shop has generated, and the opportunity to talk to customers and invite them to Open Door Coffee Mornings at St Andrew's and other activities.

Trinity Gosforth are to host an evening with Adrian Plass on Friday October 15th at 7.30, as a fund-raiser to help one of the church's young people participate in a Christian project in Africa. Trinity minister David Bedford warns that tickets are going fast! – buy yours on 0191 285 6130 or from the church welcome desk.

WELCOME TO JO



Jo Merrygold begins work as our Mission & Development Enabler at the beginning of August, following 2½ years at Carrs Lane URC, Birmingham where she has helped set up a lay residential community, and has also worked as a part-time university chaplain.

Born and brought up in Devon, and linked with the local URC, Jo came to active faith and commitment during her student years in Manchester. Later she worked with the Student Christian Movement, linking student groups and chaplaincies across the country.

Jo is a Methodist Local Preacher and is currently working towards full accreditation in the URC. We look forward to all that she will bring to the life of our churches, and to welcoming her formally at the service at St James's, Newcastle on August 14th.

VISITORS FROM MOZAMBIQUE

Ernesto Langa and José Tovela, roughly their Church's equivalent to Moderator of Assembly and General Secretary, were with us for a week at the end of July before going on to Loughborough for General Assembly. They saw a good deal of the synod and its churches, from Teesside to Holy Island, and were guests at a special welcome dinner in Durham. They returned home with two second-hand laptops thanks to the generosity of synod members—and we know that there are at least a few more coming in. They're hoping for one for each of their eleven synods: offers of more please to John Durell.

Keep the news coming in! - Contact the Synod Clerk: Revd John Durell, 44 Wearside Drive, Durham DH1 1LE
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This newsheet can be downloaded from www.urc-northernsynod.org, and further links followed there