

Magazine

February/ March 2021

Lent course

Thinking of our community

About St Valentine



Zion
United
Reformed
Church

~ Northallerton ~

Zion and Community

These are the weekly activities that would normally take place.
They will be reinstated as soon as possible

Sunday 10.00 a.m.	Morning worship After the lockdown it will be bright and early with a warm welcome
Monday 9.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. In term time	Tiny time Mums, come and join us in the Church Hall for a chat and a cuppa while the children play
Wednesday 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon	The other 'Way In' no coffee or tea but time for a chat in the Secret Garden
12 noon to 12.30 p.m.	A chance to sit and eat your packed lunch warm and dry
1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	Market Day service A time for quiet reflection in the midst of a busy day
Saturday 10.00 a.m. 12 noon	The other 'Way In' More chat in the Secret Garden

Permission is required to reproduce any of the items in this magazine

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Pastoral letter

Dear Friends,

Here we are at the beginning of February - already some of the joy of starting a New Year, making plans & doing fresh activities has been diminished by the persistence of the virus. This coupled with messages from our political leadership that things are not going to be improving any day soon is a little demoralising.

This Pandemic crisis is likely to be a defining moment for Churches across our country and we as a congregation need to rethink what it means to be Zion after the disruption we have all gone through! Many of us feel frustrated that our own health worries prevent us doing anything face to face in the Church or in the community to help others. But the Covid crisis can be an opportunity to live out our faith by other actions of love and kindness. At the same time, we can look afresh as to what sort of leadership our church family needs in a post-pandemic world. Over the coming weeks the Elders plan to talk to each member of the congregation about what they treasure about Zion and what sort of initiatives they might like to be tried to further strengthen their faith.

We are living through a very harsh reality at the present but as we do this we must hold out a strong hope that the belief we have in Jesus Christ will not be extinguished as we seek to live Christ-centred, outwardly focused lives. At this time, it is all too easy to retreat into ourselves but perhaps we can alleviate our natural anxieties by focusing on others in our community if only at this stage by praying for them. In the first week of January the Synod Moderators of the United Reformed Church sent a letter to each congregation recommending that all Churches should close for the foreseeable future because the new variant of the virus had caused an alarming increase in infections. This same

letter reminded congregations that the work of the Church would not cease when we were not meeting together physically. The letter encouraged us to think about how we can care for our community and support people who may be dealing with mental health issues. Churches and their congregations were urged to continue to show love to one another and treat others gently.

When all else fails, love prevails. In John 13 v34-36 we are told “*I give you a commandment to love each other just as I have loved you so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples when you love each other.*”

Many people in our small community are fearful of the future and their place in it. There are some things in the town which might be included in your prayers.

Can we pray for the staff & residents of all the Care Homes in Northallerton and the surrounding area. There has been a significant increase in both staff & patients contracting the virus over recent weeks. The residents remain without visitors or services during this period of lockdown and may be feeling very isolated & afraid.



Many Covid-related situations are partially hidden at this time of businesses closing, employees being put on to reduced hours, relationships breaking down under the strain of inadequate financial resources to provide food for families, and domestic violence. Hambleton FoodShare which members of the Congregation have generously supported since it was set up has noticed an enormous increase in the numbers requesting food parcels over the past 6-8 months. As a charity it is fortunate to have strong resources to sustain it for a long time to come but we give thanks for a band of volunteers who week in and week out collect and distribute the food donated to those who need it in the town and surrounding areas. Without them many families would be going hungry.

As a congregation you have supported the six Syrian families who have now been settled in the town for the past 3 years. The Volunteer group drawn from the One Northallerton Churches have helped them to build up their confidence. Many of them are doing voluntary work, some have paid work and the children are doing really well at school. Most of all they are happy.

In a fortnight's time three new Syrian families will join us in Northallerton – this time they will have the established families to help them navigate their way around our medical & dental systems, shops, banks, cash machines. But of course, we will not be able to meet all together for some months. I know from the experience of the volunteers that the original families were very fearful and anxious on their arrival. The food was not familiar, the weather was grim and their command of English minimal- but then we could make daily visits to provide comfort and support & build relationships. That will not be possible because of Covid restrictions on this occasion. Please remember these families who will have suffered severely from the Syrian conflict and who come to our town after years of living in tented camps in Syria or Lebanon or in very basic accommodation. All their worldly goods being contained in their accompanying baggage.

Let us remember the prayer attributed to St Francis:
Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith, where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive: it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Sue Bush

Introducing...

Normally we would have got to know new members in our congregation very quickly but that's another thing that the virus has stopped happening so Ian had the idea of introducing himself to you all through the magazine. Seemed like a great idea to us so we asked Pauline and Julian to join in. So please meet Julian, Pauline and Ian.

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Hello, we are Julian and Pauline Richardson. We moved to Northallerton from Alnwick in Northumberland, at the very end of July, after a protracted moving saga, thanks in no small part to the coronavirus. We decided to re-locate to Northallerton in order to be nearer, but not too close to our two sons, who at that time were living in Leeds and Auckley, which is south-east of Doncaster. However, a little while after we announced that we were moving, our eldest son secured himself a new job in Malta and the family has now re-located to that island. Hopefully it was not anything that we said or did!

Julian was born in south-east London and retired from the research section of the pharmaceutical industry at the very end of 2009. Pauline was born in Redcar and subsequently moved with her parents to Chesham and then Huntingdonshire. She originally trained as a haematology technician, changed career to the care sector after the birth of the children, and she retired in 2008.

We were both members of St. James' URC in Alnwick and were highly involved in the running of the church - but wish to take a step back now. Julian was a serving elder for 19 years prior to the move and was the church secretary for the last 9 years.

Hi, I'm Ian Ring. Most of you will not know me but some of you will have seen me. I moved to the new King's Park development in Northallerton in the middle of the November lockdown and worshipped with you on December 20<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. Moving during the pandemic has the added difficulty of getting to know people when you can't meet or even mingle so I thought I would introduce myself through the magazine. Let's go back to the beginning of the story that led me here..



Born in 1952 I grew up in the market town of Maidstone which was also the County Town of Kent. My parents were very involved in the Congregational Church both locally and across the county so it was almost a given that their eldest son should take the same road serving variously as a Junior Church Teacher, Youth Leader, Elder and Lay Preacher as well as on District and Provincial Committees. I even followed my father by working for the County Council.

Leaving Maidstone for a new job in Manchester I soon found myself as Church Leader of a small URC on the edge of Bolton that had voted to close three years earlier but was persuaded to stay open by the Synod Moderator, given an interest free loan by the Synod only to be repaid if the church closed. It was an exciting place to be as the church grew, a story I in itself that I will tell you one day. Encouraged by the Minister to train for the ministry I went to college in Manchester and after ordination served the URC in Sheffield, Liverpool, Worcestershire and the Community for Reconciliation, also in Worcestershire, as well as on Synod and National Committees.

With retirement looming I had to decide where to retire to and I remembered the comment of George Williams, my Minister in Maidstone from 1965 who, when asked where he would retire to replied 'anywhere I haven't been a Minister'. Sound advice then and sound advice now, and still the preference of Moderators across the country. I drew up my criteria which included a church I felt comfortable in; easy access to a mainline railway to London for Eurostar and visiting family; a good range of shops; a

small to medium town not a village or a large conurbation; good countryside nearby; opportunity to be involved in heritage, particularly transport, activities. Initially I was looking in the East Midlands, South & West Yorkshire and I stayed in a variety of towns and visited many more. Nothing felt quite right. I did a quick internet search for housing possibilities in other parts of the country including Lancashire, Cheshire, Dorset, Sussex and Bedfordshire. I even looked around locally in Worcestershire and Warwickshire but was still no further forward.

I had ruled out anything north of Selby as too far north. Then it occurred to me. From my local railway station to St Pancras for trains to the continent or family in Kent took just over two hours including changing trains in Birmingham and walking from Euston. Maybe I should look at York, Thirsk or Northallerton as the overall journey would be only a few minutes longer at most. I was feeling drawn to Northallerton. I remembered Zion from a brief visit in the early 1990's with a group of young people from Yorkshire Synod at the start of their four-day post Easter fifty mile walk, that year from Northallerton via Stokesley, Lingdale and Whitby to Robin Hood's Bay. It also fitted the bill as I had never served the URC in the Synod let alone the local church. I booked three nights at the Golden Lion and after leading worship on Sunday morning I travelled by train to Northallerton.

That evening I walked around the town. The Monday was a Bank Holiday and I took the morning bus to Leeming Bar, the Wensleydale Railway to Leyburn, the afternoon bus to Hawes and then the bus back to Northallerton. Tuesday, I took the bus to Richmond, another bus to Barnard Castle, a third bus to Bishop Auckland and the train back to Darlington, then Northallerton. On Wednesday I looked around the market then took the bus to Thirsk, then the bus to Easingwold and finally a bus to York for the train home. I felt comfortable in Northallerton but with plenty of time until retirement I decided to sleep on it, to pray, and do more internet research.

Another couple of train trips to Northallerton allowed me to explore the town more including a guided tour late evening by Malcolm Smith, a round trip on the town bus as well as Saturday

coffee and Sunday morning worship at Zion. I looked around Bedale including Sunday lunch at the Platform One Café, and Thirsk. I was convinced Northallerton was the place for me. It was as if God was leading me. I made an application to the URC Retired Ministers Housing Society which was approved. House hunting began but was fruitless, then came lockdown. Finally, in June 2020, I visited Northallerton again, this time driving for the first time. It was a Sunday and I found a house on the new King's Park development. The journey home was via Masham (for supplies of Black Sheep), Ripon, Pateley Bridge, Grassington, Skipton, Keighley, Halifax, Holmfirth, Glossop, Buxton and Leek. It was a fabulous day out in glorious sunshine. The purchase process was more protracted than I hoped it would be and I retired on 31<sup>st</sup> August without a house to move into.

Finally, completion came and the move was fixed for 15<sup>th</sup> November. Despite trying to fit a quart into a pint pot I felt at home immediately. I enjoy shopping on the market and strolling along the High Street and I look forward to the day that church and community activities can function again. It was crucial for me to find a community in which there was a church I felt at



home in. This is because I believe that a Christian should be part of a local church where they can support and be supported whilst exercising their God given gifts. I have retired from the stipendiary ministry of the URC but not from the service of God. I have asked for my membership to be transferred to your church, or should I say our church. I hope that I have gifts that can be used in Zion and I look forward to meeting and getting to know you all.

This is the sixth URC Synod I have lived in and in the words of Edward Plumptre I really do feel that 'Thy hand O God has guided'. The next part of the adventure of my life with God has begun. I wonder how it will progress and I look forward to finding out.

## Pressing on

"This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what lies ahead" [*Paul, Philippians 3.13, his happiest, most relaxed letter*]. Very appropriate words as we leave 2020 behind and enter 2021. The apostle Paul doesn't want to dwell on the past. I wonder why? What about ourselves? We can derive much from reflecting on the past. Of course, there are things in 2020 we don't want to think about, like the coronavirus. But generally speaking, it is good to remember the past. We've much to learn from thinking over our failures as well as our successes. I often find myself recalling the hymn's words

'Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come ...'

Remembering the past can give us either joy or regret. It is a case of knowing what to treasure and what to let go. There are times when we need to forgive ourselves – and praise God for His mercy - for what we have done or have not done.

The apostle Paul says he deliberately forgets what is in the past. Why does he do that? He had achieved much [*Phil 3.5*]. He does it because he cannot ignore the fact that he had persecuted Christ's followers [*Phil 3.6*]. The significant thing was that he did not allow the past to determine the present or the future. What was important now was his new life as a Christian - nothing could compare with knowing 'Christ Jesus my Lord' [*Phil 3.8*]. "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection" [*Phil 3.10*].

Listen to Paul again. He wants to know Christ "and the power of His resurrection". What He means is that He knows Christ as the living person, risen from the dead, present with him Paul - and all who love Christ – by His Spirit, and that he wants to taste more

and more of Christ's presence, life and enabling power for new, redeemed living each new day that comes. Just think of that – our relationship with our risen Lord! What could possibly be more important? Think of what it means. Because it is the risen Lord we walk with, we can confidently set out on the new year.

*Jack McKelvey*

(Retired URC minister, Manchester)

## ...from your Valentinus

Asterius here, jailer for many years in charge of a prison north of Rome. Responsible for locking up many miscreants on behalf of our Emperor Claudius. It's not a very edifying career, I freely admit. Gosh, the criminality and bestiality I have heard about and witnessed are legion, but, to be honest, not all of it is perpetuated by prisoners. The system itself is regrettably brutal too.

Actually, even some of our normal Roman customs leave me a little queasy. Take the festivities around the feast of Lupercalia in mid-February. Not content with sacrificing a goat and a dog, the priests then use strips of the animals' hides dipped in blood to whip women in the belief that it would make them more fertile. And the seasonal rituals may also include a sort of crude matchmaking session, with bachelors selecting the names of their next female targets via a lucky dip from an urn. Shows how much disrespect lies behind our typical attitudes to relationships between the sexes. Of course, our Emperor prefers all those men he needs as soldiers to remain unmarried and free from shackles. Maybe he also thinks they would otherwise lose some of the predatory virility needed for fighting? The norm, but all very

unedifying.

In fact, there is only one man I have ever personally encountered of a totally different persuasion. A priest to that persecuted band of religious zealots...the Christians, still struggling on, 250 years after their hero died on one of our Roman crosses. In my jail, I'm afraid any Christian prisoners undergo terrible privations, maybe even worse than the others. I wish it could be otherwise but my job is always at stake. Surprisingly though, in time I did come to do everything I could to help Valentinus, that priest, to minister secretly to those benighted victims. He reassured them that they were cherished for their faithfulness to their God, even unto death. Some sort of life eternal would be their reward. And, partly because motivated by his example, but also by the following deeply personal story, here's how I finally came to completely change my own views on life and death. A very bitter sweet experience it all led to in the end, though.



Gradually, I had been becoming more and more impressed by that visiting priest. So much so, that one day I shared with him my deepest sorrow. At home, my daughter was going blind. All the healers and soothsayers to whom I had turned had proved helpless. But Valentinus just prayed with her. Called on his Saviour, Jesus, to restore her sight. And, miracle of miracles, it worked. Christians, count me in!

Just as impressively to me, along with his wonderful human empathies Valentinus also had no time for our society's acceptance of fornication or polygamy. Christians believe that marriage is a sacred communion between one man and one woman, lifelong. And, unlikely as it seems, the teaching had begun to appeal to quite a few regular Roman guys. Subversive. The authorities decided to stamp that out in the strictest way possible.

Probably you can guess the tragic outcome of all this. Yes, Valentinus was arrested. No way would he deny his actions or betray his beliefs. The ultimate punishment was inevitable. Firstly, they beat him almost senseless. Then they stoned him. And finally, they decapitated him, displaying his severed head in public as a grim deterrent. And, irony of ironies, all in the middle of the Lupercalia season!

You can imagine how inconsolable was my daughter. But amazingly he hadn't forgotten her, despite his looming awful fate. Somehow, he had arranged for a note to be smuggled to her, expressing his love and concern...and signed 'from your Valentinus'.

I compile this testimony in the probably vain hope that one day others will hear the full story of a true martyr. And wouldn't it be wonderful if in the future all men and women were inspired to send each other little notes and tokens of their love? Transforming Lupercalia into a sort of Valentinus' Day!

*Paul Bowes*

## Praying with Jesus

This year's Lent course will be led by Rev Ian Ring and will be on Zoom. We are all familiar with the Lord's Prayer but what about the other prayers of Jesus. How can the prayers of Jesus help us today? In our Bible Study we will explore these prayers together.

1. Ash Wednesday 17 February – Some Helpful Advice – Matthew 6 vv 9-13

In this first session we will look briefly at the prayer life of Jesus and what he says about prayer before taking a longer look at the Lord's Prayer

2. Wednesday 24 February – Thanking His Father - Matthew 11 vv 25/26  
In the second session we explore the context of a prayer of thanksgiving in the daily life of Jesus
3. Wednesday 3 March – Seeking His Father's Help – John 11 vv 41/42  
In the third session we find Jesus performing God's will in a difficult, but potentially exhilarating, situation and discover how prayer transforms the situation
4. Wednesday 10 March – Allowing His Father's Will – John 12 vv 27/28  
In the fourth session we see Jesus submitting to God's will despite his inclination to choose another path
5. Wednesday 17 March – About to Face Danger – John 17  
In the fifth session we turn to Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane where, in a critical moment, Jesus prays for his Disciples and the yet to be born Church
6. Wednesday 24 March – Facing Death – Luke 23 vv 34 & 46, Matt 27 vv 46  
In the sixth session we look at some of Jesus' words from the cross remembering that all communication with God is prayer
7. Holy Week Wednesday 31 March – Praying For Us Today - Roman 8 v 34; Hebrews 7 v 25  
For the final session we look at what Paul says about Jesus and Prayer and how that helps us today

The Link to join each meeting is:

Meeting ID 710 9018 7122

Passcode **Bzb6nW**

Invite Link

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71090187122?pwd=bEIDc3RlSk9mN2YvMjdrZDFpR1lhZD09>

## To you who pass by

Ye who pass by and would raise your hand against me, hearken ere you harm me.

I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights; the friendly shade screening you from the summer sun; and my fruits are refreshing draughts quenching your thirst as you journey on.

I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table, the bed on which you lie, and the timber which builds your boat.

I am the handle of your hoe, the door of your homestead, the wood of your cradle and the shell of your coffin.



I am the bread of kindness and the flower of beauty.  
Ye who pass by listen to my prayer. Harm me not.

(a notice on a tree in a Spanish park)  
(from a collection by **Arthur Mee**)

## With a smile

Your baking skills leaving a bit to be desired – don't give up hope

### For better or for worse

We married many years ago 'for Better or for Worse'.

I was writing lots of poems then, but sadly you can't eat verse!  
I could do various things with eggs – scrambled, poached,  
boiled and fried

And recipes were duly found, and basic things were tried.  
But, oh alas, it came to pass I made many mistakes  
(identifying with King Alfred when I burnt the cakes!)

My mother-in-law must have been anxious, stifling a groan  
On hearing that her offspring's weight had fallen by a stone!  
I soldiered on determined to impress my fading fella  
We went from eggs to Vesta meals...Beef Curry and Paella  
And gradually had success when just  
the hob was used  
But failures from the oven left me  
saddened and confused.



I'd set the oven timer then from work  
we'd be returning

To find that we'd be greeted by the smell of dinner burning.  
My Pyrex dishes – all the rage – lost their patterned lustre  
Especially round the edges where the burnt bits used to cluster.

t, and after far too long, as both of us  
got thinner

And I had lost my confidence in dishing out a dinner

We called the cooker maintenance man to come and take a look

Perhaps it wasn't my fault that the food was burnt and stuck.

Our lives changed quite dramatically after that man called  
The thermostat had not been set right when it was installed!  
No more smouldering burnt offerings – well, only now and then,  
I tackled brand new recipes with confidence again.

The weight's gone on, and on, and on but then we mustn't grumble

The Worse is Better now – I'm off to make a crumble.

*Jean Purvis*

(Written for Northallerton Talking Newspaper)

## Church diary

Sorry, there are very few dates for the diary; If you have anything that you would like to add when the next magazine comes round just let us know. We haven't included possible live services as the future is too vague. The information will be in the notices as and when appropriate

|                                   |         |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>February  | 10.00am | Elders' meeting<br>- Zoom             |
| Tues 16 <sup>th</sup><br>February | -       | Reading circle review date<br>- email |
| Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>March     | 10.00am | Elders' meeting<br>- Zoom             |

| |

# Elders' duty rota

If you have any problems and would like to speak with someone please contact the Secretary, your designated Elder or the Duty Elder as given below

**Week beginning**

**February**

**7<sup>th</sup>** Judith Puttock

**14<sup>th</sup>** Christine Roddam

**21<sup>st</sup>** Liz Styan

**28<sup>th</sup>** Susan Watson

**March**

**7<sup>th</sup>** Paul Bowes

**14<sup>th</sup>** Sue Bush

**21<sup>st</sup>** Jane Haslam

**28<sup>th</sup>** Judith Puttock



## Contact us



|                                |                                                                                                        |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Ministers:</b>              | In vacancy                                                                                             |              |
| <b>Secretary:</b>              | Susan Bush                                                                                             | 01609 882468 |
| <b>Treasurer:</b>              | Judith Puttock                                                                                         | 01609 771282 |
| <b>Organist:</b>               | Carol Hogg                                                                                             | 01609 883319 |
| <b>Bookings:<br/>For Rooms</b> | Jane Haslam                                                                                            | 01609 774641 |
| <b>For Church<br/>services</b> | Christine Roddam                                                                                       | 01609 776693 |
| <b>Magazine<br/>editors:</b>   | Sue and Jo Kennedy<br><a href="mailto:sue.kennedy123@btinternet.com">sue.kennedy123@btinternet.com</a> | 01609 881408 |
| <b>Church:</b>                 | Answerphone<br>N.B. No incoming message facility                                                       | 01609 779610 |
| <b>Website:</b>                | <a href="http://www.tsurc.org/">www.tsurc.org/</a>                                                     |              |



**Zion  
United  
Reformed  
Church**

**~ Northallerton ~**

We hope you have enjoyed the magazine and when we are able to open again, we invite you to worship with us at High Street, Northallerton at our 10 a.m. Sunday service.

**Please note that the closing date  
for items for the April/May issue is  
19<sup>th</sup> March**