



District Newsletter – March 2021

District Chair's Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

At midday a darkness fell over the whole land

Lent, our word coming from the old English for the Springtime lengthening of days in the Northern hemisphere, was a period of preparation in the Early Church for those to be baptised at Eastern that in time became shared by all. Lent, therefore, is a time of reflection and repentance, of seeking to turn our lives around, asking for forgiveness and opening ourselves to God's transforming love as we seek to align our lives more fully with Christ's. It is a time when we make space for God, for others, and for ourselves, including by giving away and giving up.

This year, some in the District have suggested that one of the ways for making space for others and giving away could be by choosing to make a **donation towards Covid-19 vaccines** for others in less well-off countries, perhaps when receiving a Covid-19 vaccination yourself.

An internet search will reveal options for making such donations, including for children through Unicef: https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/coronavirus/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI-I6Szu6n7wIV9BkGAB3SKQSYEAAYASAAEgLTGPD_BwE; through the Arm in Arm initiative: <https://www.arminarm.net>; or, there is the general WHO Response Fund: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/donate#:~:text=Everyone%20can%20now%20support%20directly,.COVID19ResponseFund.org>.

In terms of reflecting more broadly, the **Presidential Visit** by the Revd Reichard Teal at the end of February helped many of us to think again about particular challenges in the agricultural world and more widely, or the opportunities for all our chapels to respond to their communities and not least to risk breaking through some of our personal and cultural inhibitors to talking about our faith. There is a fuller account of the virtual visit later in the Newsletter.

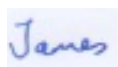
Separately, some of us were able to attend a political forum with some of the County's MPs on the **impact of Covid-19 in our communities**. Hearing accounts of the impact of the pandemic was salutary and alarming. For example, an Anglican colleague on the West Coast spoke of an 18 month waiting list for psychological support for a young person in grave danger, and of having taken 9 funerals for those who have died by suicide in recent months.

Such accounts are shocking for all, and we hold the families who are suffering, and individuals who even now are contemplating such a step, in our prayers. But more than that, how can any and all of us help, by reaching out, even to a friend or acquaintance through a phone call, to offer a **listening** ear, and thus something of God's presence, whether the person is in perceived need or not, and whether the need is small or great. I heard a wonderful account of one of our supernumerary ministers' wives just telephoning others when individuals came to mind.

There will be opportunity for another type of reflection this Saturday 13th March at 3pm as we celebrate the long-postponed **Testimony Service** for our ordinands, the Revds Zena Smith and Andrew Sterling. Whilst alas the service is virtual, it might enable you to attend, at the time, or later via catch up, through the link elsewhere in the Newsletter. If you are unfamiliar, these are special occasions, when we hear about how God has been working in Andrew and Zena's lives, and of their response to God's call. In these long difficult months, do join in this sharing, for God's light will be shining.

If at Christmas we held faith with the one whose light still shines in the darkness, so, as we approach Holy Week, we seek to walk with the one who entered the very darkness of death, and of all the world's sin, that pinned him there to **the Cross**. We know that too often (sometimes, we fear, all the time) we betray, run away, deny or even shout, by words or actions and through hard hearts and closed minds, 'Crucify!': we are part of all the sin, we know that. Yet even when God's son felt utterly abandoned and God was somehow split apart, God endured, was present in the darkness of death, in the waiting tomb, and in all that is hell. As then, now, and always, God is present, even in darkness, as we wait for ourselves and with others, looking for and seeking to bring relief, release, Resurrection.

God hold you and bless you, and God help you to hold and bless others, not least in the darkness.



The Revd Dr James Tebbutt

DISTRICT NEWS AND EVENTS

The Presidential Visit of the Revd Richard Teal to the Cumbria District

26-28 February 2021

The pandemic has affected all Presidential visits this year, but it was particularly poignant that in 'returning' to the District of which he had been the Chair for 11 years, the Revd Richard Teal could not greet and catch up with old friends in person. More significantly, of course, we were conscious of those who had been lost, to Covid 19 or in other ways, since Richard was last in the District.

Nonetheless, Cumbria welcomed the President of the Methodist Conference 'virtually' via Zoom with enthusiasm and gladness through a series of conversations and services over the weekend of February 26th-28th.

On the Friday evening, the President greeted old friends and colleagues amongst the senior leaders of this (the first) Ecumenical County, the vision for which Richard had himself been instrumental in developing through relationships and prayer. Richard guided a conversation with Anglican, Baptist, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, Roman Catholic and United Reformed colleagues as we reflected upon the impact of the pandemic. Richard heard about developments with the Ecumenical County's 'God for All' initiative (this preceded the Connexion's!), and its 'Vision Refresh' commitment to follow daily, care deeply, speak boldly and tread gently, in

our devotional life, listening to and social care for communities, evangelism, and concern for the environment and climate change.

As a county, Cumbria has many industrial and post-industrial areas, plus significant tourism given its beautiful countryside, but much of the county is rural, and this was the theme for Saturday's Zoom conversations, reflecting some of the President's particular interests and concerns.

On Saturday morning Richard met with representatives of the Agricultural Community, including established or young farmers, the Managing Director of Cumbria Farming Network, an Agricultural Supplies manager, a Vet, and various Agricultural chaplains or others. Richard enquired about joys, concerns and mental wellbeing: some 50% of young farmers are experiencing mental ill health, and the theme 'Its ok not to be ok' and of talking and sharing about this was commonly endorsed. The pandemic's impact on local 'farm to fork' was recognised, as were the economic and new regulatory effects of Brexit and of the Agricultural Transition Plan. The long-term impact of climate change on countryside and farming practice was especially noted, with its potential effect on our taken-for-granted/underappreciated vital farming contribution to the population's food supply.

On Saturday afternoon the focus was on Rural Mission, as lay and ordained representatives from circuits gathered by Zoom to consider the mission of what are 64.5% of Methodist churches, namely small churches in often rural and semi-rural contexts. Using an Emmaus Road bible study, breakout rooms and video, the President encouraged us to attend to 'the small' in ways that are often underused or may go unnoticed, and to share the experience of faith with one another, even when involving new habits or overcoming present cultural taboos (36% come to faith through a conversation).

On the Sunday morning, the President was extensively interviewed on BBC Radio Cumbria, when the presenter spontaneously acclaimed Richard's extensive knowledge of agricultural matters and how impressive that made him as an ambassador for the Church (which must in turn encourage us all to be understanding and articulating of a breadth of social concern if we are to be relevant to society, including through the window of the Media!).

Richard then joined the Solway Circuit on the North West Cumbrian coast to lead their Sunday morning Circuit service, in advance of the Solway Circuit this summer joining with the Western Fells Circuit.

Finally, on the Sunday afternoon Richard preached at a Kendal Circuit service that was also streamed more widely for the District. Richard pointed to the God who best of all is with us in the world, personally, and in the Church; the God who entrusts himself to us through Jesus and in the Holy Spirit, transforming us through Resurrection faith, and who is with us now and in eternity. Afterwards, many had opportunity through breakout rooms for a brief hello and catch up with Richard and Sue Teal, being thus reunited with their former Chair, their present President, and their continuing friend.



We were enriched by the President's visit amongst us, and will continue to pray for him and the Vice-President, and for the Methodist and all people of good will, that collectively we may be relevant for society and our communities as ambassadors of God's love and care, in the changing context in which we are called.

James Tebbutt

Ordinands Testimony Service – 13 March 2021 at 3pm – to be held on-line

You are invited to join on YouTube via the following link:

<https://youtu.be/xlk4u2CfN8I> .

Or if you have difficulty accessing the stream on the day, then it will appear here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6iZVadGymIBC04aEEOJryw> .

New District Website

The new District website goes live this month. There is some initial and basic information included as a starting point but there will be more to come over the next few months. We would like to include photographs on the home page which reflect the nature and diversity of our county. If you have any photographs which you are willing to provide (including permission to publish them) please can you email them to Carolyn with brief details of when, who, what, where, etc.. Thank you.

Celebrating & Praying – Winter Newsletter

Revd Becca Gilbert, the Western Dales Mission Community Pioneer Minister has produced an e-bulletin giving information on events in the area and pointers for prayer. A copy is attached with the electronic Newsletter.



Other Events and Information

The Well Learning Hub

The Methodist Children, Youth and Families Team have produced a Newsletter for March which is packed full of information, news, resources and events which you can be a part of. A copy of The Well is attached to the electronic Newsletter or can be accessed here: [The Well Snapshots March 2021 \(methodist-news.org.uk\)](http://methodist-news.org.uk) . There is also the opportunity to sign up to receive this directly if you wish.

Ecumenical Social Responsibility Officer for Churches together in Cumbria



CTiC wishes to appoint a person who will exercise a creative and enabling role assisting churches in Cumbria to work together in matters of social, political and economic import affecting the county and country, formulating appropriate Christian responses to such issues in consultation with the Social Responsibility Forum, its chair and Trustees of CTiC.

This post is for 20 hours a week and anticipated to be for 3 years subject to a probationary period. It is home-based, with some travel to meetings.

Job description, person specification and application form can be downloaded from www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk

Interviews on a date to be notified in April with a start date on 01/06/21.

For enquiries about this post telephone 01539436451 or email: andrew.dodd1@btinternet.com

Closing date: 31.03.2021.

A prayer remembering the Foot and Mouth outbreak 20 years on



CUMBRIA METHODIST DISTRICT DIARY

MARCH 2021

- 13 10:00 District Circuit Stewards' Meeting – Zoom
- 13 15:00 District Ordinands' Testimony Service – On-line
- 17 09:45 Presbyteral Synod – Zoom
- 18 15:00 District Being Inclusive Group - Zoom
- 23 10:00 District Policy Group - Zoom

APRIL 2021

- 13 10:00-13:00 Lay Employee Day – Zoom
- 24 9:30 Representative Synod – Western Fells Circuit / Zoom TBC
- 28 19:30 District LP meeting with Bob Bartindale - Zoom

MAY 2021

- 4-7 Diaconal Convocation
- 8 10:00 District Stationing Briefing – Stainton

JUNE 2021

- 7 10:00 Regional Learning Network Forum – Preston
- 19 10:00 District Safeguarding Meeting
- 19 15:00 Ordination Service
- 24-1 July Conference - Birmingham

JULY 2021

- 8 10:00 District Policy Group

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 3 10:00 District Finance Group
 5 (afternoon) Welcome Service for Revd Paul Harold – Western Fells Circuit (Solway)
 11 9:30 Representative Synod – South Lakes Circuit
 18 9:30 CTiC Dementia Anna Chaplaincy Conference – Border Kirk, Carlisle
 28 Welcome to Cumbria Ecumenical Day - TBC
 29 10:00 Regional Learning Network Forum - Preston

OCTOBER 2021

- 7 19:30 District Safeguarding Group
 9 10:00 District Local Preachers' Meeting – Carver Uniting Church, Windermere?
 13 10:00 District Policy Group - TBC

NOVEMBER 2021

- 17 10:00 District Sabbaticals Advisory Group
 17 12:00 Ministers Retreat

DECEMBER 2021**JANUARY 2022**

- 22 10:00 District Circuit Treasurers Meeting
 25 10:00 District Policy Group

FEBRUARY 2022

- 5 Ecumenical Ministry Development Day – North Lakes Hotel, Penrith?
 9 19:30 District Safeguarding Group

This has been sent to Ecumenical Representatives, District Officers, Ministers, Supernumerary Ministers, Lay workers, Circuit Stewards, Circuit Administrators, and others who have subscribed to this Newsletter. Please feel free to circulate this among your churches and to others who may find any of these items of interest. If anyone would like to be added to the circulation list, please contact the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson.

The next issue of the Newsletter will be April and any information for this to be sent to the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson, by **7 April**.

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