



1st edition, 22 March 2020

## **W**elcome to the first edition of *Newstand Lite*, the new newsletter from St. Andrew's URC.

In light of the suspension of services and other activities at St. Andrew's due to the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, we have taken the decision to keep in touch in this new and more colourful newsletter, brought to you as a substitute for the usual monthly Newstand and posted out to all members and adherents on the church roll.

Newstand *Lite* will contain some of the regular articles and information that we feature in Newstand itself, plus some additional articles to hopefully keep you entertained due the prolonged periods of self-isolation.

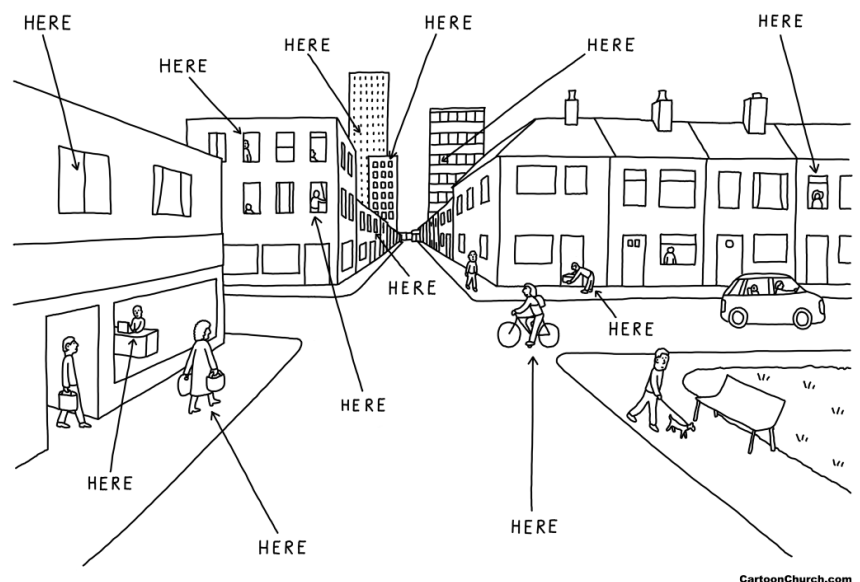
We hope to bring the newsletter more frequently than the monthly Newstand, hopefully on a fortnightly basis, for as long as the current guidance of self-isolation and restriction of public gatherings is in place.

If you have any material you want to be considered for inclusion in Newstand *Lite* then please post it to Tim Cooke, 4, Kingfisher Way, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 3QR, email it to [standrewsnewstand@gmail.com](mailto:standrewsnewstand@gmail.com), or you can ring and leave a message on 01670 354834 (but please don't make these too long!).

On behalf of Carla and the Elders of St. Andrew's URC, we send our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time and hope that Newstand *Lite* brings you some cheer and a reminder of the presence of God's unending love.

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### WHERE THE CHURCH IS



**St. Andrew's United Reformed Church**  
Eastfield Avenue, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, NE25 8LU

<http://standrewsmonkseatonurc.org.uk>



## Cheque-out time for local charities

We had a very happy and lively presentation of charity cheques this year. Four dogs with their owners from the charity Hearing Dogs for Deaf People came along together with a representative from Bloodwise (Blood Cancer Research).

On receiving their cheques for £500 they spoke about the valuable work carried out by their charities. Unfortunately North of England Children's Cancer Research was unable to send someone but the charity was very grateful for the donation.



## Postponement of Annual Church Meeting

Due to the closure of St Andrew's because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Annual Church Meeting has been postponed to a future date which will be arranged in due course. In the meantime the current post-holders continue in office.

**Ray Hammond**

## St Andrew's and Coronavirus

In light of the Coronavirus outbreak, the following decisions were taken last week:

- Activities Team met on Monday and took the decision to cancel all social and fundraising activities on the premises up to and including the Christian Aid events in May.
- Following receipt of guidance from Church House, Executive Team has confirmed that all worship at St Andrew's is suspended till further notice.
- The majority of hirers of the premises have over the last few days suspended their activities and are no longer using the premises. This includes all the uniformed organisations.

## Minister's Musings

Dear Friends,

As I sit at my desk and write this, I am aware of a tumult of emotion: deep concern for you and for all, a sense of being unmoored and unsettled, fear, numbness, great love and a morsel of hope. I imagine that you too, since the outbreak of Covid-19, have been unsettled, concerned, afraid, numb, loving, hopeful and had other surprising emotions. The first thing I want to say is that, whatever you are experiencing, it is completely normal. It is how you – your body, your life experience – strive to cope with an overwhelming and uncertain situation. Speak kindly to yourself; acknowledge the confusion and challenge of these times; listen.

We are the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and more of people who came through the Great War, the Spanish influenza, the Great Depression, the Blitz, and the deprivations of World War II and the Austerity. We are survivors. There is in us a reserve of strength and wisdom that will accompany us through this pandemic. Recall how you have survived other challenges; draw lessons from your own experience and that of others.

Our Bible was created by people who endured great traumas and rose to rebuild their lives and even sing praises to God who made us and whose love never lets us go. From slavery in Egypt and forty years wilderness wandering, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the Exile, through to the crucifixion of Jesus and the persecution of early Followers of the Way, they knew that the only way through hard times is to cling to God and to their communities of faith and to move through

the crisis. They accepted the harsh reality of life and leaned into it, doing what they had to do.

Dozens of times in the scriptures, people are told “do not fear”. They are told it because fear is real and there are dangers. Fear is not a moral failing; it can be realistic, or a warning, or information about the need to tread carefully. We cannot eradicate fear – nor would we want to. But we can remind

**“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”**

ourselves that fear should not have the last word. The empty tomb is a testament to the power of love over fear, and love never dies. So when fear arises, we breathe deep and draw on those reserves of strength and wisdom our forbears gave us. We rise and walk

the way of faith, remembering as the writer of 2 Timothy 1:7 said, that *God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.*

My prayer for all of us in these difficult times is that we will connect with those deep reserves and that we will use our power, our love and our self-discipline to keep ourselves and each other as safe and healthy as possible. The best antidotes to fear are love and laughter – so stay connected to loved ones and enjoy the good things in life that are before you; breathe fresh air every day; move; phone a friend or someone you think needs a call. Pray the psalms – the ancients kept an open channel to God; the invitation stands for us also to speak the truth of our feelings to the One who holds the world in a wide embrace, and then to listen. Read a gospel through; deep springs of living water will refresh. We have what we need.

In Christian love, **Carla**





## Pandemic

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar

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## From the Hope 4 team

On an overcast morning at the beginning of Lent 2020 the skies were heavy and grey. It began to rain, the strong wind driving the rain at all angles into those unfortunate enough to be out, making the morning even more miserable. The tree lined road looked desolate; the trees' bare branches silhouetted against the dark overcast sky. The gardens of the houses nearby looked the same, not a speck of colour to be seen amidst the bare, dark sodden earth. The few folks battling the elements were bent against the wind and rain, huddled under umbrellas. The whole scene seemed to reflect that first period of Lent; the barrenness of the landscape, grey like ashes, stripped of colour, the trees dripping wet like tears, and the cold, wet, dark earth.

The picture that unfolded perhaps could mirror the unfolding journey of the Lenten period. The scene stripped of all colour presented a stark picture of Christ's journey to Jerusalem. While we can read the stories of Jesus' healings and teachings, we can also follow the stories of Jesus' stark warnings to his disciples of his suffering and death and their reactions of disbelief. We can read the accounts of Jesus' wrath when he scattered the tables in the Temple; the acclamations of welcome on Christ's entrance to Jerusalem that is now Palm Sunday. Contrast this with his torment, the accusations of the relentless questions from the Pharisees trying to trick and corner Jesus at every opportunity. We can trace the dark times of Holy Week, his betrayal and abandonment even from those closest to him, his trials, the cries of 'crucify him' and the darkest of times on Good Friday, nailed to a cross and Jesus'

last words: *'Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!'* (Luke 23 v 46).

Yet on that miserable wet blustery morning in 2020, there was suddenly a quiet moment, when the wind died down

as if to draw breath. In one garden, tiny buds could be seen on a bush, hardly visible but just there. Tiny buds that represent hope of new life, after his death on the cross the resurrection of Jesus Christ, of his rising again on the third day. What colour and joy this brought to the lives of those who stood by Jesus' tomb...HE is alive! The colour and joy that Easter brings today, of this amazing gift of love of

God, of His Son Jesus Christ who died for us. Lent leads us to follow the paths of darkness but also leads us to the path of reflection of the closeness to our Lord in the opportunity to look inwards at our very essence, the very spirit of our faith and where we are on our journey of faith this Lenten period.

In this Lenten period 2020, we are all going through difficult times with the outbreak of the Coronavirus. There is deep concern for the safety and wellbeing of loved ones and those around us. There is deep concern for those on the front lines treating the sick, those working hard to keep the infrastructure of our society able to function in a safe environment ensuring support is available to those in need.

May we, despite the difficulties and dark days we are all going through, find like the buds ready to bloom again, hope in the rebirth of the fullness of the love of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*Crum's great hymn sung to the tune "Noël nouvelet" follows*

**"Lent leads us  
to follow the  
paths of  
darkness but  
also leads us to  
the path of  
reflection"**

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
wheat that in the dark earth many years has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love whom we had slain,  
thinking that He'd never wake to life again,  
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
he that for the three days in the grave had lain;  
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,  
then your touch can call us back to life again;  
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

*J.M.C. Crum (1872-1958) altd.  
CCL No. 213535 / One Licence A-632495*



## Transitional Working Group

When it is safe to resume meeting as a congregation, we will review our experience of transitional ministry and have a proper good-bye to Carla. In the meantime, she will keep a praying, watching, caring brief with us as long as possible. She'll be writing **a weekly reflection on the Sunday lectionary** which she will circulate by email or post (if possible) - we'll include it in *Newstand Lite* too. If you would like to receive this, email her at [cagroschmiller@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cagroschmiller@yahoo.co.uk) or call her at 07427 838 370.

## Noticing God at work in the world

He was a Christian and he loved swimming in the sea.

One day, a passing boat saw him swimming in a rough sea a long way from shore and someone shouted, "Do you need help?" The swimmer replied, "No, I am sure God will save me."

Later, a fishing boat passed near and the fisherman called out, "It's pretty rough out here, can I help you get back to shore?" The man replied, "It's OK thanks, I know God will save me."

The story goes that the man drowned and went to heaven. He asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" And God replied, "Didn't you see the two boats?"

## Is your favourite here?

**B**ibleGateway is a web-based platform and they have listed the most viewed or searched for Bible verses for 2019.

If you added up all the usage percentages, Psalm 23 would be the most popular Bible passage of 2019. It has popularity among Christians, but perhaps also among those who hear the psalm at funerals or other events within the Church.

However, if we only give one mention to Psalm 23, then the most popular verses are:

1. John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
2. Jeremiah 29:11: For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
3. Philippians 4:13: I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
4. Psalms 23:4: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Ps 23.6 was 7th, Ps 23.5 was 8th, Ps 23.1 was 9th & Ps 23.3 was 10th)
5. Romans 8:28: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
6. Romans 12:2: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.
7. Matthew 6:33: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
8. Isaiah 41:10: So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
9. Philippians 4:6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
10. John 14:6: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### **You are not alone!**

St. Andrew's Elders and Pastoral team are only a phone call away and will be keeping in touch with you all. If you need someone to talk to and pray with, please do give them a call.

If you don't have contact details for your Elder or Pastoral Visitor, please contact Ray or Ann Hammond on 0191 252 3319 or Carole Mallett on 0191 252 1723.



# Prayers for this moment

## **From our General Secretary, Dr John Proctor:**

Lord Jesus,  
In the midst of a storm,  
You said, 'Peace be still.'  
Bid our anxious fears subside,  
Sustain your church in faith, hope and love,  
Bring our nation through this tumult,  
Grant wisdom to those with heavy responsibilities,  
And healing and hope to those who are infected.  
Amen.

## **From our Minister:**

The day lies before us,  
full of the known and the unknown.  
Be the breath we take before each step.  
Be the source from which we draw strength.  
Be the hope that guides us into the future.  
Open our eyes to all that is around us.  
Open our heart to the love that lives through us.  
Open our hands to the task the moment requires.  
Let us do this one thing, the thing before us,  
As if all creation and our very life depend upon it,  
As if You, O Lord, are bent over,  
Watching, listening, and willing us  
To do it well.  
Amen.

## **A prayer for all seasons (suitable for handwashing!):**

Our Father who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.

