

NEWS FROM THE NW SYNOD 18TH OCTOBER 2017



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1: Moderators Snapshot



Last week I had the privilege of participating in two special services to mark the 500 years since the Reformation in 1517, in Manchester Cathedral and Blackburn Cathedral. The snapshot (slightly blurry as I tried to snap away discretely during the sharing of the Peace) shows our commemoration in the transept of Blackburn Cathedral as around 150 people share the peace – including one furry friend! During the service two keynote speakers addressed us - Pastor George Samiec (Vice-President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England) and Fr John O'Toole (National Ecumenical Officer for the Catholic Bishop's Conference in England and Wales).

Please continue to pray:

- for the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer that "they may be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23)
- for a striving as locally as possible to share with those of other denominations or independent churches/networks in mission
- for the United Reformed Church as we seek to be re-formed and to follow Jesus more closely through our common emphasis on Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today
- for our North Western Synod as we seek to support one another through the formation of local missional partnerships as the context for encouraging the ministry of all God's people.

2: News from Wilbraham St Ninians - This Is Who I Am" - Asylum Monologues

Philip Jones writes...

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.

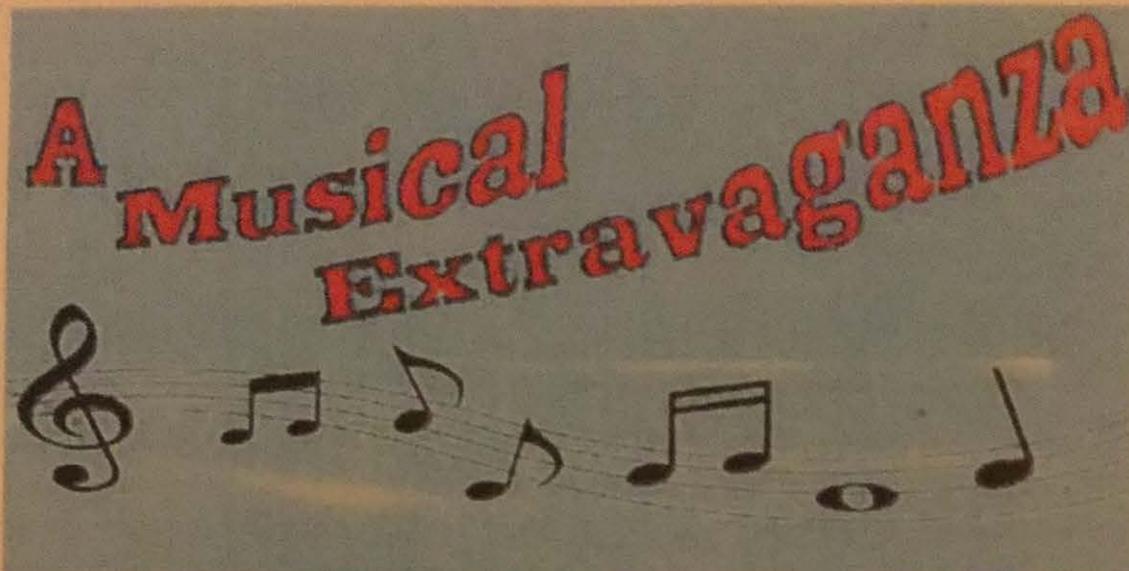
But I was most deeply moved by the strength and integrity of our friend Margaret as she held the stage in a packed venue and spoke her story from the heart.

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.



3: ALTRINCHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Altrincham United Reformed Church
Presents:



With the
Cantus Bravura Choir

Leader: Daphne Sumbler

7.30 p.m. Saturday 11th November 2017
at
Trinity Hale URC, Cecil Road, Hale.

Entrance: £5 children **£3**

Tickets available through church members, or ring 929 9747
or, pay at door.

Altrincham United Reformed Church is a registered charity, # 1129206

4: Coffee morning and fundraiser at Gatley URC

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

The recent event at Gatley URC organised by Gina Gibson and Mubeen Ali raised £1001

There was a real spirit of partnership with users of the building who made cakes and helped to serve drinks.

