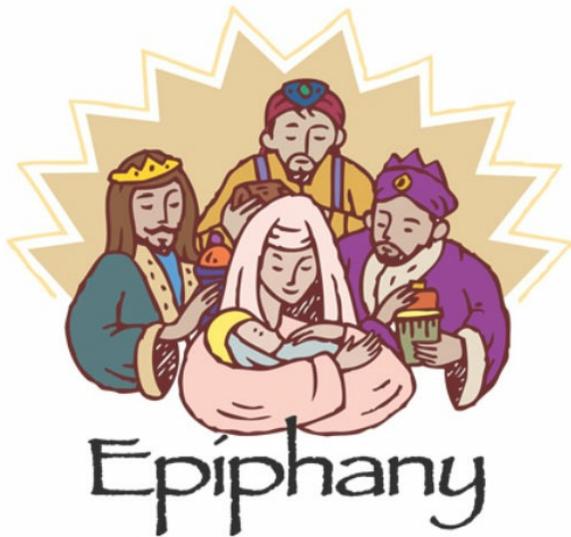


BRIDGE

January 2020



*For the United Reformed Churches in
Bewcastle and Carlisle*

*Part of the
Cumbria URC Missional Partnership*

Contacts and Sunday Service Pattern

THE MINISTER

The Revd Nick Mark

156 Lowry Hill Road

CARLISLE

CA3 0ER

Telephone: 01228 526162

Email: nmark@keme.co.uk

THE KNOWE CHURCH

BEWCASTLE

Services: 1.45pm on the first Sunday in the month

Contact: Mrs Doreen Telford

Telephone: 016977 48248

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

WEST WALLS

CARLISLE

CA3 8UF

www.urccarlisle.org

Services: 10.30am every Sunday

Contact: Mrs Rosalind Fearon

Telephone: 016973 44892

Email: rosrayfearon@talktalk.net

When there is a fifth Sunday in the month

the Service is for both Churches

usually at 10.30am at St George's

(Please check our Churches Services lists)

From the Minister

Dear Friends,

We begin another year and it is an opportunity to build on past achievements and cope with new challenges. We welcome friends at both St George's and Bewcastle from the now closed Church at Brampton and you will see, starting on page 6 in this issue, a copy of the closing Sermon which demonstrates hopefully that particular Church had fulfilled its role in that particular place. Sincere thanks go to all those members of the congregations at Bewcastle and St George's who attended the closing service it was much appreciated by the congregation at Brampton.

At St George's we begin in the spirit of making New Year resolutions the year with a review of what we are doing and considering whether or not to change anything in the light of the change in Ministry and of our joining the Heart of The City Mission Community. The Heart of The City Mission Community are also holding their first Moving Forward workshop on the 18th of January commencing at 10.00am which will give members of the congregation the opportunity to learn more about what a Mission Community can achieve and more particularly what the Heart of The City Mission Community hopes to achieve.

St George's have also changed the starting time of the morning service by commencing at 10.30am. It is appreciated that this will cause problems for some folk but it has occurred due to the new parking regulations introduced by the County Council after much consultation with the people of Carlisle. With St George's acquiring extra spaces from the Cathedral Trust in the car park adjoining St George's it is hoped that people in greatest need can be helped.

This year will see in a few months time the Viaduct end of West Walls reopened after a closure of some 4 months at least for the demolition of the long-abandoned hotel. This will be very welcome as the closure has certainly reduced the footfall around the Church.

It is frustrating for any organisation that depends on people attending it and whose purpose is to reach people with God's Love to have access to its building restricted.

We begin the month in our services by celebrating Epiphany. We have the familiar age old story of the visit of the Magi but it is one which takes on renewed importance when we think of how the newborn Messiah becomes a refugee and even the Wise men have to escape Herod's clutches. The other crucial point that comes from the visit of the Magi is the emphasis that Jesus is for all humanity not only the Jewish people.

This is a very important message in the Ecumenical County of Cumbria with the emphasis on God For All. It is a strange thing is it not that it takes dignitaries from places people have either not heard of at all or only have a faint knowledge of to establish the credibility of our Saviour. Epiphany is another opportunity to continue the transformation begun in Advent.

Advent last year started a positive trend of increased attendance at services which we all pray and hope will continue into this New Year.

Our services in January continue with the baptism of Christ. Familiar though this event is it reminds us of how God needs to affirm to the people that Jesus was his only Son. It reminds us when we get despondent about God's message reaching others that there were challenges even then.

The key Sunday for me in January as a URC Minister has to be Sunday the 18th when we celebrate the week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It is a great day to make sure that wherever possible we arrange Pulpit exchanges to demonstrate to the world at large that in Cumbria at least we are working together with other denominations. That morning I will be preaching in an Anglican Parish Church and the following Sunday St Georges will have Canon Michael from the Cathedral preaching whilst I have the invitation to preach at the Cathedral. Visible signs of unity are very important in our divided world.

On a personal note Janet and I would want to thank you all for the many Christmas greetings we have received. Janet and I wish you all a peaceful and fruitful New Year.

With every blessing
Nick Mark

Brampton United Reformed Church

Closure Service

A full church of Ecumenical friends were welcomed, with representatives from all the Brampton churches and further afield in Cumbria on Sunday afternoon 24th November 2019. The service was led by the Revd Sarah Moore Area President, with the Revd Nick Mark giving a summary of the history of the Church. This service was one of celebration for 357 years of Presbyterianism in Brampton, when Communion was also served.

Florence Scott gave us memories as she remembered, over the past 80 years from going to Sunday School, Youth Clubs etc to the present day. Readers were Margaret Holland, John Salton and Barbara Laird. The Organist was Peter Day.

It was with regret that the doors of the church closed for good after 357 years.

Fellowship continued with refreshments in the Hall at the Green Door.

The Revd John Robinson, his wife Muriel, the Revd Robert Sheard and family, the Revd Ian Prentice, his wife Wilma, the Revd David Ruddick, his wife Pat and Pam Dent sent their regrets at not being able to attend.



News of the Fellowship

Martin Baker is in hospital at Carlisle. Nanette Brown is now home. Shirley Brown is improving. Our thoughts and prayers go to all those who are not able.

It was a lovely occasion when the children of Meghan and Paul Troughton were Christened by the Revd Nick Mark on Saturday 16th of November. Maggie Florence and Jack Andrew are the grandchildren of Margaret and Brian Holland and the great grandchildren of Florence Scott and John Salton. Barbara Laird presented beautiful Children's Bibles to Maggie and Jack.

We send all our good wishes to Don and Isobel Hill on their move to their new home in Greystoke, and we wish them every happiness there.

Our thanks go to St George's folk and the Knowe Church folk for their support and friendship over the years.

Barbara Laird

Sermon at the Closure Service of Brampton URC

Sunday 24th November 2019 at 3pm

Let us Pray:

Guide us O Lord on this day through your word to look both backwards and forwards and give thanks for your guidance over three and a half centuries. Amen.

I arrived here as minister just a few months after you had held an amazing service to give thanks for 350 years worship and like all Churches should do the Elders challenged me to do something and so today is not about what I have done but about what we as a team here of congregation, elders and minister have achieved together. So am I to say well in preaching at the Closing service we have finished up as abject failures?

I suggest no because I was guided to the interesting passage in Ezekiel chapter 37 which follows the immortal passage on dem bones, dem dry bones.

So for my text I felt guided to Verse 19 and these words of God:

The Lord Yahweh has said this: 'Here am I, I'm going to take Yoseph's piece of wood that's in Ephrayim's hand, and the Yisraelite clans that are his associates, and I shall put them on it, and make them one piece of wood. They will be one in my hand.

Recently the Rural Dean Edward and the Lay Chair Sheila invited me to speak to the Brampton Deanery about our closure. Today is not about failure because there is a real sense of achievement to record. This Church came about because of very troubled times. Life had been pretty simple and people had what was then and still is a fabulous place of Worship in the Parish Church. Then came the momentous events of 1662 when 24 priests in Cumberland were ejected from their livings because they felt they were disobeying God if they complied with the Act of uniformity. Thus my predecessor many centuries ago now Nathaniel Burnand was ejected from St Martin's and set up his own little church meeting in houses.

There was much persecution and you will see to my left a replica of the Royal Coat of Arms which allowed Presbyterians as we were then known to worship freely. The Hall next door was the original Church built in 1725 after a succession of meeting places with windows high up so folk couldn't look in. The minister then Robert Wight had 101 families in his care. This Church only dates back to a mere 1854 and is quite unusual with the stained Glass windows behind me.

In modern terminology let us fast forward to 1972. The Presbyterians joined up with the Congregationalists to form the United Reformed Church later to be joined by the Churches of Christ and the Scottish Congregationalists. Many of you present today will say what an odd denomination we are since we have never envisaged a long-term life. We were born to die by uniting with other denominations.

That hasn't happened because in our modern world we see sense in giving people choice whilst trying to unite in the things we can do together. So my slant on the Christian faith isn't better than either Rachel, Ruth, Huw or Stephen my very supportive colleagues can offer because we all believe in the Same God and the same Jesus Christ.

When elders and congregation met with me because of falling numbers we had two stark choices. One was to plod on and try to win more souls. The other choice was to promote and work with the other churches on making the Ecumenical County of Cumbria here in Brampton not an aspiration but a reality. We have realised we couldn't do both so we have worked on the creation of a Mission community which is nearing fruition and we have encouraged the exciting ecumenical project in our halls where you will all hopefully join us for a feast afterwards. In some places we might feel we are deserting people but part of the ethos of a mission community is going forward in strength and we are still in Brampton offering four different styles of worship three traditional, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist and one Fresh expression in the Network Youth church that Ruth leads.

What I have witnessed in my few years here then is an amazing turn round of events. Instead of many churches competing with each other and often arguing with each other we have churches cooperating on Mission but still offering their interpretation of the Gospel of Christ.

Mission communities has also meant a radical rethink for the URC in Cumbria on who it actually serves. We have no parishes so anyone can come here. There are folk from Scotland, folk from Carlisle and we call it a gathered church. The question we are beginning to answer is that the population in general want to identify with an area like a Mission Community rather than travel miles to worship.

To the local congregation on behalf of the URC here I thank you for your support and say to you don't give up worship, rethink how God managed to bring together very difficult factions in our reading from Ezekiel.

I have a real hope and belief in Mission Communities and that they will provide something in the variety they offer for the many people who don't go to church yet are desperately seeking spiritual nourishment. I will obviously miss this Congregation but I leave feeling that it has fulfilled its purpose. It has contributed through Churches Together and its part in negotiations to paving a way back from the dissension and turmoil of the 1660s. You may say why has it taken so long but Area President Sarah started our service with that passage from Ecclesiastes reminding us we work to God's time not ours. Above all we are freeing a small number of people from the onerous task of caring for these buildings and enabling them to spend more time telling others of God's love. In the North Western Synod we have the joy of our own challenging theologian Lawrence Moore who stops us standing still and reminds us in simple terms that we should be Christ centred not working on survival. He stops not just ministers but Elders being complacent. It is obvious that we need to reduce the time we spend on buildings and increase the time we spend on reaching people. Our Gospel reading reminds us of that. Yes it is painful to see a church die but it is vital for things sometimes to close for something new to happen. Look out in the coming months for the Launch of the Brampton Mission Community. Folk will see that instead of a buildings-centred set of Churches we will have a people-centred set of churches.

I'm like many of us here getting old but my cynicism goes when I see how new ideas like the work that Ruth is doing is reaching young people and we are beginning to break that spiral of decline. God's one church needs different forms of expression.

Revd Nick Mark

News from the Knowe Church, Bewcastle

Many thanks go to everyone who participated in or supported in any way the Christmas festival on the 14th and 15th of December.

With the Closure of Brampton URC the Church has gained a number of large print hymn books so if you need one please ask one of the duty elders. Also Brampton have kindly donated more of their comfortable blue chairs and a pair of Go-Pak Tables. Soon you will notice a major change with the installation of both a Sound and Loop system. Again this will be coming from Brampton URC. The former congregation at Brampton are glad to see all these items have gone to a good home!

It has been good to see the new carpeting at the rear of the church which makes the area much more welcoming.

Our Communion service on the 5th of January will be held at Barbara's Studio in Roadhead as has been customary in past years. Anticipating the normal weather conditions in February it is expected our February service on the 2nd of February will also take place at Barbara's studio. We thank Barbara for her kind hospitality.

Nick Mark



Schedule for St George's URC, Carlisle

St George's Services

Jan	5th	10.30am	(Revd Janice Faris)
Jan	12th	10.30am	(NM)
Jan	19th	10.30am	(Revd Iain Mackenzie)
Jan	26th	10.30am	Communion (Canon Michael Manley)
Feb	2nd	10.30am	(Revd Janice Faris)

Readers

Jan	5th	Pamela Martin
Jan	12th	Marjorie Lawson
Jan	19th	Elizabeth Mackenzie
Jan	26th	Tony Wiseman
Feb	2nd	Paul Faris

Communion Duty

Jan 26th

Preparation

Ian Moonie

Serving

Peter Day
Ian Moonie

Duty Rota

Jan 5th
Jan 12th
Jan 19th
Jan 26th
Feb 2nd

Elder

Tony Wiseman
Trevor Irwin
Moira Wales
Olive Cronie
Marjorie Lawson

Steward

Pamela Martin
Jessie Overs
Deborah Usher
Kathleen Harris
Pamela Martin

Flowers

Jan 5th
Jan 12th
Jan 19th
Jan 26th
Feb 2nd

Elizabeth & Iain Mackenzie
Moira Wales
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

Saturday Coffee Morning

Jan 4th
Jan 11th
Jan 18th
Jan 25th
Feb 1st

Jessie & Michael Overs
Elizabeth & Iain Mackenzie
Rosalind Fearon & Kathy Craig
Pamela Martin & Jessie Overs
Kathleen Harris & Moira Wales

February 'Bridge' Preparation

Claiming date for Articles:

Sunday 12th January

Contact editor or email to:

deepray@btinternet.com

Printing in week from:

Monday 20th January

By:

Kathleen & John Harris

From St. George's Secretary

I hope that Christmas has been a time of joy and blessing for our members and friends. We remember in our prayers all those who are unwell and those who care for them.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Christmas celebrations: Olive for conducting the carol service, Peter for playing the organ, Tony for his lovely cards and everyone who decorated the church so beautifully. Thanks also to those who delivered our gifts to WERS, the Food Bank and the Carlisle Homeless Centre. We are also indebted to Trevor, Michael, Tony and others for ensuring the building is warm and well maintained.

2020 brings a number of challenges for our church. We have been privileged to have a Minister for the past 8 years, but in February Nick is retiring; we have entered into a new relationship with our city centre church neighbours; and we have become part of the wider Cumbria URC Missional Partnership. Elizabeth has already arranged for a number of visiting preachers to conduct services during the year.

The elders meet early in January to consider how best St George's can contribute to the wider community, based on the responses to the questionnaire in December. We will bring our findings for discussion to the church meeting on Wednesday 22nd January.

Date for your diary

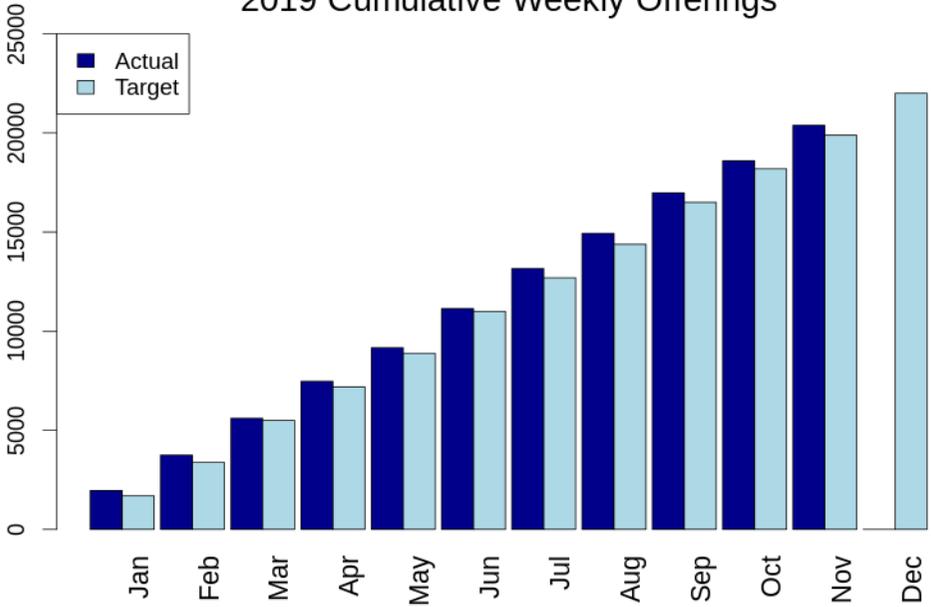
On Sunday 23rd February at 2.30pm we will be holding a farewell service for our Minister Revd Nick Mark conducted by Revd Sarah Moore, followed by a tea in the Tithe Barn. There will be no morning service.

An event postponed

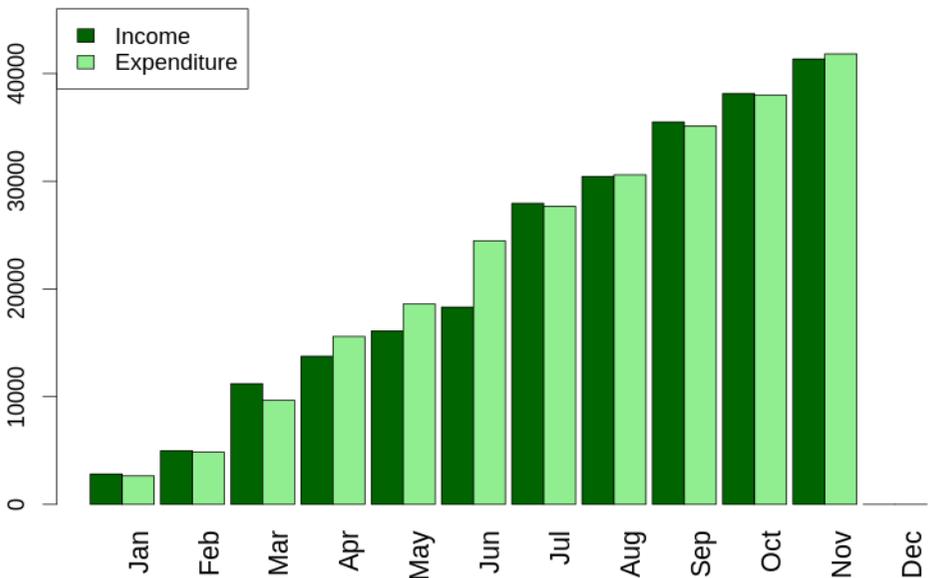
The Moving Mountains Day event planned for 18th January has had to be postponed because some of the Church Leaders find themselves unable to attend on that day.

Rosalind

St. George's URC Carlisle 2019 Cumulative Weekly Offerings



2019 Cumulative Total Income / Expenditure



Notes from St George's

Gift Aid Scheme (*Pamela Martin Gift Aid Secretary*)

This Scheme is of great financial benefit to our Church, and if any Members would wish to join (currently a UK Taxpayer to be eligible), please see me, and I will provide a Declaration Form for completion.

In addition, if any existing Members of the Scheme have had changed circumstances during the past twelve months, it would be much appreciated if they could let me know, so that their details may be updated. Thank you.

Samaritan's Purse (*Elizabeth Mackenzie*)

My grateful thanks to all who again filled shoe boxes - 54 from St. George's and a total of 3,085 from the Carlisle area. The boxes have this year been sent to orphans and under-privileged children in Bosnia.

Scams (*Elizabeth Mackenzie*)

At the Guild meeting on 4th November, Andy Auld of the Citizen's Advice Bureau gave a talk on 'SCAMS'. The following suggestions from the 2019 Scams Awareness Campaign is something worthwhile taking time to read. If you suspect a scam:

- STOP and take time to get advice. You can contact the Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 04 05 06. If it is a scam this will automatically be reported to Trading Standards.
- REPORT scams and suspected scams to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 www.action.fraud.police.uk. If debit cards, online banking or cheques are involved, contact the bank or credit card company.
- TALK to family, friends, neighbours so that they can avoid scams.

Thanks for Flowers (*Mavis Hall*)

Once again I would like to give my thanks to the Flower Ladies for the unexpected roses I received last Sunday. They brighten my day and my week whenever I see them. Thank you.

Stop Press (*Editor*)

We have just been informed of the death of Mrs Muriel Drinkall in the late evening of 11th December. A very long-term member of St George's, her funeral, conducted jointly by her daughter Eileen and Nick Mark, is arranged at the crematorium on Thursday 19th December at 3.40pm.

St George's Guild

Programme for 2020

6th January

*A talk by a member of Carlisle Key
(an organisation working with young people)*

3rd February

*John & Diane Findlay
various films including
'A unique place of worship in Dorset'*

2nd March

*Rev. Iain Mackenzie
Women of the Bible,*

6th April

*A talk by a member of the Great North Air
Ambulance.*

11th May

*Cream Tea at Dobbies
(a treat from Guild funds)*

Jesus-shaped Church: Combating Survivalism

*NW Synod's Mission & Discipleship Team
Lawrence, Dave, Darren & Daleen*

*"Ecology is about whole life discipleship
not survivalism!"*

(October 2019)

Daleen writes

Last Saturday I attended an Eco Workshop at the Dandelion Community at Wythenshaw lead by the Green Christian Community. During the group discussions we realised that much of the vocabulary around the ecological crisis deals in guilt, blame, fear and survivalism. This literal message is of no use. In John 10:10, Jesus said that he came, not to condemn the world but he came, so that we have life in abundance.

Therefore, what Christians can bring is the reality of forgiveness and restoration to wholeness. We can change the narrative of survival and believe that, in us, God can do a new thing, and a new way of living and being, beginning with us.

We are in Creation, we are of Creation, we cannot live without Creation. Jesus himself trod lightly on the earth, fed the poor and reminded us that Creation is within God's care. Remembering this we have reason to be joyful and talk meaningfully about possibilities for change. Every action counts and we do it, not to just survive, but for love because we never know who is influenced by it. The question is: In what new ways can we learn to live gently on the Earth?

- Pick up litter
- Invite people to eco events



- Spread message of hope and effective action
- Write to politicians
- Become involved in a local project
- Engage with ecology through worship and bible study groups
- Encourage Uniform groups to get involve in eco projects alongside the church such as building bug houses, bird feeders, composting etc.
- Become a Eco church through ARocha
- Reduce the use of plastic
- Buy local produce if possible etc.

Ecology is about whole life discipleship...not survival.

Dave writes

The Message translation of John 10:10 is a version that reverberates with promise:

"I came so that they can have more and a better life than they ever dreamed of!"

These words, spoken by Jesus, promise the hope of a different world, a world of abundance. They are spoken to a time and people that knew extreme scarcity.

Jesus' family and neighbours were largely peasant farmers, eking out a living on land that was probably once theirs, but is now owned by landlords in Jerusalem in payment for impossible and extortionate tax levies. These are the "thieves and robbers" mentioned in the previous verse.

Jesus' neighbours needed a better life because their present one was intolerable. The country was marked by an extreme gap between the "haves" and "have-nots". The elite made up 10% of the population, but consumed over 66% of the country's wealth.

The remaining 90% of the population lived precarious lives of poverty. They were, at best, the "just coping", with no chance of progressing up the social or economic ladder.

They lived on the edge, permanently holed at the waterline by taxation. So precarious were their lives that they needed to pray for enough bread each day in order to survive the next 24 hours. They started off with nothing, and they would be lucky, when they died, to have most of it left!

When Jesus' neighbours heard the promise of life and life in all its fullness, they didn't hear it as a distant, spiritualised promise of a better place when they died. No, they heard it as his promise that God would ensure that they experienced life before death - fullness and abundance now! Christian dreams are not of heaven, but of a redeemed earth where hunger and poverty are no more.



Our world, our planet, the poor and downtrodden who scrape for the scraps left by our present day "thieves and robbers" need God's Kingdom now. As our Lord taught us to pray: "May your Kingdom come on earth".

And may we put our prayers for "heaven come down to earth" into action, so that all may experience a better life!

Darren writes

It's hard to have a discussion when you agree with everything that's being said. Daleen and Dave have both articulated key reasons why it is crucial for the church alongside all people to take climate change/crisis seriously enough to act.

I remember in the early 1980's in my geography lessons being told almost as a matter of fact that the rate by which the polar ice caps were then melting would bring serious global consequences by 2050. Why I mention this is because the evidence of human impact on climate change is not new science, it's not a fad or a phase, not

even an argument. Al Gore in his documentary-film *An Inconvenient Truth* cited the same kind of teaching when he was at school in the 1960's.

So why is more not being done? Why are we so slow to act? Whose responsibility is it? Is it that simple to make a difference?

A passionate 16 year old girl called Greta Thunberg is certainly making significant waves by challenging leaders, governments and industries that need to be doing more and as she rightly points out - applauding and nodding in agreement means nothing without action.

When Adolf Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, Great Britain and the world responded. War was declared. It took years to stop the advancement of the Nazi occupation and wider threat but nevertheless it was unthinkable that the world should sit and wait it out, argue over the accuracy of the data, scoff at and mock those who highlighted the deadly nature of this threat.

It is time for the church and the world to wake up to the reality of a threat that is far greater than the one Hitler ever posed. Not because of what could happen but because of what is already happening to our brothers and sisters in the poorest global communities through the impact of human-affected climate chaos. This is not a time to applaud and nod, or to sit it out, argue the toss or mock those who are doing what we should be doing. Not even to wait for someone else to tell us but to make time to listen, to learn and to care. It is time to act. This isn't the job of a 16 year old girl this is a responsibility for Jesus-shaped people ready to declare war on the unjust practices that damage the earth God made good and deny people the life in all its fullness Jesus promised.



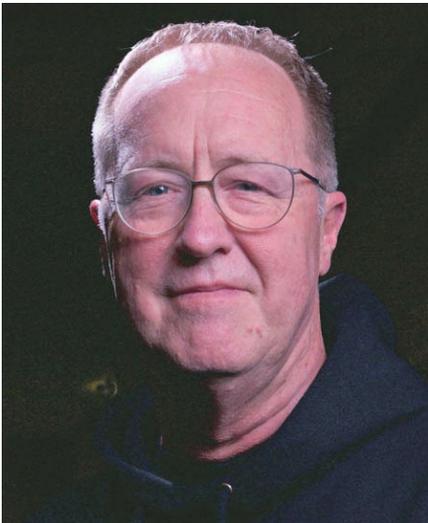
Lawrence writes

Daleen writes, "Ecology is about whole life discipleship ... not survival". I agree. The state of the planet is a gospel issue. This is a case where theology matters - crucially!

I remember being shocked by a quote from one of George W Bush's energy spokespeople:

"We don't have to worry about climate change because Jesus is coming again!"

He was articulating a particular theological viewpoint, made hugely popular in the 1970s by an American postman, Hal Lindsey, who wrote a book significantly titled, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. It's a version of so-called biblical prophecy in which Jesus will come and "rapture" all the Christians (take them safely to heaven), while the earth will be destroyed in a nuclear conflict, as God plans. The earth, in other words, doesn't feature in God's salvation!



It's a pernicious, dangerous theology: if God is going to nuke the planet, why does it matter if we trash it by our rampant consumerism? Where is our duty to steward God's incredible creation? Where is the sense that we hold it in trust for God and for our children's children? It means we can destroy it with impunity for our own selfish benefit ... in God's name, even!

As Dave reminds us: the biblical picture is of a world redeemed, restored and re-created. John the Seer's vision in Revelation 21: 1-5a is of the world as God intended it to be (what Jesus calls, "the Kingdom of God"). Note that, far from whisking us off to heaven, God "comes down" and "pitches tent" (literally, "tabernacles") with humanity.

The gospel - the Good News of God's salvation in Jesus - means that the church ought naturally to be in the forefront of saving the planet - like wot Darren says. Thank God for Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg! They are not just prophets who speak to the likes of Donald Trump - they're prophets sent to wake us up to our calling as disciples of Jesus!



Prayer Partners
2020

Commitment for Life
Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

A Commitment for Life resource

January

Prayer for peace

*we dare not merely pray that You end all war;
for You made us in your own image, O God of Peace,
we dare not merely pray that You end starvation;
for You have blessed us with plenty, O God of
Abundance;*

*we do not merely pray that You end all prejudice,
disease, poverty and hatred*

*We pray instead that You give us the strength,
determination and wisdom to live as Jesus lived,
as living reminders of the coming Kin-dom*

Amen

Twelve Faces of Hope (3)

With hope comes love

Hope is the reason to stay positive and loving life, in spite of all the negativity around you. Without hope, there are no positive expectations. Hope helps psychically, spiritually and emotionally.

My Christian faith is instrumental in coping with hope. It tells me that everything will be ok, and that things will change for the better. It is important to share hope and it's a tool that helps us support



each other emotionally. Through hard work, team spirit and collaboration, within the society and among community members, we can turn our hopes into reality.

It is important that we don't leave, and that we work together where we are for peace

and reconciliation. Lasting peace can only be accomplished through tolerance and understanding. We must become more open to one another and respect one another. Dialogue is crucial for reconciliation.

My hope is that this conflict comes to an end, and that different communities can live together in harmony. That requires dialogue, in addition for courage to leave our comfort zones.

I also hope to be able to stay in Jerusalem, because this is where I belong. I've travelled, I've lived abroad, but I have always returned, and I hope that I can continue to have the privilege to live here, in a reconciled land where everyone will be at peace of mind.

Hope is a very strong word.
With hope comes love.

Nanor Arakelian
Communication coordinator



**World Council
of Churches**

Commitment for Life

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

Alsra: a success, but for how long?

Alsra is an unrecognised Bedouin village in the Naqab/Negev Desert, not far from Beersheba in Israel. In unrecognised villages, the state does not provide basic services, infrastructure (e.g. water and electricity), or budget.

The village also lacks what city planners would call a 'master plan' - a blueprint for existing and proposed development of a town, or a plan for how it will support the life of the community living there. These villages are, as the word 'unrecognised' suggests, essentially invisible.

Christian Aid's partner Adalah (which means 'justice' in Arabic) is an independent human rights organisation and legal centre whose mission is to promote human rights in Israel, especially for the Palestinian minority (around 1.8 million people, or almost 21% of the population).

Unrecognised villages like Alsra face a constant threat of demolition through orders produced by the state. Fighting against the unjust destruction of Palestinian family homes is a long and uncertain process. Living in these villages means living with the constant risk that your house will be demolished.

Working to reverse demolition orders for Alsra in 2006, Adalah took the case to the Israeli courts. After 8 years, Adalah was successful

and the demolition orders were cancelled, saving the homes of about 70 families. However, as the village is unrecognised, the state could issue another demolition order at any time.

Commitment
for Life

In the meantime, for those like Khalil who live in the village the struggle for recognition goes on; 'Alsra is not on the map, there are no road signs marking its existence. We bought signs to break the silence, to make ourselves visible.'

Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life, which is protecting human rights in Alsra and across the region.

Services

The Knowe Church, Bewcastle

Jan	5th	1.45pm	Communion in Barbara's Studio (NM)
Feb	2nd	1.45pm	Service in Barbara's Studio (NM)

St George's URC, West Walls, Carlisle

Jan	5th	10.30am	(Revd Janice Faris)
Jan	12th	10.30am	(NM)
Jan	19th	10.30am	(Revd Iain Mackenzie)
Jan	26th	10.30am	Communion (Canon Michael Manley)
Feb	2nd	10.30am	(Revd Janice Faris)

Dates for your Diary

January

5th	10.30am	Regular Sunday Service Time at St George's changes to 10.30am from today
6th	9.30am	St George's Elders Meeting (bring lunch)
6th	2.00pm	St George's Guild (see programme on page 15)
13th	2.30pm	Service at Croftfield Care Home
14th	7.30pm	Christingle Service at Cathedral
17th	All day	St George's Deep Clean
18th		Start of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
18th	4.15pm	Taizé Service at Cathedral
21st	2.00pm	Dementia Tea Service at St George's
22nd	2.30pm	St George's Church Meeting

February

23rd	2.30pm	Farewell Service led by Revd Sarah Moore on the retirement of Revd Nick Mark. Followed by tea in the Tithe Barn.
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