



## District Newsletter – April 2021

### District Chair's Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

**Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

A Happy Easter to you! This year I was privileged to lead daily reflections (on Zoom) through Holy Week with Anglicans, Methodists and Roman Catholics in Kirkby Lonsdale, and then to preach at the outdoor services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Socially distanced, on church grounds, and within the new regulations, we even sang: hallelujah!!

Through the week I used Mark's Gospel, partly because it is Mark's year in the cycle of readings, and partly because, whilst I apologised that Mark's account for Easter Sunday is not as cheery as that of the other Gospels, it resonated with the misery of the pandemic.

Mark's Gospel ended originally at probably chapter 16 verse 8, where, instead of the Resurrection appearances of the other Gospels (or as may later have been added as further verses of Mark chapter 16 after the first part of verse 8), Mark's bewildered and frightened women are simply told to tell the disciples that Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee, and there they will see him. In the probable original ending of Mark, that's that, there were no reassuring or comforting experiences of actually seeing Jesus at this point, instead, they have to take it on trust, that if they follow Jesus, they will see him.

Similarly, it is hard for us: we do not actually see the risen Jesus, but are also invited to trust that in continuing our discipleship (Galilee is where the disciples were first called: it speaks to their ongoing discipleship), notwithstanding our failures (just as the disciples variously failed), and provided that we too leave behind the places of deadness (the empty tomb), we too will discover Jesus's resurrection.

I emphasise the last point (the leaving behind of our places of deadness) because of the clue in the word for 'bewilderment' in verse 8: 'ekstasis'. From this we get our word 'ecstatic', meaning something extremely happy and positive (as, indeed, a deep experience of resurrection must surely ultimately feel?!); but, more immediately and literally, here it implies a 'standing out' ('ek'/out of – 'stasis'/standing), a displacement from one's usual place of understanding, a dislocation from one's familiar way of thinking or normal comfort zone.

For the women and disciples, for us too, the Resurrection offers, invites, demands, this displacing, unsettling change: a leaving behind of outmoded, unhelpful and damaging ways of thinking and being, whether in our personalities, relationships, or communities. These are the things that drag us down rather than lift us up, and which are death-dealing rather life-giving (especially when they involve failing to care for and include the least amongst us).

Rather, we are invited courageously to step out of our old selves and to trust that, in the light of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, we can revisit our Galilees (whatever that might mean for us); take up our discipleship once more (especially in the care and inclusion of the least amongst us); and leave behind the places and things of deadness in order to embrace more fully love and life. If we can do this, we too shall find the road to Resurrection; we too shall come to know and see the risen Jesus.

Mark engages us, therefore, to remind us that the work of Resurrection invites response and requires change; it is not just about a happy or even ecstatic feeling (though it can include that!): it involves moving out of the old, and into a life that is new.

Alongside this (lest Mark has the only word – this is a both/and point!), Matthew, Luke and John offer us wonderful examples of the free, forgiving, releasing gift of resurrection to those who first encountered the risen Jesus; a gift likewise offered to you and to me.

Resurrection comes in the gifts of our coming together, of singing, and of receiving Communion again (even if not yet, or not fully, but sometime). In these signs, and in the telling again of Christ's Gospel; and in the working through of our memories; and in the first Spring days; and above all in our continued love and care for one another; even now, God's Resurrection is working its way, bringing us through the frustration and sorrow, leading us from death to life: a free gift for us all. Let us receive, and, let us respond!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!



The Revd Dr James Tebbutt

## **GOD IN LOVE UNITES US and the CUMBRIA DISTRICT SYNOD**

Given the continuing pandemic regulations, the District Policy Group confirmed at its meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup> that the Spring Synod on Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup> will again take place virtually by Zoom. The Methodist Conference passed a resolution enabling us to meet in this way whilst present restrictions prevent a normal physical gathering. It would of course have been preferable for our conferring to be in person if that had been possible, but we do now have much collective experience of working via Zoom.

Apart from its general business, the Synod's main focus will be to consider the God in Love Unites Us Provisional Resolutions that the Methodist Conference directed each Synod to consider. Although there has been a year's delay, many will recall the extensive consultation that took place prior to the pandemic through the many independently facilitated Forums and Circuit Meetings throughout the District. We were grateful to ecumenical friends as well as Methodists who helped in this regard under the programme and approach agreed by the September 2019 Synod.

The responses from the Circuit forums and meetings will be reported to Synod members. The responses represent a range of views and the different levels of feeling that we hold amongst us. The members of Synod, who act as representatives rather than as delegates, will consider these responses together with the conferring on the day and their own sense of what should be the appropriate responses to the resolutions, or any proposed amendments to them. Please hold the members of Synod in prayer at this time.

We will need to put a time limit on the length of speeches at Synod, to allow so far as possible all who wish to speak the opportunity to do so. To try to ensure sufficient time, we will be meeting in the afternoon as well, and thus from 9.30am (for registration) to 3.30pm (or thereabouts), with suitable breaks during the day.

We have also considered the question of observers, not just the official observers who attend Synod in various roles, but others from our churches who may wish to attend. Normally, with the agreement of the meeting (and not when there is confidential business to be dealt with in a closed session), observers are welcome to attend and speak, but not to vote. Given that a virtual meeting raises particular challenges, we want to navigate these by asking anyone who wishes to attend (and who is not a Synod member or official representative) to notify their superintendent minister by Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April at the

latest. Additionally, if they wish to speak, on this occasion we will ask them to indicate to their superintendent whether it is likely to be for or against the resolutions. Superintendents will in turn notify the District Chair or Synod Secretary, and this will help to ensure that, in considering any such requests, space can be given if possible, but also with some balance and a range of views. Again, observers are not entitled as of right to speak, and we will need to give priority to those who are members of Synod, who are likely themselves, of course, to reflect a range of opinions. When it comes to voting, we will make arrangements so that voting is only available to those who are actual members of Synod.

In all our conferring, dialogue, debating and discerning, as ever it will be incumbent on each and every one of us to think, speak and act in a respectful, sensitive and inclusive manner, as prayerfully, before, during and after Synod, we seek to live with our sometimes contradictory convictions. May God give each of us the grace to do so.

Revd Dr James Tebbutt

## DISTRICT NEWS AND EVENTS

### **District Property Secretary**

Many of you will know and have appreciated Jim Irving's work as the District Property Secretary for the last 15 years, and we formally acknowledged and thanked Jim for his work at the September Synod. We are grateful that in the background pending recruitment of a new DPS, Jim has continued quietly to support the work in the District, and we want to thank him again for this.

Many of you will also have heard and been saddened at the loss of Rosemary, Jim's wife, in these last weeks, and our hearts and prayers have gone out to him and his family. Jim has asked us to include the following note in the Newsletter, and we are glad to do so.

Jim Irving and family are most grateful for the messages of sympathy and encouragement received from across the District following the recent sudden, sad, loss of Rosemary. To most Rosemary was only a voice on the telephone but without her help I could not have fulfilled my role.

We will continue to think of Jim, and indeed all who have lost loved ones in recent months, and ask God to uphold them.

We are able now to announce that the District has recently appointed a new Property Secretary. This role is a joint one with Lancashire District and replaces the previous two District voluntary posts. Stephanie Roux comes from the South East District where she is currently the Resourcing Mission Officer and District Property Secretary as well as a volunteer Circuit Property Secretary. Stephanie will start in post on 12th April and will offer support and oversight for property matters within the two Districts and lead the development of the District Property Development Plan. Accordingly, she will seek to help churches better utilise, develop or dispose of their properties in accordance with national and local policies. Details of how to contact Stephanie will be made available in due course once email and phone details for the role have been set up.

## New District Website



A decision was made recently not to renew the old District website and as it was felt important to maintain a presence, the new website went live last month despite there being a number of pages waiting for relevant information. Please therefore be patient while we build up the material to provide a useful resource not only for the District itself but also for those who might come upon the site when browsing. If you have any information about special events or activities which would be helpful for others or relevant to the wider District, then these can also be included. For a one-off or special event you would like to advertise more widely, please let Carolyn have the details or to let others know about something that has taken place in your church or circuit then send a short report and photographs (with relevant permission). If you haven't seen the new website, please use this link to have a look: <https://www.cumbriamethodistdistrict.org.uk/> .

### Virtual Phoenix – 12 months on

Other than saying 'White Rabbits' on 1 March (as my mum always did), I've never been at all superstitious. But Friday 13 March 2020 was the last time our Gosforth-based Christian music group Phoenix Praise held a practice in the flesh – 5 years to the day since Friday 13 March 2015 when we learned that St Bees School, where my husband Keith and I were both working, was about to close.

By Wednesday 18 March 2020 we had learnt that communal worship, choirs and groups meeting in church buildings were now banned; by Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> the whole country was in lockdown. But Phoenix had a booking for the evening of Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>, at The Meeting Place (Egremont Methodist Church), so Keith and I began to wonder: could we somehow honour it over the internet?



The next day, with the help of a few willing volunteers on the other end of phone lines, we started to experiment with Zoom; like most people, we had never used it before. On the Friday we ran our first 'virtual' Phoenix practice, from the comfort of our own front room. On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> some brave Phoenix pioneers, along with some even braver folk from Egremont, helped us get our first Zoom service off the ground, and the experience proved positive enough to encourage us to hold another service the following week. By this time it was almost Easter, so we decided we couldn't stop before then. And here we all are, more than a whole year later, with over 50 online services and almost the same number of Friday night practices under our belts.

In the intervening months we have made many mistakes and had a lot of fun learning from them. The whole enterprise, just like Phoenix itself, has become joyfully ecumenical – well over 60 people have been attending the services regularly, from Anglican, Roman Catholic, URC and various independent free church congregations as well as Methodist, along with some who don't currently belong to any other church. Every age group is represented, from the under 10s to the over 95s. One of our Phoenix members who is a student has even been able to join us regularly once again while away from home at Uni. There is a big team involved in keeping the show on the road: preachers, readers, musicians and prayer-leaders, ensuring things stay varied and vibrant, and technical wizards without whom the whole thing would quickly fall to pieces. What many of us like best about it is that it is completely live and interactive; apart from the

occasional backing track, nothing is pre-recorded, and we can see and hear our friends worshipping with us. Those able to stay for a while after the services can chat to each other informally and even interrogate the preacher if he/she stays too! People who are housebound, others who have moved away from the area, and even a few who have never lived in Cumbria, can all worship with us.



Of course we – well, some of us! – miss being able to hug each other, and Phoenix members in particular really miss singing together in harmony – though some of the less musical folk attending our services reckon it a bonus that others can't hear them singing at all! (Everyone has to 'mute' themselves while singing 'live' in services because of time-lag problems over Zoom – but we do all say 'The Lord's Prayer together unmuted, which is rather a muddle to say the least, but God hears each of us loud and clear.) We are sad that a few of our regular Phoenix members

don't (or won't!) have the internet in their homes – though those who do have it have kept others in touch with what's been going on as far as possible, and in increasingly ingenious ways.

It may be that the light at the end of the lockdown tunnel is getting brighter at last. So where do we go next with Virtual Phoenix? Perhaps we shall all be so sick of Zoom once 'normality' returns that we never want to use it again. But at the same time, it seems a shame to let go of all that we have learnt, and to lose the opportunity of worshipping with those who could never hope to gather with us physically. Are 'hybrid' services – simultaneously physical and virtual – the way ahead, or should we hold some services in our church buildings and others online? In the next few weeks we'll be posing these and other questions to all regular attenders. In the meantime, anyone else who would like to join us would be very warmly welcome. Just email [jillfhudson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jillfhudson@hotmail.co.uk) to join in, or visit our website [www.phoenixpraise.org.uk](http://www.phoenixpraise.org.uk) to find out more about the band and about our activities both in and out of lockdown.

Jill Hudson 22.3.2021

(Photographs are of Phoenix Praise in action prior to lockdown and restrictions)



## Other Events and Information

### **Authorised Lay Training Pathway and Local Lay-Pastors Taster Evenings**

28<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 pm for Church Leaders in Cumbria

6<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 pm for those wanting to explore ALTP as a participant

For more information about ALTP visit the God for All website:

<https://www.godforall.org.uk/god-for-all-team/lay-training/>.

To book for either of these events being held on Zoom contact:

Emma Richardson: [emma.richardson@carlisediocese.org.uk](mailto:emma.richardson@carlisediocese.org.uk) or

Brec Seaton: [seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk)

## Living Library – 22<sup>nd</sup> May



This is an online event arranged and hosted by the Regional Learning Network where people who might be interested in some of the lay leadership roles in our churches, can join, almost anonymously, and ask questions of people in other

circuits. It would be ideal for those who might not be very confident, or who aren't ready yet for people in their own churches to know that they might be willing to think about some kind of church role. Additional information is in the attachment with the electronic Newsletter or use this link: [www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/vocations/living-library/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/vocations/living-library/).

## Caring for Cumbria's Churches Conference – 30<sup>th</sup> April

The Churches Trust for Cumbria have arranged this event which takes place on Zoom between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm. Join to hear and discuss the value of church buildings and their role as places of worship, hubs of the community and as heritage assets, as well as for practical advice on assessing their sustainability for the future. For further information contact [Jayne@ctfc.org.uk](mailto:Jayne@ctfc.org.uk).

Speakers include:

Lord Inglewood (National Churches Trust)	
Trevor Cooper (Historic Religious Buildings Alliance)	Jayne Potts (Churches Trust for Cumbria)
Marion Barter (Historic Buildings Advisor)	Heather Ford (Churches Insurance Consultant)
Richard Teal (Methodist President)	Peter Aires (CEO Churches Conservation Trust)

## Wesley Historical Society



We have recently been sent a copy of the Spring issue of the Wesley Historical Society Proceedings which people might find of interest. A copy of this is attached to the electronic Newsletter and a link to their website is here:

<http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/>.



## CUMBRIA METHODIST DISTRICT DIARY

### APRIL 2021

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

### MAY 2021

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

### JUNE 2021

7	10:00	Regional Learning Network Forum – Zoom or 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
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**SEPTEMBER 2021**

- 3 10:00 District Finance Group
- 5 (afternoon) Welcome Service for Revd Paul Harold – Western Fells Circuit (Solway)
- 8-12 Queens College Rural Placement in KSAT Circuit
- 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 Circuit Stewards Meeting
- 13 10:00 District Policy Group – TBC
- 16 10:00 District Local Preachers’ Meeting – Carver Uniting Church, Windermere?

**NOVEMBER 2021**

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

**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 May and any information for this to be sent to the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson, by **5<sup>th</sup> May**.

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