



Regional Conference was a total blast!



Our Lay Delegate Mikee being serious

Newcastle MCC was very well represented with many friends and members heading off to Brum to meet with other MCCers from across the region to worship together, get to know each other and to get some more formal business done.

UFMCC has divided the globe into Regions; this ensures that, although there are many countries without an MCC presence, that someone is looking out for individuals or groups who want to know more about the love of God, which is inclusive and crosses human-made boundaries. Region 4 includes much of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. As Alternate Lay Delegate, one of the most interesting moments was hearing about the work of God in the Region. Each church was asked to give one success over the past few years and one area for prayer or growth; comments were uplifting and incisive. We have churches in Newcastle, Manchester, Cologne, Bath, Brighton, Stuttgart, South London, Torbay, Cape Town, Bournemouth, Hamburg, Birmingham, Copenhagen, Nairobi, North London, Edinburgh, Lagos, Pretoria, Montpellier, East London and Johannesburg. We have church plants in Dorchester, Inverness and Glasgow and interested groups in Paris, Lille, areas of other areas of Kenya, Zimbabwe and an intense interest in Uganda. Whoah! That is some list.



Ruth & Cecilia being even more serious

All of us from Newcastle enjoyed meeting members of other congregations. Worship was taken from a variety of traditions across the weekend and together with themed workshops gave a focus to the weekend. The pre-conference institute Transforming Faith (exploring spirituality, faith and transgender issues) was a success; indeed Rev Dr Erin Swenson who preached on transgender issues was a highlight for me personally; such courage and vision.

The more formal process of the business meeting was at times more complex, but I can confirm that Region 4 has nominated Nancy Wilson to be presented at General Conference for election as Moderator (servant-in-charge, if you like) of the denomination for a further term. The less formal process of getting to know each other more is perhaps better discussed with individuals!

We are part of a movement which is just like the disciples. A rainbow people is one way of putting it, but certainly a random selection of people of faith. Some strengths, some areas for growth. That is the way God works. That is the way God has worked through the ages, and (post-) modernity is not going to alter that! God sees this bunch of faithful people and God pours blessing on us. There are stories of a God who touches people, who says that their name is to be changed from 'unwanted, alone and hated' to people who are called 'loved, special and 'the one and only'. We have heard this story. May others hear it too.



Our gang still being serious

Michael Wardle

All Your Diary Dates for For December

Pastor's Report for the month- We are becoming the church for our Community

Bible Feature; Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Charlotte's World of Books Monthly Book Review ; 'The Shack'

Mission Impossible.

Operation Christmas Child

All your Christmas Dates & Events

New Ministry Opportunities





Bible Feature

Jesus is the Reason for the Season



If I'm honest with myself, I didn't know the song about the twelve days of Christmas had a hidden religious meaning. I just thought it was one of those old fashioned nonsense Christmas carols.

However, apparently it was written in England during the persecution by Protestant

monarchs in the 16th century when you would be hung if caught with anything written indicating you were a Catholic. Apparently, in the song true love (represented by God) and gifts (represented by different Christian ideas) as follows:

The "Partridge in a pear tree" was Jesus.

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments of The Bible

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity - the Theological Virtues.

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which relays the history of humanity's fall from grace.

6 Geese a-Laying = the six days of Creation.

7 Swans a-Swimming = the seven sacraments - gifts of the Holy Spirit.

8 Maids a-Milking = the eight beatitudes (solemn blessings)

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

10 Lords a-Leaping = the Ten Commandments.

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles.

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

Fascinated by this, I did some research on the internet about the song and discovered each verse adds something new and the giver receives everything previously given. No doubt this song reinforces the idea of gift giving associated with the history of festivities.

If one gift is given each day in this song then we can recount a total of 364 gifts given with 184 of them being birds. Birds must have been a prized gift back in the old days!"

I also found an interesting fact about the song. If you were to add up the cost of all the gifts today (364 with 184 of them being birds), as at 2008 the cost of all the gifts given would have cost you £58,397 !

If you want to listen to this famous Christmas song you can download or play it for free over the internet at: <http://www.christmasgifts.com/music.html> or you can purchase a copy from www.Amazon.com.

Enjoy, sing-along, get into the festive spirit and see how good your memory is !

“ Jesus is the reason for the season,

Jesus is the reason for the season,

Jesus is the reason for the season,

And the truth goes marching ON ON ON !”

Happy Christmas to all our readers

Claire Liebig-Denham

Notice Sheet for December 2008



Every Sunday— Worship Service at 6.30pm St James URC Church Hall
For further details of any events below, please phone/text 07770 543407
Or email admin@mccnewcastle.org.uk

Date/Time	Event	Other information
Tuesday 9 th Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season – <i>Listening for the Word</i>	Eric's home, Jesmond Vale, Newcastle.
Wed 10 th Dec 5pm – 7pm	Tea with Dorothy – Sunderland , for the mature LGBT person!	Age Concern Cafe, Sunderland. See Cecilia for more info.
Wed 10 th Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season <i>Listening for the Word</i>	Claire and Annette's home, Thornaby. For directions, email newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Thurs 11 th Dec 7pm	CLM course	In church hall
Sunday 14 th Dec 4.30pm	Scarborough group meets	Worship and fellowship meal, Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough
Sunday 14 th Dec – after service	Squash – relax and mingle at our monthly social time	Mikee and Jonny's home, Heaton. Newcastle. See Mikee for more info.
Monday 15 th Dec 8pm	Teesside Social – Quiz Night! Come and join the MCC Teesside team!	The Oak Pub, Newport Rd, Middlesbrough. £2 per player, funds to Middlesbrough Pride '09. See Claire for more info.
Tues 16 th Dec 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison's home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Tues 16 th Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season <i>Preparing the Way</i>	Eric's home, Jesmond Vale, Newcastle.
Wed 17 th Dec 5pm – 7pm	Tea with Dorothy - Sunderland	Age Concern Cafe, Sunderland. See Cecilia for more info.
Wed 17 th Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season <i>Preparing the Way</i>	Claire and Annette's home, Thornaby. For directions, email newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Wed 17 th Dec 7.30pm	Blue Christmas service – if Christmas is a sad or difficult time for you, this service offers space away from the noise and crowds	St. James Church. See Cecilia for more info.
Saturday 20 th Dec 7.30pm	Beer and Carols – Have a festive singalong	Claire and Annette's home, Thornaby. See Claire for more info.
Sunday 21 st Dec 6.30pm	MCC Newcastle Lessons and Carols – with mince pies to follow!	St. James Church
Tues 23 rd Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season <i>Annunciation</i>	Eric's home, Jesmond Vale, Newcastle.
Wed 24 th Dec 7.30pm	Advent Study Group – a chance to reflect on the season <i>Annunciation</i>	Claire and Annette's home, Thornaby. For directions, email newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Wed 24 th Dec 7.30pm	Christmas Eve service – a simple service to welcome the Christ child!	St. James Church.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>NEW</u> POSTAL ADDRESS MCC Newcastle St James URC Northumberland Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JF</p>	<p>A Christ centred and inclusive community'</p>	<p>Phone or text 07770 543407 if you would like this sheet in a different format Registered as a charity in England and Wales, No. 1093009</p>

Pastor Report for November 2008



We are a church that is out and about! This time last year was the first AIDS march through Newcastle. It was a big occasion for us as a church and we were well represented. Since then, we have had a big presence at the Holocaust Memorial Day Vigil, the LGBT History Month Conference, the IDAHO Big Noise, we marched in Newcastle and in Middlesbrough for Pride, and have had our outreach stalls. Last year's AIDS march was a new thing. At this year's AIDS march, it felt as though we were "old timers". People are glad to see us as part of these events, we are becoming "the church for our community".

Once every three years, all the MCCs in UK, Western Europe and Africa get together for Regional Conference. 14 people from MCC Newcastle took part in the conference! This is a great achievement. Margaret and I sang in the conference choir, Anna played drums, Mikee read one of the lessons in German. It was wonderful to see so many people participating in workshops and other activities.

Conferences like this are great for meeting people from the wider MCC family and are also an excellent way of getting to know our own congregation better.

As you may know, I represent the church on the Steering Group for getting a LGBT Centre in Newcastle. MCC Newcastle was invited to be part of the Steering Group after the community consultation showed many people wanted to have a faith space as part of the Newcastle LGBT centre. Members of the Steering Group went to visit the Centre in Glasgow to have a look at a thriving centre and to learn the joys and challenges of fundraising for such a large project. We have a new MCC developing in Glasgow and they use the centre for their services. I was able to spend time with Kate Wood, one of the church planters, whilst I was there.

The Creating A Life that Matter course started this month with 11 people enrolling for the programme. Our first module is called Rediscovering our Relationship with the Sacred. We are exploring different images of God, our personal experiences of God and those people who have inspired us through the way they

have lived their lives. A song written by people on the course was used in our World AIDS Day service and was a very moving experience.

Another opportunity for learning together are our two Advent groups – one in Teesside at Claire and Annette's home, one in Newcastle at Eric's. Over the four weeks of Advent, we will be discussing Judgement, Listening for the Word, Preparing the Way and Annunciation. Each week is independent, so if you can't attend every session, it is ok.

The highlight of the month for me was going to the Shepherd's Purse warehouse to see our Operation Christmas Child boxes being sorted and packed. Huge thanks goes to Abby for organising the collection of toys, gifts and shoeboxes. It was very moving to see the care and attention that people had paid to fill each box with good things to delight a child on Christmas morning.

"People are glad to see us as part of these events, we are becoming 'the church for our community'"

Whether we are marching for World AIDS Day, or packing tiny hats and gloves in boxes for children in Ukraine, MCC Newcastle is offering a powerful witness of what it

means to be the "hands and feet of Christ in the world". As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, I think that there can be no better way to show what Christmas really means!

I wish you and those that you love a peace-filled Christmas and a joyful New Year.

God bless

Perkha

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**Apparitions BBC1 Thursday 4th
December 2008**
**Demon: "Praying is something we do
when we have given up"**

**Priest response: "Prayer is the most
powerful weapon we have got."**

Christmas at MCC Newcastle

Christmas means different things to different people. We are offering a variety of different Christmas services and socials to suit everyone! All our Christmas services will be held in the main church.

Wednesday 17th December 7.30pm – Is Christmas a hard time for you? Does it bring sad memories or difficult emotions? Our **Blue Christmas** service is a time when you don't need to pretend to be jolly; a quiet and reflective service where it is ok to be sad.

Saturday 20th December 7.30pm - Enjoy a singalong in a relaxed atmosphere – Beer and Carols at Claire and Annette's home, Thornaby

Sunday 21st December 6.30pm – Our **Carol Service**, with mince pies for afters!

Wednesday 24th December 7.30pm – recapture the anticipation of Christmas with our **Christmas Eve** service. A chance to let in the peace and joy that we hope for during this festive season.

Ministry Opportunities At MCC Newcastle

AT MCCN, we believe in the “priesthood of all believers” - that is, everyone has gifts and everyone is called to ministry. We are all different, so there are many different ministries in the church. Do either of these opportunities sound good to you???

Opportunity One:

Do you enjoy working behind the scenes to serve other people? Do you enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done? Do you think it is important to make a commitment and keep it?

Every Sunday, a transformation takes place. In about 40 minutes, the church hall changes from being an empty room to a sacred space. Without the faithful work of a small team, this vital change would not happen.

We need a small group of people who are willing to serve on a rota to build our sacred space each week – making sure people have a place to sit, that the microphones are put in place, tables and chairs are set up in the fellowship area. Could you commit yourself to arriving at church by 5.20pm **once a month** to help make this transformation happen? **Please see Abby, Alison or Cecilia for more information.**

Opportunity Two:

Do you have the gift of administration? Do you like getting things in order and working as part of a team? Do you enjoy working on a computer and using programmes such as Excel, Access and Outlook? Are you able to maintain confidentiality?

The **Office Angels** look after the general administration of the church, supporting the work of the Welcome Team, the Treasurer and Pastoral Care. We need someone who can input data into the computer and keep our church database up to date. The Office Angels minister on a Monday morning each week at the church office, but this could be flexible. **If you would like to know more, please talk to Cecilia.**



Mission Possible - Operation Christmas Child 2008



MCC Newcastle took part in Operation Christmas Child this year and I would like to share a big thank you for everyone who made donations of items to fill shoe boxes and those who gave completed shoe boxes. We managed to fill fifteen full shoe boxes and supply a further four bags of top-up toys to the warehouse in Byker. Don't forget Operation Christmas Child is about giving some of the worlds poorest and most deprived children a gift and message of hope and love at Christmas time. The children that these gifts will go to, will often be victims of war, poverty, famine, disease and natural disaster.

I like to think of the shoe boxes as fifteen or more smiles and acts of love. Thank you for going shopping, for box wrapping and toy packing, as you will bring hope and a smile. I would like to personally assure you that your little boxes of love will be on their way to the Ukraine very soon. Each of your lovingly given gifts were taken to the Warehouse by a team of us from MCC



Newcastle. We checked them, stacked them and then boxed them ready to be shipped in a truck to Operation Christmas Childs partners in the Ukraine. Between me, Raj, Lesley, Elaine and Cecilia, we must of checked and packed nearly 500 boxes between us, that's when we could stop our very own pastor from playing with all the toys, (we have our very own big kid in our midst!).

It was also a great opportunity to meet other volunteers from different churches and community groups. I think that everyone that helped out in the Warehouse that day was moved and touched by the amount of boxes that were packed and ready to go; approx 1,500 boxes are processed in the Warehouse each day. So a big well done to everyone involved. Thanks must also be given to Monica for feeding the workers after their shift in the Warehouse. Your food was just scrummy!



Claire's dog Jessie

News Flash - MCC Dog Walks

I just wanted to drop all readers of the MCC Newsletter a line to let you know the winter is now closing in and there will be no more dog walks until the spring. Fret not though, as in the spring, there will be a whole host of new venues for walks and some old favourites too. My dogs Maggie and Mo would like to say thank you to all their canine and human friends that joined them on the walks and they look forward to seeing you in the New Year. Remember when the dog walks are running you don't need a dog just bring yourself for some fresh air, exercise, company and chatter. Maggie and Mo would like to say Bon Voyage and see you in the spring, with their little paws waving lol !



Abs with Maggie



Dog Walk Fun



See you all next year !

Both articles by: Abby Brown



Charlotte's World of Books



Christian bestseller “The Shack” doesn’t disappoint

WM Young’s self-published novel “The Shack” is something of a phenomenon. Written in a garage, this book was number one on the other side of the Atlantic, is the only Christian book on the worldwide bestseller list and is about to appear on the shelves of Tesco here in the UK. Call me sniffy if you will, but there’s something about ‘bestseller’ hype that leaves me cold, so it was with anticipation and not a small dose of cynicism that I reached for a copy.

The storyline, in a nutshell, goes something like this: the main character, Mack, is a man who carries a ‘great sadness.’ His image of God has become embittered by a tragic incident involving the abduction and death of his little daughter, Missy. While his wife (Nan) seems to be able to lean on God (who she affectionately calls Papa) throughout this tragedy, Mack struggles to accept that a loving God would allow such a terrible thing to happen. Alone in the house one weekend, he receives a letter inviting him back to the source of his pain, the shack where Missy was killed. The note is signed simply ‘Papa’. Cruel joke or genuine invitation? Well, Mack decides to go there and find out, and so follows his incredible encounter with the Sacred...

First things first. Despite ‘having always been a writer’ Young, a janitor from Oregon, had never written a full-length novel before *The Shack*, and his inexperience does show. The prose at its best is readable and at its worst tends towards cliché (this may be my cynicism reappearing, but there’s something disappointingly Disney-esque about the way the flowers grow and woodland creatures frolic at God’s arrival). The reason the book is a bestseller has, I suspect, nothing to do with Young’s literary talent, but a lot to do with the book’s astounding and innovative take on God. Not surprisingly, the choice of a black African-American woman to represent ‘God the Father’ has ruffled some feathers. I enjoyed this manifestation of God, who explains to Mack she appears as a female ‘to mix metaphors, to keep you from falling back into your religious conditioning.’

The real strength of the work comes as Mack struggles with letting go of his burdens, moving through anger, sadness and guilt to love, forgiveness and grace. The many questions he asks tackle some of the big issues (Why does God allow suffering? Why should I forgive and how?), and leaves the reader wishing Mack would voice some of their own questions. And maybe this is the brilliance of *The Shack*: that in changing our perceptions of God, it helps us bring our own stuff before the Creator. It is ultimately a triumph for liberal-minded Christian writing, and as it is aimed at those ‘who stand outside of religious institutions but are still hungry for God,’ it strikes a resonance with the LGBT community. My advice to you is to go to Tescos, pick it up with your bread and milk and then pass it on to a friend. Alternatively you could wait for the movie (I kid you not!) and take some people along. After all, a beautiful she-God who bakes your grandma’s scones and feeds your soul at the same time is worth sharing, isn’t she?

See www.theshackbook.com for more details. A copy is available from MCCN, just ask me.

Some of our Regular Activities at MCC Newcastle

For December only - Advent Study Groups

Every Tuesday at Eric's in Jesmond Vale, Newcastle and every Wednesday at Claire and Annette's in Thornaby, Teesside. Your opportunity to prepare for Christmas with topics, such as Judgement, Listening for the Word, Preparing the Way and Annunciation!

1st Saturday of every month - Tea with Dorothy

If you are over 50 and would like to meet socially with other folk, this is the place for you. Afternoon tea and chat at Martha and Mary's Chillingham Road, Heaton, Newcastle. See Eric for more info. TWD outings are organised by Roger every month too. TWD opens in Sunderland on the 2nd and 3rd Wednesday of every month, 5pm - 7pm at Age Concern cafe, Sunderland.

Every other Tuesday - Prayer Party

This is a chance to join with others in prayer, for ourselves, our church community and the wider world. It is also where we hold in prayer those requests that come to us on a Sunday. See Alison for more details.

Scarborough Group - Meets the second Sunday of every month for worship and fellowship from 4.30pm, Westborough Methodist Church Hall, Scarborough

Useful Contacts at MCC Newcastle

Abby Brown	Social Team	social@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Claire LiebigDenham	Newsletter Editor	newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Cecilia Eggleston	Pastor	pastor@mccnewcastle.org.uk
George Gardner	Social Team	social@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Alison Kaine	Board Member/Set Up Team	setup@mccnewcastle.org.uk
John Lawson	Outreach Tees/Welcome Team	welcome@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Andy Lumsden	Board Member	contact@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Katie Marsh	Treasurer	treasurer@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Michael Wardle	Worship Rota/Board	worship@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Prayer requests		prayer@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Web Team		webgurus@mccnewcastle.org.uk

Our Mission

The Metropolitan Community Church in Newcastle upon Tyne
is a Christ-centred and inclusive community, with a commitment to spiritual and personal growth
through worship, prayer and action.

We seek to provide a welcoming and accepting atmosphere,
and aim to proclaim Christ's message of liberation for all.

We work towards a transformation in the understanding of Christianity
and its relevance to contemporary society.
Registered charity number 1093009

MCC Newcastle would like to extend a very warm welcome to all readers. We hope you enjoyed our newsletter which is published on a monthly basis and can be found in colour on our website at www.mccnewcastle.org.uk

However, we are obliged to state that nothing in this newsletter either; written, said or otherwise, purports to represent the Metropolitan Community Church in general. If you have any comments about either content or presentation please contact the Editor who welcomes any contributions but reserves the right to edit as deemed appropriate.