



**Wilderness People....the book is launched**



Helen's Launch Speech

Three...two...one...take off !  
 Our book has finally been launched! In true MCCN style we put on a special service and a launch party, including a slide show of photos, a feast expertly prepared by Mr. Eric and his team, and a very special exhibition of Mazi's artwork (we were the very first to see it!).

'Wilderness People' has been a long time in the making and we were thrilled to see it in solid form. Everyone received a free copy and some of us were lucky enough to have ours signed by the editor, Helen, herself! It has been a real pleasure to laugh, cry and be surprised by the wide range of stories within its covers; of the times when being gay was much more risky than it is now and civil partnerships were unimaginable. Of wild parties and weddings, babies, ex-gay ministries, epiphany moments and finally finding a home. One thing is certain; it's been a very interesting journey!

I am sure everyone would like to join me in thanking Helen, who dedicated so much time and passion to the making of the book, for her commitment. Thanks also go to all those, both named and un-named who contributed to it and to making our 'Wilderness People' service so special.



Mazi's artwork was used on the front cover

Copies of the book are already making their way around the world, and we pray that our stories will bless all those who read them. Enough said, lets go and make some more history ! Charlotte



The books are uncovered

**All Your Diary Dates for November**

**Pastor's Report for the month**

**Bible Feature; Finding Your 'God Zone'**

**Pastor's Monthly Report**

**Details of a new exciting monthly Book Review feature**

**Exclusive; A letter from Jonny in Africa**

**MCCN joins up with Operation Christmas Child**

**Details on our brand new course;**

**"Creating a Life that Matters"**

**A Big Big Congratulations to Emily, Katie and John on the birth of Elsa**

*This poem was written by John*

Elsa - born Monday evening - 20th October 2008,  
 Elizabeth Grace Watson - 7lb 15.5oz.  
 Elsa - fine dark hair and complexion Watson features - and toes!  
 Elizabeth Grace Watson - 7lb 15.5 oz.  
 Katie Emily and John - learning to sleep when we can!  
 Watson features - and toes!  
 No visitors please - 'til we've started to surface.  
 Katie, Emily & John - learning to sleep when we can!  
 Prayers for - children, adults, carers, lovers and singles.  
 No visitors please - 'til we've started to surface.  
 Elsa - complete and perfect - yet so much more to be.  
 Prayers for - children, adults, carers, lovers and singles.  
 Elsa - fine dark hair and complexion  
 Elsa - complete and perfect - yet so much more to be.



*...prithce brother, just thow a versian which I mightest verify understand?*



# Bible Feature

## Finding Your 'God Zone'

One of the readings at church in October, was about Jesus' response to the Sadducees and the Pharisees in their attempt to make a fool of our Lord and, at the same time, challenge the teachings of Moses' laws.

The question, that many of you will know, was;

***'What is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?'***

As Helen, who was preaching for us, explained, the Sadducees and Pharisees where, in Jesus' times, the religious crème de la crème (or so they thought of themselves). So to publically ask such a rising religious star a difficult legal question was a really cheap attempt at humiliating Christ.

Ok, scene set... Good crowd around the infamous teacher, plenty of ears to pass on the reply. Perfect situation.

Mark Ch 12 V29 and Matthew Ch 22 V.36 both describe the event. Jesus' answers to trick questions such as this is one, is of the things I love about Jesus' character. Totally aware of their hidden agenda, He uses their futile questions and turns the answers into some of the most meaningful passages of the Gospel. Just Brilliant! Oh if we had politicians so wise!

**The answer;**

***"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.***

A second is equally important; ***"Love your neighbour as yourself."***

Finally, He concluded ***"all the commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."***

That's a rap, first take, bowled over, out of sight....the Sadducees' and Pharisees have

been outplayed and who is looking humiliated now?

What Jesus is trying to teach us all is, that if you live your life in 'the God zone' everything else will fall into place. But, first, you got to get into 'the God zone'.

That sounds simple enough, no rocket science there then. But how do you get into 'the God zone'? I suppose I really got into my first 'God zone' whilst attending my communion classes at the age of fourteen. However, I must admit, it was only after attending MCCN that I actually fell in love with Jesus. Around that time I discovered a Christian pop group called Delirious. Their music was like love songs to me, anthems to the love of my life. I recently went with George to Leeds to see them play their last ever concert together and believe you me, I was truly in my 'God zone'.

There are many different ways people find their own 'God zone'. Some people pray, meditate, use art, music or dance. Some people find their 'God zone' when they are evangelizing or reading the bible.

Cecilia and myself recently attended a Diversity Day at South Tyneside college to promote the our church. One young student approached our stand and, with a wealth of religious knowledge, began to question our belief that God made and so loves LGBT people, as indeed, loves us all. She had a strict literal interpretation of the bible. It is the Word of God and if it tells you something is a sin, it is a sin. Go straight to jail, do not pass go, do not collect £200 and there will certainly be no heaven waiting for you!

After using all of the counter points of view in the book, we knew we were never going to convince her different. Then I remembered Jesus' answer to Pharisees question what is the most important commandment in the law of Moses? I found myself reciting the Lord's response to her....

Yep, that's the one....you got it....

**'Find your God Zone'.**

Amen

*By Claire*

## Notice Sheet for November 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](mailto:admin@mccnewcastle.org.uk)

Date/Time	Event	Other information
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2 – 4pm	Tea with Dorothy – a cuppa and company	Martha and Mary café, Chillingham Road, Heaton, Newcastle. See Eric for more info.
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	<b>NO SQUASH – see later in the month!!!!</b>	
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison’s home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	MCC Region 4 Conference, Birmingham	
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>No Taizé service</b>	Next service will be 5 <sup>th</sup> December
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> Nov 4.30pm	Scarborough group meets	Worship and fellowship meal, Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough
Wed 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov 5pm – 7pm	Tea with Dorothy - Sunderland	Age Concern, Sunderland. See Cecilia for more info.
Wed 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Good Book Club – a refreshing opportunity to study the Bible	Church office. See Cecilia for more info.
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 11am	Dog Walk – Castle Eden walkway	See Abby for more details or email <a href="mailto:social@mccnewcastle.org.uk">social@mccnewcastle.org.uk</a>
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> Nov 8pm	Squash – social time for all	Mikee and Jonny’s home, Heaton, Newcastle
Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison’s home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Wed 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 5pm – 7pm	Tea with Dorothy - Sunderland	Age Concern, Sunderland. See Cecilia for more info.
Thurs 20 <sup>th</sup> Nov 7pm – 9.15pm	<b>New!</b> Creating a Life That Matters course—see article	Church hall. See John or Cecilia for more details
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Movies with Mikee – share a film, discuss the meaning. This month – “Sister Act”	Mikee and Jonny’s home, Heaton, Newcastle. See Mikee for more info. Bring your own popcorn!
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov 6.30pm	Membership Service—Dress Up Sunday!	A time to celebrate with those making a formal commitment to MCCN
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov 7.30pm	Deadline for Operation Christmas Child boxes	See Abby and newsletter article for details
Thurs 27 <sup>th</sup> Nov 7pm	CLM Course	Church hall
Saturday 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov 10am	Operation Christmas Child Warehouse visit—Byker	See Abby for details
Week beginning 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	Advent groups start	More details later!
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison’s home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> Dec 8pm	Taize service - A reflective service with chants, prayers and silence	St. James Church
Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec 12.30pm	World AIDS Day march, Newcastle	See John for more details.
<b>Visit our website for updates and amendments throughout the month. <a href="http://www.mccnewcastle.org.uk">www.mccnewcastle.org.uk</a></b>		
<b><u>NEW POSTAL ADDRESS</u></b> MCC Newcastle St James URC Northumberland Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JF	<b>A Christ centred and inclusive community’</b>	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

# Dear friends Greetings from South Africa!

I have now been here for 3 months, and thought it would be good to give you an update of how things are going.



Jonny in Africa

First of all, I would like to thank you all for your prayers, emails, phone calls and Facebook messages – they have

all been VERY MUCH appreciated. It has been a fantastic support to me, to know your thoughts and prayers are with me. This was especially the case in the first few weeks which were a really tough time for me, having arrived here; missing home, friends and family, having to adjust to a completely new working environment and feeling quite isolated.

Before I left, I had decided that I would bring the Anglican lectionary with me, so I would have a structured way of reading the Bible every day. On the day that I left, when I was feeling incredibly anxious, the Psalm for the day was *Psalm 31*. Listen to this for someone in my predicament;



Every day life in Africa

*"In you O Lord have I taken refuge; never let me be put to shame...turn your ear to me, come*



*quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.....I will be glad and rejoice in your love for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.....be merciful to me*

*O Lord for I am in distress, my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.....but I trust in you, O Lord, I say you are my God, my times are in your hands.....how great is your goodness which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of humanity on those who take refuge in you....."*

I'm not a great believer in bible 'lucky dip', but I was just blown away by this, it was as if God was saying, "I know what you are going through, and I am with you, don't be scared,

everything will be OK". And the amazing thing was, that in the following few days, the readings from the lectionary seemed as if they had been specially chosen for me. Things have been tough, but I am so thankful for the reality of God's presence over the past few weeks.

Work has been a challenge; I have had to learn new practical skills, and resurrect old ones (from my days as a junior hospital doctor). I have had to learn a lot about HIV and TB, and also get used to the different systems and structures here. Thankfully, everyone in the hospital has been very supportive, so I have rarely felt out on a limb. I feel much more confident now at work, but the on calls are still stressful, as I have to cover the whole hospital and deal with everything that comes in through casualty. This can vary from stab wounds, to strokes, to snake bites!

Work aside, I have managed to explore the local area a bit, and am really looking forward to Mikee's visit next week, during which we will be able to see a bit more of this beautiful country, including a visit to a game park, and a journey up into the mountains bordering the Kingdom of Lesotho.



Mikee with Jonny

My time here now seems to be passing quickly, and I am looking forward to a happy re-union with you all in January!



The scenic landscape

With much love, Jonny



Making friends



and having a laugh

## So actually what does go on at our Scarborough Gathering???

### Marianne shares with us all

Scarborough MCC Gathering meets once a month at Westborough Methodist Church in Scarborough...handy for the train station!

Our time together begins at 4.30 pm with a time of worship. This can take many forms as we take it in turns to lead the worship time. Sometimes it is a quiet time of reflection, sometimes based on music or poetry, sometimes following a template or pattern sometimes not...it all depends on the leader. This has the blessing that we never quite know what to expect, except that it will be a chance to be open to the working of God in our lives and an opportunity for shared prayer.

Without ending our 'service' we move to the end of the room and have a shared meal together, ending with a 'thanksgiving' from each of us for something which we have experienced recently and then we hold hands around the table and say the Grace as a blessing to each other.

We always welcome visitors, so if any of Newcastle MCC are having a day in Scarborough, we would love to see you!

love Marianne



Charlotte's World of Books



**“Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.” ~Groucho Marx**

Did you know MCC Newcastle has a library? Its current home is one of the big church cupboards at the back of the hall and it contains a good collection of fiction, non fiction, commentaries, and different versions of the bible, and, of course, a good chunk of queer theology! Now, if you're like me, and find the overwhelming array of Christian or spiritual books available to be slightly disconcerting; or if you would like some recommendations to kick-start your reading, then this column is here to help you. I, commit to sitting down every month with a different book and a big pile of chocolate (provided for by generous donations to MCC newsletter, labelled 'Chocolate Money', cash and cheques accepted, sadly no credit cards (smile!)), to sift through the contents of the MCC library- as well as whatever grabs my fancy on Amazon- to bring you the best Christian writing out there.



Why books? Although we are bombarded with visual culture (television and cinema), and this can seem like an easier option, there is nothing that can touch you like a good book can. And, with CD versions of many books available, there is really no excuse for not giving it a go. A book allows you to use your imagination, can open up new worlds of thought, be a source of comfort and inspiration, and make you laugh. It can make you see truths you have never considered, or express those you already have lurking in the back of your mind.

I will start by reviewing the number one Christian best seller of the year, 'The Shack' by William P Young for next month's newsletter. If anyone has any suggestions of books they would like me to review for future columns then they can get in contact by emailing the editor on [newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk) .

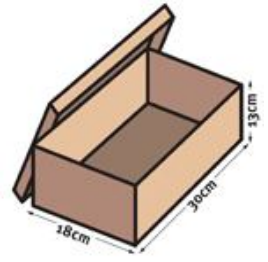
Don't forget to send the chocolate cheques!

By Charlotte N



## Operation Christmas Child 2008

As many of you may have heard at church, MCC Newcastle will be taking part in Operation Christmas Child this year, but some people will ask what is it all about? Operation



Christmas Child is about giving some of the worlds poorest and most deprived children a gift and a message of hope and love at Christmas time. The children these gifts will go to will often be victims of war, poverty, famine, disease and natural disaster.



### What Kind of Gift?

The gift of hope and love comes in the form of a Shoe Box carefully filled with toys, sweets, hats, gloves, pens, crayons and small things that would make a child smile. MCC Newcastle will be collecting in both completed shoe boxes by you or, individual items you would like to be put into a shoe box for Operation Christmas Child. We appreciate everyone has a different pocket and we would love everyone to be involved. There are leaflets available on a table at the back of church by the serving hatch telling you all about how to make up a box and what items would be suitable to be put in.



These shoe boxes will hand delivered to each child, where appropriate and in culturally sensitive ways, a booklet of bible stories will also be made available to each child, which tells them the true meaning of Christmas – the gift of baby Jesus Gods son. This year our boxes will be taken personally by me Abby to the Operation Christmas Child Warehouse in Byker. The countries this warehouse will be delivering to will be Belarus, Serbia, Ukraine and Romania. These are all very cold countries so please bare this in mind. If you would like to see personally that your shoe box start its journey, we will be going to the Warehouse to deliver the boxes and help out. If you have any further questions please see Abby for more details. Here are some important dates to remember below:

\* Last Collection Date for Boxes: Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2008.

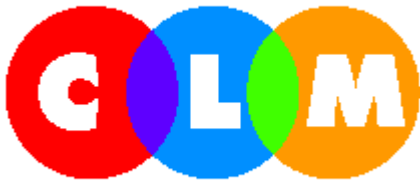
\* Delivery of Boxes and Help Out: Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2008 10am

**NEWS FLASH!!!! WE NEED LOTS OF SHOE BOXES WITH SEPARATE LIDS  
PLEASE GET HUNTING!**

Please get shopping, box wrapping and toy packing as you can bring hope and a smile to some of the world's most vulnerable children.



## CREATING A LIFE



## THAT MATTERS

**Creating a Life that Matters** is all about relationships: intentional, authentic relationships - with the Sacred, our Self, and our Passion. CLM transforms lives and inspires people to more directed, clear, passionate involvement in their life and in the life of the world, through the support of their local MCC.

**The Sacred:** While many would agree that relationship with the Sacred is the fundamental beginning of all faith paths, this transforming experience is often lost when we exchange our spiritual vitality for empty religious practices. In the six sessions of Rediscovering Relationship with the Sacred, we explore what it means to be transformed by an encounter with the Sacred, and rediscover loving God with heart, soul and mind.

**My Self:** We expend time, effort and money seeking to understand who we are. In Rediscovering Relationship with My Self, we explore some of the influences that have shaped us, and investigate ways to create a self we will want to live with, others will want to relate to, and God will be able to use in the service of all that is Sacred.

**My Passion:** Our passions make us most aware of our personal power, energy and joy. Many internal and external factors influence how successfully we manifest these passions in our lives. In the six sessions of Rediscovering Relationship with My Passion, we explore ways to manage those factors, and discover what gives us power, energy and joy as we serve the Sacred through church.

MCC Newcastle will be running **Creating a Life that Matters** on **Thursday** evenings, starting 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008 with a meal and introductory session.

### Course Information

The course is delivered as three modules, each of six weeks. There is an additional introductory session at the start of the course. **Each session will run from 7pm – 9.15pm.**

Course dates are:

**Rediscovering the Sacred:** 20<sup>th</sup> November, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008, 8<sup>th</sup> January, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009.

**Rediscovering your Self:** 26<sup>th</sup> February, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009.

**Rediscovering your Passion:** 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, June 2009.

#### Can I just do one module?

No. Each module adds to the next one, so you need to enrol for the whole course.

#### I will find it difficult to pay the whole course fee at once

It is possible to pay in instalments if you need to, but it is better if you can pay in one go if you are able to. See Katie Marsh for more information on paying by instalments.

#### Are there any pre-requirements for coming on the course?

No, you just need to be willing to make the commitment to take part.

#### How do I book?

Complete a booking form available at church or from Cecilia via email, and give it to John or Cecilia with payment for the course, or post to

MCC Newcastle, c/o St. James United Reformed Church  
Northumberland Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JF

## Pastor's Report – October 2008



I started my Spiritual Director's course at Ushaw College this month. A Spiritual Director or Faith Companion is someone that walks alongside us in our faith journey, helping us to reflect on our lives and our relationship with God. It is great to be with a group of people from many different church backgrounds, all learning how to serve others better through this ministry. I hope that as I learn more about this important part of being a pastor, I will be able to serve you better.

The Wilderness People book launch was the most amazing experience. It was wonderful to greet people from our community, as well as seeing so many of our church family gathered together to celebrate who we are. Huge thanks go to Helen Berry and her team who produced the book, and to Mazi Hoseini for his fantastic art exhibition. I will present a copy of Wilderness People to the Moderator of Metropolitan Community Churches, Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, and to our Regional Elder, Rev. Elder Glenna Shepherd, at the regional conference in Birmingham this month.

It is always a joy to teach the Enquirers and Membership classes. It gives me a chance to reconnect with the amazing story of how Rev. Troy Perry was called to start Metropolitan Community Churches, our early struggles as a denomination and how MCC Newcastle continues to live out of the mission of sharing God's inclusive love. It is heartening to hear how people value being part of our faith community, the questions that they have and their willingness to make a commitment to this congregation. Our membership service will be on **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November**, so come ready to celebrate!!

I am still meeting with people individually to discuss the spiritual gifts survey. If you did not complete a survey and would like to do so, please let me know. As a result of the ministry fair that we held, several people expressed an interest in reading during the worship services and we now have the beginnings of a readers' rota! Thank you to everyone who has offered to be part of this. It is encouraging to have more people getting involved in different aspects of church life.

The Creating a Life that Matters course will be a new adventure for MCC Newcastle. We are only the second church in the UK to offer this course. MCC Edinburgh started the course in October and we will be liaising with our colleagues there to share ideas. John Lawson and I will be leading the course and we are both looking forward to it. We have already received several booking forms and expect to receive others this week. Places are limited, so get those forms in!!

I have now been in post for a year as the Pastor of MCC Newcastle. The time has gone so quickly, it is hard to imagine where the year has gone! In other ways though, I seem to have been here a long time and almost can't remember what I did before. This has certainly been a year of change for all of us. Change always brings loss, even when the change is a positive one, so it is natural that we will think back to the times BP (Before Pastor) and miss some aspects of our faith journey together.

As we go forward together, we are growing as a congregation, growing in faith, maturity, generosity and in number. Each day brings new opportunities for me to learn and grow as a pastor. Over this past year, I have made some mistakes and still have much to learn. We have also achieved a great deal together and it has been one of the most exciting and joy filled years in ministry that I have ever had!

I remain delighted and honoured to serve each of you. Thank you for your prayers, support, encouragement, patience and wisdom in this first year. God has so many blessings in store for us, and we have so much to offer our community..... here's to the next year!

God bless



## Some of our Regular Activities at MCC Newcastle

### **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 also meets in **Sunderland** on the **2nd and 3rd Wednesday** of every month, 5pm - 7pm at Age Concern Sunderland.

### **The Good Book Club**

Many people at MCC used to know their bible well, but it has been a while since they did some bible study, often because they left their original church home. The GBC is a chance to re-acquaint yourself with the Bible and surprise yourself with what you remember!

### **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.

### **Useful Contacts**

Abby Brown	Social Team	social@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Ian Martin	Pastoral Care	pastoralcare@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Claire Liebig Denham	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	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](http://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.