

Area President

FROM THE
DESK OF THE



Rev Sarah Moore (photo by Sylvie from Cockermouth URC), Churches Together in Grange Good Friday Walk of Witness (own photo), A Passion for Kendal: The Crucifixion (photo <http://apassionforkendal.blogspot.co.uk/>), URC logo

Pentecost 2012 edition

Out in all weathers, following Christ and sat-nav, finding a welcome!

This rather wooden haiku describes my first experiences here in Cumbria as your Area President. It feels like quite some time even though it is not quite three months since many of us gathered together at Carlisle St George's URC to celebrate my induction into post.

As the calendar turns into May, my attention again moves towards remembering the story in Acts that recounts what happened on the day that the Spirit came.

The evangelist Luke (who wrote Acts as well as his Gospel) describes how Jesus' friends were gathered in one place. Suddenly from heaven came the sound of the rushing of a violent wind which filled the house. Divided tongues that looked like fire touched each person present. Each began speaking in other languages. A crowd gathered and the people were confused as each could hear the Good News of God's power in their own language.

I wonder what hearing the Good News in your own language means for you? While Cumbria does not have huge numbers of members of other ethnic groups, a variety of languages are spoken here. I have heard of Polish, Italian and Greek communities in my short time so far. But what if language here is not so much about the literal words we speak but rather a short hand for the whole background and story that makes up a person?

What would it mean, for example, for a student, or a farmer, or a scientist, or a single parent or someone on holiday, or anyone else for that matter to hear the Good News of God's power using words and ideas that that person can understand? Is it possible for those of us within the Christian community to learn to speak the languages of the people who are outside of it?

People in the English speaking world have a reputation for struggling to speak other languages. There are all sorts of reasons for this. One is that learning to speak someone else's language is hard work. Another is that it seems that so much

of the world speaks English, either as a first or second language with many of those people only too happy to practice on us!

Several years ago I had the privilege of visiting the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, one of the North Western Synod's international mission partners. One of the issues that myself and those with whom I was travelling encountered was the phenomenon of minority languages that were considered endangered or extinct. According to UNESCO, there are currently around 6000 languages spoken in the world today and it is predicted that half of these will disappear by the end of the 21st century. I met with people from the Siraiya tribe who were trying to recover their ancient language. They explained that their language meant so much more than the words they spoke. Language was also about the passing down of customs and stories and identity and knowledge and wisdom. It plays a big part in how people define themselves.

I return to the question that I posed earlier in this reflection.

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Tripartite News

Following the signing of the Declaration of Intent between ourselves, the Church of England Diocese of Carlisle and the Cumbria District of the Methodist Church, in November setting up the Ecumenical County of Cumbria; the Tripartite Steering Group continues to meet to oversee how this ground-breaking agreement can best be put into action. Three working groups are being set up each with the brief of addressing the three commitments set out in the declaration. These focus around how we will seek out every possible opportunity to share together in mission to people living and working in as well as visiting our county, how might share both lay and ordained ministers whenever possible and how we can work together to optimise the use of our buildings for the benefit of our local communities.

Who's who around the Area?

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Is it possible for those of us within the Christian community to learn to speak the languages of the people who are outside of it?

Language is about so much more than words. So is mission. One reaction to when we meet someone who doesn't speak our language is simply to speak our own a bit louder or slower. Another is to smile and point! Neither of these are likely to work well.

To truly and deeply engage with many of the people outside the Christian community today, we need to learn to present the Good

News of Christ in words and stories and ideas that people understand. Perhaps we need to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be able to do this. For that Good News to take hold, we need to keep speaking in that new language and not simply expect people to eventually learn to speak ours. The early church eventually learned to 'speak' to those outside the Jewish faith and kept that language. Maybe its time that Christians today learned to do the same with and for folk outside our doors?

With every blessing, Revd Sarah Moore

News from around the Cumbria Area

North Cumbria Group

Carlisle St George's, Brampton and Bewcastle look forward to welcoming the Revd Nick Mark as their new minister in August. Nick is currently ministering in Chesterfield and his induction will be on Saturday 8th September at 3pm. Venue to be confirmed.

Penrith & Penruddock

Revd Peter Sharp has announced that he will be concluding his ministry in Cumbria in the summer. Peter and Linda will be moving to their home in Derbyshire enabling them to be closer to elderly relatives.

South Lakes Group

Welcome back into the group following maternity and sabbatical leave to Revd Carole Marsden. Carole has been developing genuinely all-age music resources that are accessible by non-musicians. Kendal enjoyed a successful experiment worshipping with friends at Stricklandgate Methodist Church. It is hoped that the two congregations will ultimately come together to form an LEP. Still in Kendal was the community theatre performance of *A Passion for Kendal*. This saw 1000 people on the streets of the town on Good Friday witnessing the story of Easter unfold before them. Carver opened its doors once again for its Holy Week Labyrinth welcoming all to reflect on the events of Christ's life leading up to his death. Finally, our thoughts and prayers are with Lawrence

Moore following his resignation from the post of Moderator-Elect of General Assembly.

South West Cumbria United Area

Our thoughts are with Revd Martin Williams as he prepares to start his sabbatical which is based on the theme 'Roots and Routes'. Dalton are now well on the way towards forming an LEP with their Methodist neighbours and discern which of their two buildings will best enable them to further their mission in the town. Ramsden Street now have their new audio-visual equipment installed and working and are looking forward to experiencing how this will enhance their worship together.

West Coast Network

A small group from Whitehaven are travelling to South Africa this month to visit their twin, Pearson Street Congregational Church, Port Elizabeth and other projects associated with it. As part of the moving towards setting up the five churches of Whitehaven, Workington, Cockermouth, Harrington & Silloth, conversations are taking place to sort out how this will work in practical terms such as changing service times to enable regular contact with Alistair and Dave, ministering in the network on a regular basis. These churches are currently involved in the Strategic Buildings Review, facilitated by the Churches' Trust for Cumbria and part of the tripartite covenant.

Events Coming Up

Area Day

Taking place on Saturday 28th July at Whitehaven and organised by the churches of the West Coast Network. The theme for the day will be 'Fishing' which will include various activities and conclude with an Act of Worship including Holy Communion led by Revd Sarah Moore.

Celebrating Together

This annual event planned by Churches Together in Cumbria takes place on Saturday 15th September in Kendal. Rev Robert Freeman (Bishop of Penrith) will be the keynote speaker reflecting on Mission today. There will also be workshops, worship and time to meet and get to know other people from around the county. Lunch is provided. More details available soon.

North Western Synod

The next meeting of the North Western Synod is taking place at Carver URC, Windermere on Saturday 13th October. Bishop James Newcome and Rev Richard Teal will be attending so this will be an opportunity to share and celebrate all we have achieved together in our ecumenical county of Cumbria with our URC friends from around the north west.



'Teach us to Pray'

I will be leading a half day session sharing experience of prayer, spirituality, pastoral care and talking about what nurtures and nourishes us in our faith at Carver URC, Windermere on Monday 28 May, 2pm to 4.30pm. An email is being sent to ministers and church secretaries and others for whom I have email details with more information. Please contact me by phone or email if you would like to attend.