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## News from the NW Synod 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016

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1: **Moderator's snapshots** Over the weekend our URC General Assembly met in Southport, with a full agenda and over 40 resolutions to be considered as part of its business. The café style setup of tables and chairs in the Convention Centre near the seafront provided the opportunity for group discussions at various points, as well as the setting for the evening meal which we shared together around the tables. Highlights included the addresses given during our meeting by Bishop Angelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK, Revd Chris Ferguson as General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the Revd Dr Majid Abel as senior pastor of the Naulakha Presbyterian Church in Pakistan. Of special note was the election of the next Moderators of General Assembly (2018-202): from our Synod Mr Derek Estill, and from Eastern Synod the Revd Nigel Uden. Well done to those from our Synod who won an award from the Community Project Awards Scheme sponsored by the Congregation & General for their work with people living with dementia... Melody Memories at the Amani Centre, Trinity United Community Church in Manchester. On Sunday morning we were joined by others from local congregations and gathered in the theatre (picture) to share the Lord's Supper together led by Revd Kevin Watson, under the URC's banner of "People of the Way".

Please continue to make use of the General Assembly prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, we are your people, people of the way.

Light our path.

Show us Your way clearly and compellingly.

Through complexity, diversity, dissent, make Your will known,  
make Your will shown – in our lives and in our Church.

We give thanks for Your call which gave birth to our Church many years ago.

Help us now to hear Your call afresh.

Like a cool wind on a hot day, blow us out and about, people of the way,  
healing, life-giving, wise and faith-full.

Amen



**2: Death of the Revd Barry Jones** Please be informed Barry (Revd Barry Jones) died peacefully on the evening of 6th July in St John's Hospice after a short illness.

Details of his funeral will follow.

Thames North Synod

**3: Revd Tony Wilkinson** The congregation at Clitheroe United Reformed Church on Sunday 3 July joined the Revd Tony Wilkinson in celebrating his 50 years as an ordained minister. The picture shows Tony (3rd from left) with some of the church members before cutting a cake made to commemorate the occasion.





Dear friends

Sabbaticals are dangerous things – or maybe it's having time to pray, reflect and explore "What's next?" that's the danger. Either way, I have returned from my sabbatical and submitted my resignation as Director of the Windermere Centre, with effect from 4 September. After 14 years in post, I am on my way.



So what is next for me? Two convictions have prompted the resignation: the first is to explore ordination to non-stipendiary ministry, and the second is to offer myself within the URC and more widely on a freelance basis as a resource and enabler to encourage members and churches in missional discipleship.

Those of you who have followed developments here at the Windermere Centre will immediately recognise the extent to which this is a direct outflow of the focus on "What's the point of church?" I don't think there's a more important question to ask if we are going to invest the resources of time, energy, personnel, money and organisation that being a church demands.

Neither do I think that the answer is as obvious as it might initially seem: it is very easy to frame our anxieties about the future of the church in the face of decline and apathy in terms of mission, when what is actually driving us is how to maintain as much of our current setup as possible for as long as possible.

There is only one good reason for the existence of the church, and that is to make a Jesus-shaped difference to the life of the world - and when I talk about "Jesus-shaped", I mean "Easter-shaped". Jesus is defined by the Way of the Cross – dying and rising.

I am convinced that what we need to discover most urgently as individuals, local churches and a denomination is what needs to die in order to for us to be resurrected to the New Life that God has for us in Jesus through the Spirit. We need to find ways collectively of discerning what the key choices are that we need to make, and the risks that we need to take. That is how we will become faithful and effective – which may or may not prove to be the same thing as having a long-term future. But it is the same thing as discovering Life and being part of the Good News we proclaim.

Moving on from here is thus the next step for me on the road I've been traveling here at the Windermere Centre. Geographically, it means moving away; in terms of priorities and direction, it is about being on the same journey as the Centre. I hope the Windermere



Centre will continue to call on me as part of its own mission of “resourcing the church through hospitality and theological adventure”. I will certainly be bringing people to the Centre – and, vitally, operating Pay What You Can as the means of being paid for my future work for the church.

There’s a very big “Gulp!” involved. Leaving the Centre and staff and Carver Church after 14 years is going to be a huge wrench – it will be like leaving home and family. I will miss the interactions with people and churches that I’ve built up over that time. And then there’s the fear and apprehension (as well as the excitement) of changing radically the pattern of daily life, and of all the unknowns of where this stretch of the road will take me.

What will sustain me is the conviction that this is what God is calling me to, just as that same conviction has sustained me through all the wonderful and appalling times of the past 14 years. On a daily basis, though, it is the nourishment I have derived from sharing your own journeys of discipleship, and being allowed into your lives that has held and encouraged me. That has been an immense privilege. “Companion” literally means “bread-sharer”: thank you for your companionship and friendship of the past years.

May the God who has brought us all to the place where we are be with us and bless us as we navigate the next bend in the road – wherever that may lead.

Lawrence

6<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

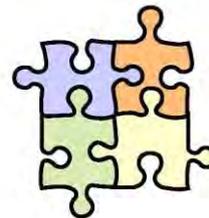
United Reformed Church  
Castlegate Clitheroe

# Annual Jigsaw Festival

Saturday 13th August  
10.00am to 4pm

Hundreds of made-up jigsaws on display.  
Browse before you buy.  
Enjoy tea, coffee, bacon butties, freshly made  
sandwiches and home-made cakes.

**Join us on Clitheroe Food Fest Day**  
Free Entry



**6: News from Trinity Community Church Moss Side** At URC Assembly representatives from Trinity Community Church in Moss Side received an award from Congregational and General Insurance for their work in creating dementia friendly communities. The church has worked in partnership with Together Dementia Support to offer a monthly singing session called Melody Memories alongside other weekly activities that help people living with dementia and their carers. The work aims to reduce social isolation and assist people to continue with activities that they enjoy. A video can be seen on You Tube <https://youtu.be/gm7hamD5u40>

Revd Bob Day said, "We are delighted to receive this award. It represents lots of hard work from church members, volunteers and our partners Together Dementia Support. It's amazing how much good will and support for faith based projects can be generated when the church works with other community groups and interested agencies. Thanks to everyone who has made this work so worthwhile and enjoyable."



**7: Easy worship** For a number of years we have been using Easy Worship software to project hymns, pictures etc during services. It is not very straightforward to use and we wondered if other churches use any different software that they are happy with.

I'm not sure if we could put a note in the Synod newsletter or how we might take this further.

Our contact for IT issues is Carole Kay 01254 249984.

Thanks  
David Faulkner, Secretary Trinity Blackburn