

**Wilderness People
Real Life Stories from MCC Newcastle!**



Helen Berry, Editor of 'Wilderness People', writes....

Back in September last year, you may remember we launched a project to gather stories from the congregation at MCC Newcastle as part of our 'Living History' month. You may have been wondering what happened next! I had an amazing response, and spent nearly all of November taping one-to-one interviews with over twenty volunteers. This resulted in over thirty hours of oral history on tape. In the spring, I employed a very wonderful assistant who typed out every single word – it took her nearly 100 hours! Since May, I've been editing the result – a 200-page document (it was about 180,000 words). I've pulled together each story into a shorter form that's easier to read –without, I hope, altering the main themes of the precious tales that people told me.

I am just blown away by the amazing things I have heard and which will be in the book that is about to be printed. Just to give you a little taste of what's to come, who knew that so much cottaging went on among miners in pit villages in the 1940s? Or where the gay pubs were in Newcastle in the 1950s while homosexuality was still illegal? Just how many of our members have been thrown out of other churches, or had people pray to change their sexual orientation during the 1970s and 80s? And how have people come to terms as they grew up and found about their sexuality and spirituality? The stories are funny, moving, incredibly brave and spiritually uplifting. There are tales of bullying and violence, of being rejected by family and friends, but also of finding reconciliation, love and healing. My most senior interviewee was 75, the youngest is 21. There are contributions by women and men of all sexualities and backgrounds – including five different nationalities. I knew we were a diverse community, but the stories really show just how true this is. There's also the story of how MCC Newcastle was founded, and how it has grown since the early 1990s to the thriving, growing community it is today.

I'm really delighted this has captured so many people's imaginations, and that a lasting record of God's work through our community will now be on record. I've also received brilliant support from my MCC friends, so a massive 'thank you' to everyone, particularly those people who gave up their time to be interviewed.

**All Your Diary
Dates for
September**

**Pastor's Report
for the month**

**Bible Feature
"What a friend you
have in Jesus"**

**Get ready for
Regional
Conference!**

**Updates from our
Justice work**

**SuperGay
Weekender Info**

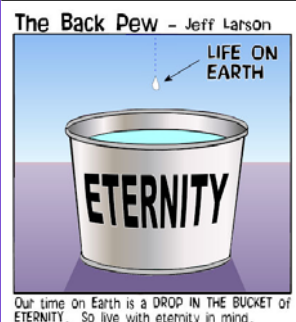
**Important
Notice of
Special
Congregational
Meeting**

INVITATION TO A PARTY AND BOOK LAUNCH

The 'Wilderness People' book launch will be held on **Sunday October 12th** after the evening service, which coincides with the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

All are very welcome – there will be a party with free refreshments and free copies of the book for those who attend.

There will also be an exhibition of art and memories!





Bible Feature



What a Friend We Have in Jesus

I know it is a famous hymn sang commonly by children but, as the saying goes; children usually say the simple but honest and true things. I believe you really do have a best friend in Jesus.

One of my all time favourite Christian groups is a band called Delirious. They sing a song just about this very theme. The lyrics go:-

***What a friend I've found
More faithful than a brother
I have felt your touch
More intimate than lovers
Jesus...Jesus...friend forever.***

In the Gospel Jesus often referred to his disciples and followers as friends. In *Luke Ch 22 V: 21* during the last supper He says to the disciples “*But here at this table, sitting amongst us as a friend, is the person who will betray me.*” Jesus even regarded Judas as a friend when the actual betrayal was taking place; *Matthew Ch 26 V.50* “*my friend, go ahead and do what you have to do.*”

Jesus describes the present generation to John in *Matthew Ch 11 V. 19* “*...and I, the Son of Man, feast and drink and say I am a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of the worst kind of sinners ! But wisdom is shown to be right by what results from it.*”

Most importantly, in *John Ch 15 V. 12-16*; “*I command you to love each another in the same way that I love you. And the here is how to measure it - the greatest love is shown by people who lay down their lives for their friends. You are my friends if you obey me. I no longer call you servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything that God told me.*”

Wow ! Imagine Jesus as your best friend !

Well, not only can you be Jesus' friend, but Jesus is pleading you to be best friends. Isn't that awesome! Imagine you have a friend who is there for you twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days of the year. A friend who is prepared to laugh with you when times are good yet, also prepared to give total commitment to you when things go horribly wrong, times when you are devastated and so down you think you are never going to come back up again. A friend that understands you so well that they know instinctively what you are going to say or do, even before you do. Flipping hec...what a mate that would be !

I don't know a person on earth that would turn down a friendship like that....do you ? And what is more, I don't know another person that can offer you a friendship like that. Hang on to your bibles folks...oh yes I do... Jesus invites you to be His friend, to be bosom buddies, to share your life with Him. So I urge you to take up the challenge today and make a life long friend with Jesus. I did and I've never regretted one moment of it. You could be best friends with Jesus too.

Well what are you waiting for...do it now...be it now....be best friends with Jesus !



***What a hope I've found
More faithful than a mother
It would break my heart
To ever loose each other
Jesus...Jesus...Jesus...friend forever.***

Notice Sheet for September 2008

Every Sunday—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 2 nd Sept 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison's home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Friday 5 th Sept 8pm	Monthly Taize service	St. James Church
Saturday 6 th Sept 11.00am	Dog Walk - Hawthorn Dene – Hawthorn near Easington	See Abby for more details or email social@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Saturday 6 th Sept 2 – 4pm	Tea with Dorothy – a cuppa and company	Martha and Mary café, Chillingham Road, Heaton, Newcastle. See Eric for more info.
Sunday 7 th Sept – after service	Squash – relax at our monthly social time	Mikee and Jonny's home, Heaton. Newcastle. See Mikee for more info.
Tuesday 9 th Sept 7.30pm	Spiritual Gifts Dinner Party – share a meal and find out more about your spiritual gifts!	Mikee and Jonny's home, Heaton. Newcastle. See Cecilia for more info.
Wed 10 th Sept 5pm – 7pm	New!! Tea with Dorothy - Sunderland	Age Concern, Sunderland. See Roger for more info.
Wed 10 th Sept 7.30pm	"The Good Book Club" – refresher Bible classes	Continuing our journey through Acts. Church office, St. James URC
Friday 12 th – Saturday 13 th 10am – 4pm	Heritage Open Days – St. James URC	MCCN and other congregations here will have a display. St James Church
Friday 12 th – Sunday 14 th	Middlesbrough's Supergay Weekender	Enjoy the parade, staff the church stall, have fun.
Sunday 14 th Sept 4.30pm	Scarborough group meets	Worship and fellowship meal, Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough
Sunday 14 th Sept – after service	MCCN Ministry Fair	Find out more about the church's ministries!
Tuesday 16 th Sept 7.30pm	Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together	Alison's home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info.
Wed 10 th Sept 5pm – 7pm	New!! Tea with Dorothy - Sunderland	Age Concern, Sunderland. See Roger for more info.
Monday 15 th – Friday 19 th Sept	Cecilia on leave	
Saturday 20 th Sept 2pm	Tea with Dorothy outing. National Glass Centre, Liberty Way, Sunderland	10 minute walk from St. Peter's Metro station) Free entry. See Roger for more info.
Sunday 21 st Sept tbc	Pink Picnic – Leazes Park, Newcastle	See Abby for more details or email social@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Wed 1 st Oct 7.30pm	"The Good Book Club" – refresher Bible classes	Continuing our journey through Acts. Church office, St. James URC
Friday 3 rd Oct 8pm	Monthly Taize service	St. James Church
Visit our website for updates and amendments throughout the month. www.mccnewcastle.org.uk		
<p><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>

Where is Katie ? Read on and You Will Find Out...

**“I am not what I ought to be,
I am not what I want to be,
I am not what I hope to be
but by the grace of God
I am not what I was.”**

*Rev John Newton author of Amazing Grace
and former Slave Trader.*

I came across this quote whilst I was away on Summer School, last month, with the North East Oecumenical Course (NEOC), it really spoke to me on a variety of levels. Summer School was scarily entitled “The Evangelical Revival in the 18th Century” and we were based in Bristol but with lots of field visits (quite literally, as it was at this time the likes of the Wesley brothers started to actually preach outside in fields and town squares – look out Grey’s Monument, here I come!!). There was a lot of emphasis on social justice, with the anti-slavery movement being key at this time, and the beginning of Sunday Schools to teach working-class children to read. If you would like to know more, get in touch, I can talk about all sorts of strange and wonderful things from that period now.

As some of you may know I have had ‘In-Care’ status with MCC since attending the Readiness to Enter Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat last year. This means that I have a Ministry Action Plan which covers all of the areas of formation, education and practical theology I need to undertake to be in a position to become an ordained person within the denomination.

NEOC is just one part of this process, but a very intense part!! This year I will be doing two years’ worth of academic study into one year as the course will close August 2009. This will be challenging but enjoyable. Alongside this (2 night classes a week for the next year) I commence my placement for 10 months at the end of August. I am

absolutely delighted to have been selected to join the Chaplaincy team for the 3 hospitals in Newcastle. I will be on placement for about 12 hours a week

Including Sundays. This is a whole new experience for me despite being civilly partnered to a medic!!!

NEOC requires that I attend 6 residential weekends a year, the workshops for this year look particularly good and I look forward to sharing new best practice in a variety of ministerial areas with MCC Newcastle. I also meet monthly with Cecilia as my formational supervisor and hope to begin my candidacy at another MCC about this time next year.

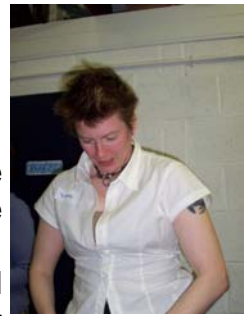
With all of these commitments and the expected arrival of our first child in November, I am guessing that I might not be around MCC Newcastle an awful lot over the next few months, but out of sight is not out of mind. I continue to value all of the prayers, lovely emails and communications that people have send over the last few months. Likewise I continue to pray for the life, growth and ministry of all of you at MCC Newcastle.

Please stay in touch !

With love and blessings,

Katie Harris

Clergy Student





Out and Proud!

There's plenty going on in Middlesbrough from Friday 12th to Sunday 14th September at the **SuperGay Weekender!**

The two main events on Saturday are the march and the Family

Fun Picnic. MCC Newcastle will be active on both, so come and join us!

We will gather for the march from 11am at Exchange Square, near the station and we will start marching at 11.45am approx! The Family Fun Picnic will be in Centre Square from 12pm - 3pm, and we will have a stall there.

Come along and be a visible Angel of the North!

If you would like more information, contact Claire Denham or John Lawson.

News Update..News Update...

Many people at MCC Newcastle gave generously towards the cost of medical treatment for Rev. Nokuthula Dhladhla, of Hope and Unity MCC, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The report from the Therapy Manager from where Nokuthula received her treatment stated that Nokuthula had not been able to walk for the previous six months and had trouble even being able to wash or dress herself without assistance. Since the operation to remove the tumour in her spine, she has made excellent progress in her physiotherapy.

Nokuthula is now able to wash and dress, she can also walk with assistance. The report concludes

She will make a very good recovery with ongoing physiotherapy and should be able to walk with the minimal assistance of a walking stick within 4-6 weeks.

Thank you for your generosity and your continued prayer support!

News Update..News Update...

Prossy, the Ugandan woman, who is being supported by MCC Manchester, has now been to court for her appeal against deportation. Over 4000 people, including people at MCCN and the North East, signed a petition to ask the British Government to re-consider its decision to send Prossy back to Uganda, where she has already been tortured for being a lesbian. The judge now has 8 days to make her decision and will then inform the Home Office. Prossy will then be told of the decision. Please keep Prossy and other asylum seekers in your prayers.

'WILDERNESS PEOPLE' EXHIBITION - WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We are hoping to hold an exhibition on the theme of 'Wilderness People' which will be displayed at the book launch and future MCC events.

We need your creative skills! Do you have any photos that you would like to contribute to the 'Wilderness People' exhibition? These can be just photos of you, your friends, family, partner – whatever. It might show a party, a church event, a civil partnership or Blessing. It could show just you, or you and someone special in your life. We want to put together a collage of images from our MCC congregation to help celebrate our diversity. It doesn't matter how old you are now – you are part of our congregation's 'Living History'.

Alternatively, you may be inspired to contribute a picture, photo or poem – anything – on the theme of 'Wilderness People'. The title refers to Jesus' time in the wilderness (Matthew ch. 4 vv. 1-11) – a place where he wandered alone, outside of society, but where he discovered his mission and future direction. The wilderness can be a place of solitude and desolation, but also one of richness, diversity and beauty.

If you would like to submit a photo or artwork for the exhibition, **please write your name and a contact address** on the back so we can return it to you afterwards. Also, you might like to add a short caption or explanation to accompany the image. What does the photo show? When was it taken? If it is a painting or drawing, does it have a title? What inspired you to create it? If you would prefer, you do not have to add your real name to the photo or artwork. Please hand in any contributions to the exhibition to a member of the leadership team at MCC.

Thank you!

We have received an anonymous donation towards the cost of producing the newsletter.

Thank you, dear reader, whoever you are, for this most thoughtful gift!



Regional Conference 2008

November 6th-9th, Birmingham, UK

In a couple of months time, we have the opportunity to meet together with other MCCers from all over Europe, Africa, and the rest of the world. Regional Conference only takes place every 3 years, and is rarely in the UK, so this is a unique chance! You can enjoy different styles of worship, workshops covering subjects from “Unleashing your inner activist” to “Meditation as spiritual practice” to “How to run an effective board”, and of course, fellowship with many other folk from all over the region.

The cost of registration for the conference is £61 (if booked before the beginning of October). There is a hotel linked to conference with rooms for £61 per night, though you can stay elsewhere in Birmingham if you want to. Travel costs will depend how many of us go - please let me know if you are planning to go - if there are enough of us, we may hire a minibus; otherwise, we may be able to organise lift sharing.

This will be a fantastic event and I encourage as many people as possible to go. I know that every conference I have been to before has been life changing!

For further information and registration forms, see the MCC denomination website www.mccchurch.org and click on the link for “Region 4 Conference”. For more details, or if you don't have internet access, speak to Emily or Cecilia.

Emily Watson - Lay Delegate

ALTERNATE LAY DELEGATE ELECTION

Part of the Regional Conference is business, that is, voting on issues that affect the whole Fellowship. As your Lay Delegate, it is my role to carry the vote for MCC Newcastle, but as our baby is due at the beginning of November, I will not be able to attend the conference. This means we need to elect an alternate Lay Delegate to carry the vote. To stand for the position you need to be a member in good standing of MCC Newcastle. The election will be on **Sunday 28th September** after the service, and all members in good standing can vote for their choice of Alternate Lay Delegate. Nominations need to be with Alison, Church Secretary, by 8pm on Sunday 14th September. For further information about what the role entails, and for nomination slips, please speak to Emily or Alison.

Pastor's Report – August 2008



Have you ever carried an idea in your head for a long time? Isn't it exciting when your idea finally gets "born"! I first shared the idea of us becoming "Angels of the North" on our leadership day, back in January. It has been wonderful to see how we have been able to incorporate this theme into our worship and other activities. Thank you to everyone who has been wearing the rainbow different colours for each worship service. It really adds colour and fun to our services. Thank you too, to Andy, who has created the banners for each service, and to Claire and Annette, Alison and Traci, and Mikee, Hannelie and Charlotte who are all hosts for our Spiritual Gifts meals.

So far, 16 different people have come to these SG parties, and we still have the one in Heaton to go! If you are not able to get to this, but would like to complete a Spiritual Gift survey, then please talk to me and I will get one to you.

Remember, whether you have completed a survey or not, you can still participate in the ministry of MCC Newcastle. On Sunday 14th September, we have our ministry fair after worship. This will be your chance to chat a little more with leaders of our different ministry areas and see where you might like to get involved.

Finding and using our spiritual gifts is all about growing spiritually. One of my great passions is to help people to grow. In order for me to do this better, I am starting a part time Spiritual Direction course at Ushaw College in October for one year. A Spiritual Director, or Faith Companion as some people describe it, is someone who journeys alongside you in your spiritual life, helping you to reflect on how your faith is developing or changing as you go through everyday life. I hope that by learning from this course, I will be able to better support you as you learn more about yourself and God. As some of you know, I am now spending the first Friday of every month as a retreat day. During this time, I meet with my Spiritual Director and spend the day focussing on my own spiritual journey.

As well as looking inwards, it is important that we are visible and present in our community. MCCers are active in different groups and organisations across the NE. I attend the monthly LGBT Issues Network in Newcastle, where LGBT workers from a variety of organisations gather and discuss a variety of issues. It was this group that developed the very successful IDAHO event in May. (International Day Against Homophobia). This group is also looking at ways of commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day in January. I also have a meeting arranged with the organiser of HMD to see how MCCN can specifically get involved. I continue to be involved in the steering group for developing an LGBT community centre in Newcastle. This is a very exciting project, but will take time, as we need to have a sound business plan, and then raise the cash!!

Three more exciting outreach opportunities are coming up. You will have already read Helen Berry's article about our book – Wilderness People. This is an amazing opportunity to reach out to so many people that we will perhaps never meet. Thank you to Helen Berry for all her many hours spent on this! Closer to home, we have a new branch of Tea with Dorothy starting in Sunderland. Congratulations to Roger Chapman, who has developed a partnership with Age Concern to offer social space for older LGBT folk twice a month. Finally, we also have our SuperGay Weekender in Middlesbrough. John Lawson and Claire Denham did a marvellous job in leading the team for Newcastle Pride; please support them in Middlesbrough too!

Finally, thank you to everyone for your kind words, generous gifts and beautiful cards for Monica's and my house blessing and warming. It was lovely to welcome you into our home.

God bless

Pinkie

Are you interested in finding out more about MCC Newcastle and Metropolitan Community Church across the world?

Look out for Enquirers class details coming up soon.

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 outings are organised by Roger every month too. TWD is also starting in Sunderland on the 2nd and 3rd Wednesday of every month, 5pm - 7pm at Age Concern Sunderland.

1st Sunday of every month - The Squash!

This is a social gathering at Mikee and Jonny's home in Heaton, Newcastle. We all squash into their house, chat, have a cuppa or a glass and usually eat a bit of pizza! All welcome!

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
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Cecilia Eggleston	Pastor	pastor@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Helen Fenwick	Board Member	contact@mccnewcastle.org.uk
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John Lawson	Outreach Tees/Welcome Team	welcome@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Andy Lumsden	Board Member	contact@mccnewcastle.org.uk
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Ian Martin	Pastoral Care	pastoralcare@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Michael Wardle	Worship Rota	worship@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Emily Watson	Lay Delegate	laydelegate@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Prayer requests		prayer@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Counselling Team		counselling@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Stewardship		stewardship@mccnewcastle.org.uk
Web		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.