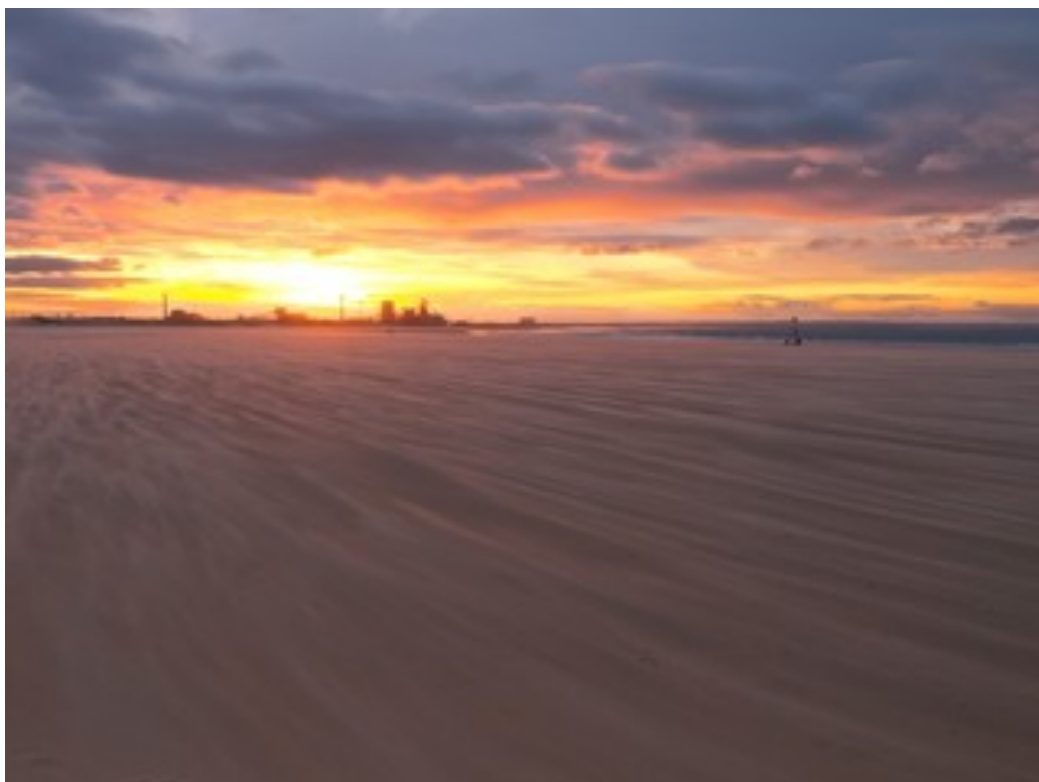


Number 84



A New Monastic Community
in Redcar, Cleveland



Information Pack

A Residential Missional Community

This Residential Missional Community will be a household of up to three people who will choose to live together as Christians in this neighbourhood. They will be a type of new monastic community who will live by a simple Rule of Life encompassing:

- daily communal prayer,
- a daily shared meal
- bible study and theological reflection
- purposeful service in the neighbourhood through some kind of work.

This Missional Community is patterned on the monastic rhythm of prayer and work. There is the inward focus of prayer, reflection and growing in the Christian faith – in other words - discipleship. At the same time there is the outward focus of being part of the local community, by living and working here.

The work that individuals choose to do (to be agreed with Synod) may be paid or voluntary and for no more than 25 hours per week. Examples include a local charity job; helping with the church ESOL classes or church toddler group; or simply doing a secular job as a person of Christian integrity (e.g. careworker, social worker, cleaner, shop worker, office worker, teacher etc). Such work enables residents to interact with people of the neighbourhood without an evangelistic agenda but simply in a serving capacity. This service to the town is what makes this community 'missional'.

The residents will worship and fellowship with the URC/Baptist church which is located next door to the house.

In these ways Number 84 will be a household that prays, studies, serves and lives together in God's love. It will be a Fresh Expression of church within the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church. The Synod will exercise pastoral care and oversight of the household.



Background and URC Context

The original idea for a Residential Missional Community was the dream of the ex- Moderator of the URC Northern Synod, Dave Herbert.

He saw Residential Missional Communities (RMCs) as an ancient model of Christian living which had existed from the early church to the present day. He noted that since the Reformation, it had primarily been the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions who largely maintained the concept through monasteries and religious orders. However, during the 20th and 21st Century, interest in this type of living broadened across denominations.

Different kinds of RMCs began to be formed -a kind of new monasticism- whereby lay people lived together within an intentional framework of prayer and service.

Dave studied Residential Missional Communities and New Monasticism during a sabbatical. He returned to Synod filled with enthusiasm for starting such a project here and after many conversations within Synod, Redcar was identified as a suitable base for such an initiative. The church-owned house adjacent to Redcar URC (Number 84) would be the place where this came to be. We welcomed the first residents in 2023.

Definition for Northern Synod's purposes –

A residential missional community (RMC) is a household of people who live by a simple rule: eat together, pray together, serve Christ in the neighbourhood together, and learn together. Such a community will exist in close partnership with a United Reformed Church congregation, and will be open to ecumenical networking.

About The House and the Town of Redcar

Accommodation



Number 84 is a 3 bedroomed Victorian terraced house with accommodation over three floors.

There is a sitting room, a dining room, kitchen and two bathrooms. Each resident has a single bedroom.

The property has been recently renovated and is fully furnished.

There is no front garden: the house opens directly onto the street but there is a small yard at the rear of the property.

The house is a stone's throw away from the beach, town centre and train station.

There is no rental charge for residency, Council Tax, water rates, utility bills, repairs. Decorations and furnishings are provided by the Northern Synod of the URC.

Context



The area in which the house is situated is one of social deprivation, with high levels of unemployment and a general air of dilapidation about it. Several houses on Station Road are of poor quality and are rented out as Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), often occupied by people in difficult circumstances.

Many local people have very little income and there seems to be little community cohesion or spirit.

Redcar in its entirety, however, is a really interesting place: like many small seaside towns it has seen better days, yet still has much to recommend it. Parts of the town are very nice, there is a beautiful sandy beach, a lovely promenade with the usual seaside attractions of ice cream shops, cafes, a lifeboat museum-cum- heritage centre and attractive town parks. In recent years the area has witnessed a housing boom.

This small town (population 140,000) has good road access to places of interest such as York, North Yorkshire, Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Darlington, Newcastle and Northumberland. There are direct trains to nearby Saltburn-by-the-Sea, York and Darlington.

Redcar sits within the Tees Valley, an area built on steel and chemical industries. Visible remnants of the steel industry are slowly disappearing with the promise of a Freeport to be developed on the former industrial site. Some people are still employed in the local chemical industry, on the outskirts of the town. There is a small fishing fleet in operation.



The context has its challenges but the vision for a small group of Christians to quietly shine the light of Jesus on this neighbourhood by living in it and praying for it is shot through with creative possibilities.

The church next door to number 84, to which the residents will relate, is also fully committed to sharing the love of Jesus in the town. This is Redcar URC/Baptist Church which is a lively, multi-generational fellowship, with a contemporary worship style. They are already hard at work in their engagement with the people of Redcar through initiatives such as a food pantry; community café; community allotment, Back to Work Course, CV Workshop, English classes plus more traditional church activities such as The Alpha Course and sessions on How To Read The Bible. Being part of this church would clearly offer the residents many opportunities.



Opportunities that Number 84 Represents

For residents, living at Number 84 provides time to devote to personal discipleship. It could be a formational experience which will bear fruit long into the future.

For the town, Number 84 represents a prophetic pronouncement of the love of God for this place. As residents intentionally pray for the healing and wholeness of Redcar, an affirming and constructive perception of the town will be modelled. Moreover, this will set the scene for new moves of the Holy Spirit here.

For the church engagement with this expression of new monasticism will bring the fellowship into direct contact with a different pattern of Christian living. This may inspire church members to want to find out more about other initiatives such as different examples of New Monasticism; Traditional Monasticism; the Houses of Prayer movement or 24/7 Prayer Movement and thus widen their apprehension of the Christian faith in all its depth and complexity.

Living By A Rule of Life

The exact details of such a life will be co-created with the residents, but it is envisaged that the following features would be included:

- Daily:** at least one time of communal prayer and one shared meal
- Weekly:** a time of communal learning and reflection. This could be centred on a bible text, a prayer or something from one of the resident's work. This may include a communal meal and sometimes Holy Communion.
- Monthly:** each resident will have a one-to-one meeting with Number 84's Companion (initially the Missional House Development Minister) for personal reflection and pastoral care.
- The Companion will join the community for their time of learning and reflection and by agreement celebrate Holy Communion with them.
- Twice a Year:** All residents will attend a Management Team meeting for mutual feedback, reflection and encouragement. Minutes submitted to Synod Pastoral Committee and Synod Executive.
- Annually:** The Companion will meet with Synod Executive to discuss and reflect on progress.
- The community will be encouraged to make a presentation to the church and/or synod about their life at Number 84. This could happen more frequently than annually by agreement.

Governance and Oversight Structure

Northern Synod wishes to ensure good care of the residents and to that end it has devised the following structures to oversee the welfare of individuals and the progress of the project.

A Companion for Number 84

The Synod has appointed Revd Dr Sue Walker as A Companion to Number 84. Her official synod title is Missional House Development Minister. This role involves pastoral care and spiritual companionship for each resident in addition to maintaining and developing the well-being of the community. She will meet regularly with each resident on an individual and confidential basis. Such meetings will be similar in format to a conversation with a pastoral supervisor or mentor. Furthermore, Sue will visit Number 84 once a month to share in the community's reflections on their life together and so have the opportunity to support and encourage the ongoing growth of their communal life.

Any problematic areas can be raised with Sue during individual meetings, during her visits to the house, or she can be contacted by phone or email. The residents will also have direct access to the Synod Safeguarding Officer, should that be required.

It is envisaged that the residents will also make friends within the church fellowship who will journey with them during their time at Number 84.

Safeguarding for Number 84

The Synod has appointed a Guardian who can be contacted by any resident who wishes to talk about any matter relating to Number 84 with someone other than the Companion. This meeting will be confidential. The residents have open access to the Synod Safeguarding Team and will be subject to Synod Safer Recruiting Procedures.

Management Team

This will meet with the residents twice a year in order for the Synod to receive feedback on the progress of Number 84 and for the residents to establish good communication links with Synod. Those attending the meeting will be:

- 3 residents from the House
- The Companion (SW)
- 1 or 2 representatives from Redcar Baptist/URC
- Synod-linked *Faith In Communities* (FIC) Worker
- 1 URC Church Related Community Worker (CRCW)
- Synod Finance and Property Link Person

Companion to Attend A Meeting with Synod Executive.

Once a year the Companion will attend a Synod Executive meeting to report on the progress of the Missional House project. The conversation will centre around the ongoing vision for the house, resources, sustainability, the wider context and HR issues. Additionally, a report will be presented to each Synod Meeting.

Residency Covenant

Residents will be required to sign and abide by the following sample covenant.

Missional Community 84 Station Road Redcar TS10 1RQ

The following covenant is intended to provide clear expectations and responsibilities for both residents making up the residential missional community at 84 Station Road Redcar and the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church, which is ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of all residents and visitors to 84 Station Road, Redcar TS10 1RQ.

There is no rental charged for residency. Council Tax, water rates, utility bills, repairs and decorations are to be paid by the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church. 84 Station Road has a no pet/no smoking/no drugs policy.

Residents are expected to find work in Redcar for up to a 25hr week.

Residency is temporary but renewable, for 12-month periods commencing from the date of arrival, to be reviewed at 6 months for the following year. Residency review will be initiated by the Management Group of the Missional Community. If either party (resident or Synod) feel it inappropriate to renew, there will be a maximum three-month period in which alternative accommodation can be arranged.

Criteria by which a residency may be curtailed are as follows:

- Failure to follow the four Rules of the House –
 - A) Pray together
 - B) Study together
 - C) Serve together
 - D) Eat together
- Behaviour deemed to compromise the reputation and standing of the Missional Community as an expression of the United Reformed Church's presence in the community
- Disruptive or anti-social behaviour which impedes the well-being of fellow residents
- Damage to property or injury to persons on the premises through neglect or abuse
- Criminal conviction other than driving offences

To be signed by residents and a Synod Representative.

Final Thoughts

It is sincerely hoped that this pioneering project will have a lasting legacy: that in a few years' time we can look back and see that God's work has been done in many and various ways:

- in seeds planted and watered in the lives of the residents and in those with whom they have interacted.
- that the prayer which has been offered in this place has had some kind of positive effect on the neighbourhood.
- that as people have seen the faithfulness of God in maintaining this household, some sort of witness has taken place
- and
- that hope has been offered. That there has been some sort of sense that God has not forgotten the people of Redcar. The government may have forgotten them, industry may have let them down, the institutional church may have failed to reach them, but a small group of Christians has prayed for them and lived amongst them quietly and with biblical imagination and has seen them as worth praying for and worth interacting with. Just as Jesus found humanity worth living with and dying for.

Our prayer is that the community at Number 84 may, in some small way be an expression of incarnational living and in this way be a part of the work of Jesus.