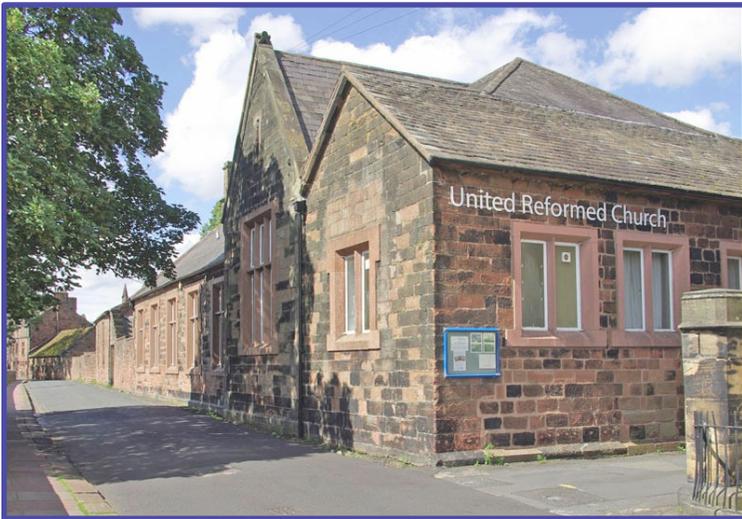


BRIDGE

April 2020



*For the United Reformed Churches in
Bewcastle and Carlisle*

*Part of the
Cumbria URC Missional Partnership*

Contacts and Sunday Service Pattern

THE MINISTER

Following the retirement of Rev Nick Mark

We are entering a period of Vacancy.

Enquiries should initially be directed

to the principal contact of

one of the two churches

as appropriate.

THE KNOWE CHURCH

BEWCASTLE

Services: 1.45pm on the first Sunday in the month

Contact: Mrs Doreen Telford

Telephone: 016977 48447

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

ALL SERVICES IN BOTH CHURCHES ARE SUSPENDED
FROM 22nd MARCH UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

SUSPENSION OF SERVICES AND GATHERINGS

In common with most other Churches we are having to suspend all Services and Gatherings until further notice following guidance from the Government as they follow scientific advice aimed at slowing down the spread of the Corona Virus.

The age and underlying medical conditions profile of our membership means that many of us have gone into, or as nearly as possible into, self isolation. Whatever level of isolation we have to endure, what is important is to keep aware of one another in our thought's and prayers. The telephone is one way to keep in touch, but do remember to keep in touch using email and our website.

Reflections

Lent is a time for reflection. With the church's focus on reaching out to people outside its membership, it's perhaps a time to think about how we are seen by some of them. Here are two reflections of quite a different nature.

THE FIRST REFLECTION, written by one of our members, relates to a recent incident which occurred at St George's.

On Saturday the 15th of February, while friends were enjoying coffee and fellowship in the library, someone threw a stone through the toilet window. The result was shards of glass strewn over the floor and a large hole in the window pane.

Luckily no one was in the toilet at the time as the stone was large enough to cause serious injury. The damage was quite costly in terms of time and money and when the clean up was complete, and the glass replaced, we were left with the question, why?

Why did someone go to the trouble of causing damage to our church?

On a busy Saturday in the city when friends were meeting in coffee shops, people were shopping, others were planning to go to the football and families were enjoying time together, did one individual with no interest in such mundane weekend activities, decide to damage our church. Why?

We often read that young people (if it was a young person) don't have anything to do, but if you can throw a stone you can help collect furniture for a charity shop, volunteer at the food bank, help with the city litter pick. You could be helping society not causing us trouble.

Every action we take has a consequence, sometimes known, often unknown. Throwing a stone at a glass window can only have one outcome so what motivation leads a person to do such a thing?

I would like to ask the culprit if they were protesting against the Christian faith in general, or our church in particular? Wouldn't it have been better to come inside church and engage with us, discussing is always preferable to stoning. I really want to know why you caused the damage.

Frequently on television news broadcasts, from more volatile nations, we see stones being thrown at the security forces. Although it's distressing to watch we know that those doing the throwing feel that they are fighting for some cause. They would justify their actions by saying that they were protesting against injustice and that their stone-throwing is the only way to confront the forces of oppression. Whether we accept that or not, at least there is reason given for such behaviour.

I sincerely wish I could talk to our stone-thrower, find out what was on his mind when he threw the stone. Maybe if he explained I might not be sympathetic but at least there would be some logic to the act, however flawed.

THE SECOND REFLECTION, from something which appeared in the national press, leads us to think about the importance of being an open, welcoming and uncritical community. A young lady, I infer, not yet a Christian herself, but attracted by the christian (adjective) nature of a particular congregation has found it a source of peace of mind.

A year ago, I'd have probably spent this Sunday morning in bed, nursing a hangover. Instead, rain or shine, hangover or no hangover, I'll be at church.

I'm not just an atheist, but one who spent a decade preaching a gospel of strident anti-theism. Yet I've started attending each week and have found it transformative. And I'm not alone. Recent surveys suggest that growing numbers of millennials and Gen Z'ers are seeking solace In church - even if they don't believe in God.

What explains the transformation from Dawkins devotee to churchgoing atheist? There are scores of churches nearby, but my favourite is St Bartholomew the Great in Clerkenwell. Initially drawn to its architecture, some personal struggles left me searching for comfort beyond the purely aesthetic.

Shamefully, as a child I accused my mother, a consummate dogooder, of child abuse for baptising me without my consent. The canard "If you're not a socialist at 20, you have no heart; if you're not a conservative at 30, you have no brain" may be trite, but it reflects a fundamental truth, maturity often involves the realisation that we can learn much from the past.

Indeed, the Church of England still safeguards our architectural and artistic inheritance. National identity is inseparable from its defining texts, the King James Bible and Book of Common Prayer. It is impossible to interpret much great art or literature created before the 1800s without some Bible knowledge.

But perhaps the most important lesson is how churchgoing takes us outside the trivia of our own lives - the preoccupations and

obsessions induced by social media and that sense of ourselves as the star of our own B-movie biopic. It enables us to escape, if temporarily, such narcissism, focusing on the wider world and taking a longer view. For me, it is a partial antidote to the illusory optimism, anxiety and depression that has defined my generation.

Am I a fraud? After all, church isn't supposed to be a mindfulness retreat. I hope not. The community cuts across the barriers of class, race and culture that govern our daily lives - poor widows worship alongside the squire, the student, the squaddie, the computer geek, the vagrant and the scientist. Some, I suspect, are closet unbelievers like me, or imbued with what Tennyson called "honest doubt".

The cup of coffee and chatter after the service make you feel part of a community, even in a faceless city like London. So, too, do the other social elements, evensong, the fundraising efforts to replace the woodwormy floor or the leaking roof. Singing hymns is especially satisfying in a world that has reduced music to a largely passive affair, something imposed on us, willy-nilly, via interchangeable pop songs blasted into shops and pubs.

As attendance dwindles, more non-believers should give church a whirl. They welcome everyone - and provide a space where even stressed and frantic "churchgoing atheists" like me can find our equilibrium.

Follow Madeline Grant on Twitter @madz_grant;

Read more at telegraph.co.uk/opinion

The Knowe Church, Bewcastle

Bewcastle United Reformed Church held their farewell service for Revd Nick Mark on Sunday 2nd February at Rough Syke Studio Roadhead, with afternoon tea after the service.

We welcomed Barbara, Vera, Florence, Euan & Kathleen to the service.

All good wishes to Nick & Janet on their retirement.

The service at 1.45pm on Sunday 5th April at The Knowe Church, Bewcastle, led by Mr Dick Davidson has been CANCELLED

Country Fest in Roadhead Hall

May 29th to 31st 11.30 am to 4.00pm each day Country Fest in Roadhead Hall. In the light of the current situation with regard to Corona Virus, no decision has yet been taken whether or not this event will take place. We will know nearer to the time.

Free entry refreshments available showcasing Bewcastle and the surrounding area, history, wildlife, farming, demonstrations on stick making and weaving. Everyone very welcome.



Doreen Telford

St George's Church, Carlisle

Secretary's Message

News of the Membership

It is with great sadness that we report that Jennifer Burgess passed away in hospital on 20th February. We extend our loving sympathy to Alan, Susan and family. Jennifer was a kind and loyal friend to many in the church. She cared for Alan with great devotion and earned the admiration of all who knew her.

It was good to see Caireen at the farewell service. We hope she continues to do well.

On 1st March we welcomed two new members, Erwin and Carole Kramer, who have transferred from the Reform church in Utrecht. We hope you will feel welcome in your new spiritual home among our church family, and we look forward to getting to know you better.

Farewell Service for our Retiring Minister

A big THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this such a memorable occasion, even though it was tinged with sadness as we said farewell to Nick and Janet. So many people helped - I am cautious about names in case I forget anyone! But thank you to those who set out the chairs and put them away again, those who printed the order of service, those who arranged the beautiful flowers, those who welcomed our guests and supervised the parking, those who set out the Tithe Barn and cleared up afterwards, Peter for the music and Tony for the photographs and card. The tea was excellent. Altogether it was a fitting tribute to Nick for all he has done for us and the wider church over the past seven and a half years. We wish Nick and Janet God's every blessing in their new home.

Annual General Meeting

This is planned for Wednesday 22nd April at 2.30pm when the 2019 reports and accounts Yearbook should be presented. If you normally submit an account or report please will you make sure Peter has it by 31st March. Remember that it is just for the calendar year 2019. In the present circumstances, it is by no means certain that the AGM can take place as planned, but there is no reason to delay production of the Yearbook.

The following elders come to the end of their 3-year term in April and are willing to serve for another term: Peter Day, Tony Wiseman.

Three elders are retiring and we are very much hoping that members will come forward to replace them. Please give this your prayerful consideration. The nomination slip is in this Bridge. If you wish to nominate someone please first check that they are willing to stand. We suggest that you retain the slips for the time being.

Contact details

If members have any concerns that they would normally take to their Minister, your elder will be your first port of call. Elders will do their best to assist you and point you in the right direction.

Co-ordinator for URC Missional Partnership is Rev Martyn Coe, based in Grange-over-Sands. In addition, Rev Dave Harkison in Whitehaven and Rev Alistair Smeaton in Workington, will share responsibilities for all the Cumbria URC churches.

A special plea

The Bridge relies very much on contributions from members. Please consider whether you could write something. We want to make Peter's job as editor as easy as possible so don't forget the deadline each month. The elders will take it in turns to write the leading article.

Weekly notices

For the time being these can't be distributed as they normally are. Please let Tony have information to which you want to draw attention. Also Peter for possible inclusion on a bulletin board page on our website.

Social and Fund-Raising Committee (*Valerie Barlow*)

The Committee had planned some events to take place in the next few weeks/months but, due to the concerns and risks relating to the Coronavirus, we have decided to put them on hold until it is safe to meet again socially. Let us hope and pray that this will be in the not too distant future.

The Guild (*Elizabeth Mackenzie*)

Our talk by a member of the Great North Air Ambulance on 6th April is cancelled. GNAA have already cancelled their community engagement work for the foreseeable future. This includes talks at businesses, schools and community groups, bucket collections at shops and supermarkets, and the emptying of collection tins. When added to fundraising events organised by their supporters, which are also expected to be badly affected, this amounts to more than £100,000 a month on average.

The Cream Tea on 11th May has also had to be cancelled.

Rosalind Fearon

NOMINATION FOR ELDER

PERSON NOMINATED

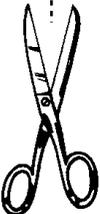
NOMINATOR

SECONDER

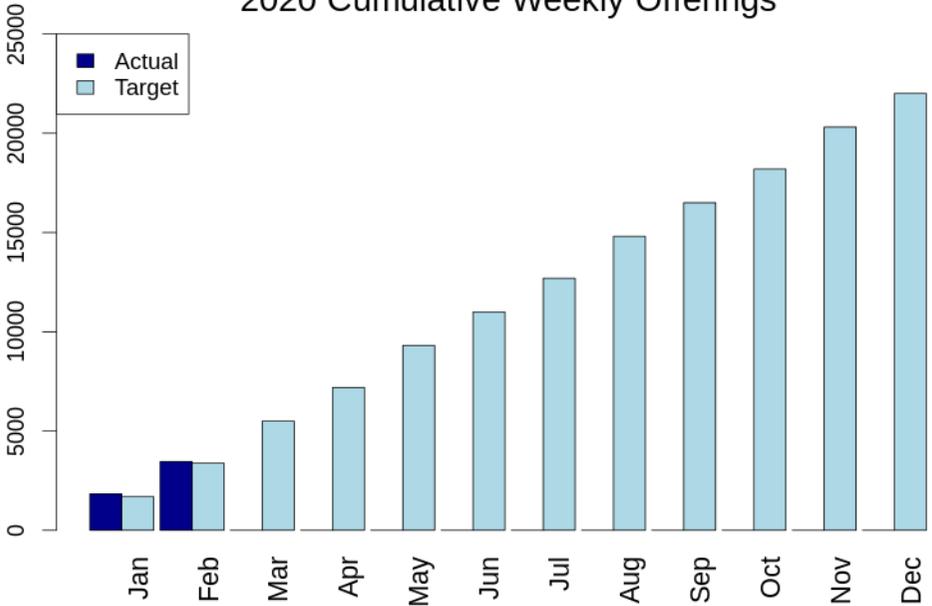
This form should be completed and retained for the time being..

Those who have completed their term of office, and are willing to serve a further term must also be nominated and seconded.

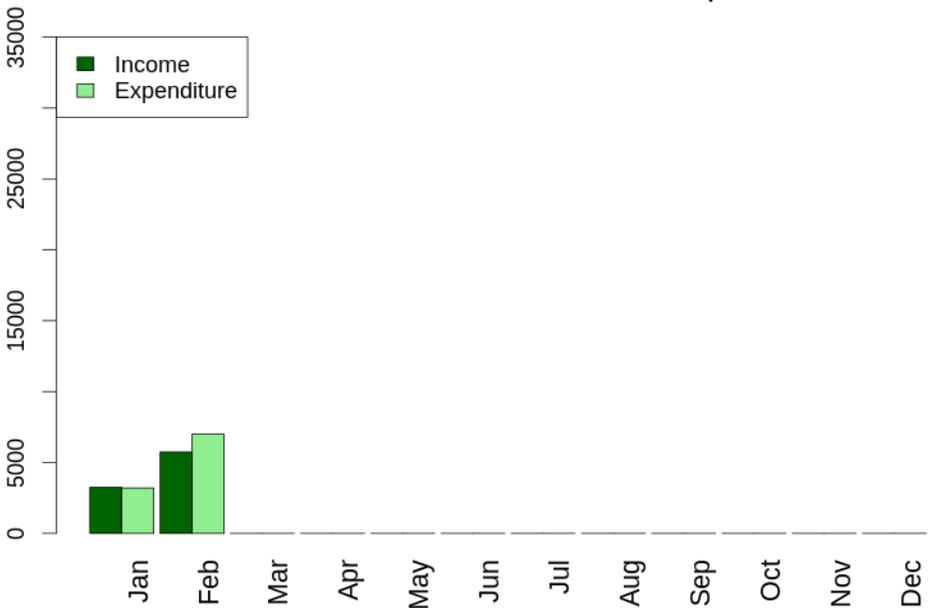
Nominators and Seconders must be full communicant members of St George's United Reformed Church.



St. George's URC Carlisle 2020 Cumulative Weekly Offerings



2020 Cumulative Total Income / Expenditure



From the URC General Secretary

*Addressed primarily to Ministers of Word and Sacraments
and Church Related Community Workers*

Dear Sisters and Brothers

We are writing to you during this outbreak of coronavirus (Covid 19) to assure you of our prayers as you minister to those in our churches and communities who will be feeling anxious about the future and concerned for the health of friends and neighbours, as well as themselves. We too would value your prayers as we consider the effects of this virus on the work of the Assembly office.

As you know the Government has now strongly discouraged public gatherings and will shortly issue advice for over 70 year-olds and those who may be particularly vulnerable. Many of our churches have already suspended all acts of worship, physical meetings, and other church activities, probably for some weeks, or even months. While this is profoundly sad, we think it is a proper response to the Government's guidance, and it is a policy that we strongly encourage every church to consider. We shall of course update you as guidance changes.

Some of our people may be involved in community support and care, in formal and informal ways.

Naturally we shall want to be careful, for others' well-being and also our own. If you undertake home visits for any purpose, you are advised to take precautions, or to consider using alternative ways of contact. If your church buildings continue to be used for any activities e.g. a food bank, you will be especially careful about hygiene.

However, as we cease meeting physically for worship, this may prove most difficult for the group such measures are designed to protect, the elderly. Some steps can be taken to ensure that congregants do not feel isolated and they have access to helpful information and support.

1. Consider some kind of telephone cascade system to enable prayer requests, pastoral news and the need for practical help to be passed on. This should be the most inclusive way of communicating as it accommodates those who are not able and confident in using a computer.
2. Pay attention to vulnerable groups, particularly people over 70, pregnant women, families affected by domestic abuse, those with long-term health conditions, mental disorders or disabilities and people who rely on others' assistance for daily support. Your church's safeguarding coordinator or the synod safeguarding officer may have helpful advice to offer about these situations.
3. Take advice about coronavirus from NHS Guidelines and share them with your Church. The NHS link is here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
4. Andy Braunston is working to extend Daily Devotions from the URC to include a short Sunday service framework, starting this Sunday 22nd March. The sign up for those who do not yet receive them can be found on the URC website: <http://devotions.urc.org.uk>
5. Many of you are either already streaming services or planning to begin. If you are just starting, remember to check the copyright issues first.
6. The Communications Team will soon feature a page on the URC website showing where anyone can join in with online worship, from live broadcasts to recorded sermons. If your church can help with this, please tell Andy Jackson: andy.jackson@urc.org.uk. There will also be guidance for those who want to start using Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media.
7. FaceTime/Skype may enable some to gather in small Bible study or fellowship groups.

8. You may have other ideas that will help to sustain our people and their church life through difficult weeks ahead. If so, we shall be glad to hear from you.
9. Let us not forget the wider community in our concern for congregants. Neighbours can offer shopping or a friendly chat on the phone, without putting their own health at risk from those who are self-isolating.
10. Following the cancellation of this week's Mission Council and all of the Spring Synod meetings, we will find ways of letting you know how work can be carried forward. A decision about General Assembly will be made over the course of the next few weeks.

Finally, a prayer

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.

Yours sincerely,

John Proctor, with Jane Baird, Francis Brienens, Richard Church
General Secretary and Deputy General Secretaries

Editor's Footnote

Regarding item 4 in the list, Andy Braunston has written with the offer of providing pre-recorded copies of these services well before the appropriate Sunday, starting for Sunday 29th March. I've already sounded out those whose emails I have, so by the time you read this, we should have some idea if there is any interest.

Twelve Faces of Hope (6)

Choosing to stay

Many Palestinians feel that we are dying in the land of our Holy One. Often, we are asked: Is it possible to be hopeful in such a difficult context? Like many Palestinians, I frankly do not know. However, I continue to force myself to pretend I am hopeful. Why do I wish to deceive myself? In my opinion, the bitter taste of fake hope is easier than surrendering to the dark cruel reality of occupation.



The reality is absence of hope. We have very few expectations, if any. We are just trying to survive. I could easily move abroad, but I don't want to live anywhere else. I want my nine-month-old daughter to grow up being able to say that this is where her parents grew

up and live. Choosing to stay here is a sign of hope, steadfastness and resistance, and that we haven't given up, after all. We still have hope that there will be some rights and that things will change.

Everything I work for everyday is that change will happen, regardless of the odds. But the reality isn't promising. My anger fuels continuous resistance, which is also a sign of hope.

Our joy is in the path towards peace and justice. We walk with Jesus. The peace of Christ is not like any other peace.

Omar Haramy

Sabeel administrator



**World Council
of Churches**

Tae a virus

Twa months ago, we didna ken, yer name or ocht about ye
But lots of things have changed since then, I really must salute ye

Yer spreading rate is quite intense, yer feeding like a gannet
Disruption caused, is so immense, ye've shaken oor wee planet.

Corona used tae be a beer, they garnished it wae limes
But noo it's filled us awe wae fear. These days, are scary times.

Nae shakin hawns, or peckin lips, it's whit they awe advise
But scrub them weel, richt tae the tips, that's how we'll awe survive

Just stay inside , the hoose, ye bide. Nae sneakin oot for strolls
Just check the lavvy every hoor, and stock-take, your, loo rolls

Our holidays have been pit aff. Noo that's the Jet2 patter
Pit oan yer thermals, have a laugh, and paddle 'doon the waater'

Canary isles, no for a while. Nae need for suntan cream.
And awe because o this wee bug, we ken tae be..19

The boredom surely will set in, but have a read, or doodle
Or plan yer menu for the month, wi 95 pot noodles.

When these run oot, just look about. A change, it would be nice.
We've beans and pasta by the ton, and twenty stane o rice.

So dinny think yell wipe us oot. Aye true, a few have died.
Bubonic, bird flu, and TB, they came, they left, they tried

Ye might be gallus noo ma freen, as ye jump fae cup tae cup
But when we get oor vaccine made, yer number will be up.

I'm sure a few Scots will understand the dialect and others will
manage to guess the foreign words! I shall surely have time to do
my reports for the AGM.

Olive