

# NEWS FROM THE NW SYNOD 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2017



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## 1: Moderators Snapshot



On Saturday we received a warm welcome from Carver Uniting Church as they hosted our Synod Meeting – an opportunity for us to gather from all our congregations and listen, talk, worship, decide, and pray together.

Our morning Bible study was led by Dr Karl Möller (Principal of the Cumbria Christian Institute) and looked at “Being a disciple” through the lens of what it means *to be with Jesus*, and *to be with those into whose company Jesus leads us*. Such discipleship reflects a “reckless generosity” and causes us to be particularly engaged with *those who need healing* and *those who are scorned, rejected and marginalised*. Karl noted

how these may seem counterintuitive – yet are the places where God calls us to be and the people God sends us to meet.

As for the items on the agenda – the book of Reports has been made widely available, and we received reports which reflected the support given to us all through the immense amount of time and energy that is offered by so many (e.g. those serving on our pastoral committees, drawn from members across a wide variety of our congregations). We thank God for the gifts given to us that support us all, so that that in each local community where we have a congregation we “may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9).

Please pray for:

- the on-going discussions and consultations across our congregations about how we can support one another as locally as possible through a pattern of Missional Partnerships,
- the work of our Synod Area Pastoral Committees as they continually reflect on the life of each of our congregations, and how best we can support one another,
- and for all our Synods in the UK (and Church House staff) as we consider the best way in which we can be connected together under our denominational priority for resourcing and developing our discipleship through “Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today.”

**2: A Light for All** SCM’s North West Gathering at Lancaster University Chaplaincy on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017, with guest speaker Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah.

With worship, creative Bible study, talks and workshops, the day event is open to all higher education students. The event runs from 9:45 am till 5 pm and costs just £5 which includes lunch.

Not a student but want to know more about SCM and what it does? Would you think about becoming a Friend who supports our work in the North West financially on a regular basis? SCM Friends and potential Friends are invited to join in with the Friends’ Gathering at A Light for All from 9:45 am till 2 pm.

To book a place as a Student or a Friend go to [www.movement.org.uk/events/light-all](http://www.movement.org.uk/events/light-all) For more details contact Rach Collins - [rach@movement.org.uk](mailto:rach@movement.org.uk)

**Cheadle Hulme United Reformed Church**  
**Swann Lane**  
**[www.cheadlehulme.urc.org.uk](http://www.cheadlehulme.urc.org.uk)**



**Saturday 11th November 2017**

# **REMEMBRANCE EXHIBITION**

**From 10am till 4pm**

Join us for an opportunity to look at displays, share stories and, during the two minute silence, remember those who have given their lives.

**All Welcome**



**4: News from Fairhaven URC** Last weekend was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the oldest Church Member and still very active Choir member at Fairhaven URC- Jim Crossan.



Jim is somewhat of a celebrity being one of the oldest Japanese Prisoner of War veterans still alive. In 2013 he undertook an emotional pilgrimage organised by the British Legion to Singapore and Thailand to visit the Japanese Prison camps where he was held during the Second World War, a visit he repeated in 2015. Also in 2015, on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VJ day (Victory Over Japan) Jim attended a memorial service at St Martin-in-the Fields and had the honour of laying a wreath in Westminster Hall gardens in London in commemoration of his fallen comrades.

When the premier of the film 'Railway Man' about Eric Lomax, a fellow prisoner of Jims, was shown at the Leicester Square Odeon in London, Jim was invited to attend. He met the star of the film: Colin Firth, who told him what a great privilege it was to meet him, insisting that he had a photo taken with Jim.

During last week's morning worship Jim was presented with a birthday card and the entire congregation sang 'Happy Birthday' to him. After the service everyone celebrated by sharing with Jim a lovely birthday cake and Jim was also presented with flowers and a cheque.



**5: This Is Who I Am" - Asylum Monologues** Some months ago, I was approached by a volunteer, Sebastian Aguirre, from a small London theatre company called [Ice And Fire](#). The company was putting together small-scale productions in which professional actors would perform monologues describing the experiences of people seeking asylum and those with refugee status. He had heard about our [First Wednesday](#) group and wanted to get some LGBT voices into their repertoire of asylum monologues.

Seb came to a First Wednesday meeting and asked for people to speak to him if they felt able to contribute their particular stories to the project. A few people volunteered to do so and Seb made arrangements to meet with them and to capture their stories. And it was a pleasure to learn that the first set of monologues, "This Is Who I Am", would be launched at a public performance in London on the evening of Tuesday 10th October.



The Ice and Fire company had booked a venue called '[Slam](#)' in Kings Cross and four actors appeared on stage, each telling the story of a gay or lesbian person's experience of fleeing their country and seeking asylum in the UK. Three of the people behind the stories - but with names changed for the performance - have connections with our church and First Wednesday.

In actual fact, only three actors were used in the performance as Margaret Nankabirwa told her own story in person and did a most brilliant job of it. Unless you had been told in advance, you would have said that Margaret was a professional among professionals in the way she delivered the monologue which reflected her own lived experience.



As a result of the involvement of First Wednesday and African Rainbow Family in the early stages of the project, Aderonke Apata and I were asked by Sebastian if we would come down to London and attend the performance, and possibly join a discussion panel after the performance to answer questions from the audience.

It was an emotional evening for me. I was proud that voices from our First Wednesday group were being heard and applauded by a truly appreciative audience through the medium of a stage performance. I was privileged to be part of a discussion panel dealing with

questions about the failings and injustices of the asylum process as it is experienced by LGBT people seeking asylum.

But I was most deeply moved by the strength and integrity of our friend Margaret as she held the stage in a packed venue and spoke her story from the heart.

This was a gospel of love, inclusion and commitment being shown in lives that I cared about, while I sat next to Margaret's partner Lydia, the love of her life, and held back the tears.

