

**Onward Christian LGBT People,
Marching for History and God !**

On Saturday 12th July history was made by the LGBT folk of the North East, as we proudly marched through the city centre of Newcastle for the first time EVER !

If you were on the March...well done, you are a history maker ! We showed the Saturday shoppers that Northern Pride is an exciting, vibrant Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender festival for the North East. Representatives of the LGBT communities from across the region came together to ensure that we had a Pride celebration that represented and celebrated our diversity. It certainly did that !

Northern Pride may well have taken a rest for some years but be assured, it came back with vengeance in 2008. We had a new fantastic venue in Leazes Park surrounded by grass, trees, a duck pond, beautiful Victorian statues and structures and, of course, a lot of rainbow colours. We had over 35 stalls from a variety of causes including Gay Police, Probation, fire service (chip pan demonstration n' all) to support groups like Arch, Parents Enquiry, as well as a bar, bouncy castle, food, drink and live music from the stage.

Ah yes, and there was even a stall promoting MCC Newcastle ! John and I had been there at 10 am setting up the stall with rainbow ribbon, pamphlets, stickers, T-shirts, cards, lollipops and even magnets. We played Christian music and generally give a sense of a 'feel good factor' about being Gay and Christian. Eric (wearing a fluffy halo), handed out magnets to those who had a fridge, stickers to those who admitted to being gay and the lollipops to anyone who approached the stall ! John's labyrinth was amazing ! And people even left prayers.

On a serious note, we did speak to some people who weren't aware we even existed, answered questions from those that were curious, and gave general information to those that asked for it. In particular, one young Catholic lad approached Eric to ask him how you could be both Gay and Christian ? Eric simply asked him if he was Gay to which the young man replied yes. He then asked him if he was Catholic to which he again replied yes. There you go then, you can be both Christian and Gay ! Eric's simplicity won the day.

My hope is that we changed lives on that day and, if we only changed one, I rejoice. But I also rejoice that God enabled us to be there to share God's message of love and hope with the people of the North East. If you were to ask me the highlights of the day it has got to be the march. Walking beside Cecilia and Ernie who carried our flag with *pride*. Shouting for all I was worth about being Gay and Christian, for MCC and being a history maker for our Lord. Oh yeah, and Cecilia happily posing to have her photograph taken with two members of the crowd ! Just Christians who happen to be Gay and proud of it ! Wouldn't have missed for the world. We get the chance to do it all again on Teesside in September. Any helping angels would be most welcome.

Claire Liebzig-Denham



**All Your Diary
Dates for
August**

**Pastor's Report
for the month**

**Jonny sets off for
his
missionary work
in Africa**

**Abby's Youth
Ministry in
Dominican
Republic**

**Bible Feature; All
You Need is Love**

**Roger- The
experience of Art
& God at Whitley
Bay**



**John & Monica at
pride**



**Mikee leading our
pride service**



Bible Feature



All You Need is Love

As the famous Beatles song says... 'love is all you need' I suppose it depends in which context it is applied. Love certainly wouldn't be all you needed if you required life saving major surgery. A competent surgeon would be the best thing at that time (as I well know !).

By and large LOVE is the most important ethos the world can have to in order to create a little bit of heaven on earth.

Just image how different the our world would be if everyone:-

- ◆ **LOVED** thy neighbour
- ◆ Thy Homeless neighbour
- ◆ Thy Muslim neighbour
- ◆ Thy Black neighbour
- ◆ Thy Gay neighbour
- ◆ The White neighbour
- ◆ Thy Jewish neighbour
- ◆ Thy Transgendered neighbour
- ◆ Thy Christian neighbour
- ◆ Thy Atheist neighbour
- ◆ Thy Racist neighbour
- ◆ Thy Addicted neighbour

In fact **LOVED** everyone just as God made them or they turned out to be !

Well it will come as no surprise at all to be told that Jesus taught us to do just that....

In *Matthew Chapter 22 Verse 37* Jesus taught us the first and greatest commandment is that "*You must love the Lord your God with all heart, all your soul, and all your mind*". In *Verse 39* Our Lord taught the second is of equal importance; '*Love your neighbour as yourself*'. Mark also cites Jesus teaching the same in *Chapter 12 Verses 29-31*

Now then, you must admit that Jesus was the ultimately supreme teacher of all times, so if Jesus teaches it, well it must be true. More importantly , it must be followed. Job sorted. We just have to **love** God the most and then your neighbours.

However, we all know it is not as simple as that. People hate, people hurt each other, people have prejudices and some people just have to be right all of the time (even when you might take a totally different viewpoint). I agree, it is not a perfect world by any means, and if we are honest with ourselves, you are most unlikely to be perfect too. I know I am certainly not !

Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians is entitled 'Love is the Greatest' and in that short chapter Paul explains to the church in Corinth what **love** is all about. If you haven't read it you really should get your bible out and give it some serious thought (actually, I would recommend those that are familiar with it to do so again).

I accept it is difficult to **love** some people and I'm no angel where this is concerned. My mother's neighbour had made her life hell for many years and after a particularly horrible incident which I witnessed, I just couldn't stand to see my Mam upset any longer. I lost my temper and told her a few home truths about her behaviour. As you can imagine there were some choice words said. During my tirade, the neighbour said to me "I thought you were supposed to be a Christian" I responded, yes I am but, even Jesus lost His temper when He saw injustice !

I've done many things I regret in my life, as I'm sure you have. I certainly didn't **love** my neighbour on that day and I have to admit, I do recall the incident every now and then with remorse. However, I did do was confess to God and asked for forgiveness. I got that forgiveness, learnt and hopefully moved on to love again and harder.

Claire

Diary Dates for August 2008

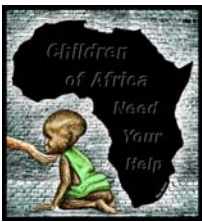
Every Sunday—service at 6.30pm St James URC Church Hall
For further details of any events below please phone/text 07770 543407
or email admin@mccnewcastle.org.uk

Not just a Sunday church

| Date/Time | Event | Other information |
|---|---|---|
| Friday 1 st August 8pm | Monthly Taize service | St. James Church |
| Saturday 2 nd August 10.30am | Dog Walk - Seaham | Meet at Tonia's Shack on the sea front. See Abby for more details or email social@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Saturday 2 nd August 2 – 4pm | Tea with Dorothy – a cuppa and company | Martha and Mary café, Chillingham Road, Heaton, Newcastle. See Eric for more info. |
| Tuesday 5 th August 7.30pm | Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together | Alison's home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info. |
| Wed 6 th August 7.30pm | “The Good Book Club” – refresher Bible classes | Acts 1 – 10. Church office, St. James URC |
| Friday 8 th August 7.00pm | Dominican Republic Evening | St James Church – see Abby for more details |
| Sunday 12 th August 4.30pm | Scarborough group meets | Worship and fellowship meal, Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough |
| Thursday 14 th August 7.30pm | The Singing Kettle – hymn singing and tea/coffee | Emily's home at Heaton, Newcastle |
| Saturday 16 th August 11am | Kite and Beach Day, Saltburn – a church fun day by the seaside | Meet by the pier. See Abby for more details or email social@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Saturday 16 th August 2pm | Tea with Dorothy Outing | Arbeia Roman Fort, South Shields Meeting at the fort 2pm |
| Mon 18 th August 7.30pm | Spiritual Gifts Party. Share a meal and find out more about your spiritual gifts! | Claire and Annette's home in Thornaby. See Cecilia for more info. |
| Tuesday 19 th August 7.30pm | Prayer Party – a chance to gather in prayer together | Alison's home, Central Newcastle. See Alison for more info. |
| Wed 20 th August 12.30pm | Spiritual Gifts lunch party. Share a meal and find out more about your spiritual gifts! | Katie and Ruth's home in Sunderland. See Cecilia for more info. |
| Friday 22 nd – Monday 25 th | Greenbelt Christian Festival | If you would like to pitch your tent with others from MCC Newcastle, let Mikee know |
| Thursday 28 th August 7.30pm | The Singing Kettle – hymn singing and tea/coffee | Emily's home at Heaton, Newcastle |
| Saturday 30 th August 12.30pm - 4.30pm | House blessing and BBQ | Cecilia and Monica's home, Walkergate, Newcastle |
| 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 |

Visit our website for updates and amendments throughout the month. www.mccnewcastle.org.uk

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| <p><u>NEW POSTAL ADDRESS</u> 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> |
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“O still, small voice of calm”

As most of you probably know, I am, as you read this, hopefully in South Africa. I thought it would be good to write a short article in the newsletter to explain a little bit about what I will be doing there and why I’m leaving my partner, friends, church, family and dog behind for six long months!

For a long time now I have had a niggling thought in my mind that I should go and work somewhere in Africa. This thought has actually been present for a few years, but I had, up until quite recently, been able to ignore this. Over the past couple of years, this thought has become much more persistent and difficult to ignore. I tried to logically reason why this thought should be there, but I couldn’t really explain it.

Of course, one explanation was that this could be the ‘voice’ of God, but I tried to dismiss this; why on earth would God want me to leave everything here and go to Africa? As time went on I was getting more and more frustrated that this thought just wouldn’t go away and was with me every day – especially when walking the dog in the mornings.

Eventually, I decided that maybe it would be a good thing to try and explore this a bit further. Very shortly after I made this decision, I saw an article in a medical journal about an organisation called the Rural Health Initiative (RHI) which is an agency recruiting UK doctors to very understaffed areas of South Africa. They were keen to have recruit GPs and were happy to arrange posts for just 6 months. I knew that I was entitled to a period of sabbatical leave from my current job, so this all seemed to slot into place perfectly.

After further discussion with RHI, I decided to bite the bullet and do this. As soon as this decision was made the

thought completely disappeared from my mind and hasn’t been there since!

Having had time to reflect on this further, I now feel certain that I was actually being called by God to go and work in South Africa. It reminds of some words from a familiar hymn;

*“Breathe through the hearts of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind and
fire,
O still, small voice of calm”*

Despite the business of my life, and my stubbornness, God’s small but persistent voice has finally got through to me!

The anticipation of this venture has been associated with a certain amount of anxiety and sadness in being separated from my loved ones, but I take reassurance in remembering (as Ernie reminded me a few weeks ago), that God will be beside me every step of the way, and that ‘underneath, are the everlasting arms’.

Jonny

I am sure I speak for everyone knows Jonny, whether that be family, friends or brothers and sisters at MCC Newcastle. We wish you all the luck in the world. God be with you and return you to us safe and sound.

We have heard from Jonny and, although his partner Mikee tells us, he is missing home very much, he is fulfilling his mission with pride.



The delicacy of Land Art experience at Whitley Bay beach on the evening of Wednesday July 16th `08: Art and God series:-



Hannelie enabled Margaret, Cecilia and myself to experience the delicacy of Land Art and she `carried` us through the artistic process of artistic expressions of others from their point of being in touch with the landscape and nature, as depicted in two of her Land Art books. She offered us the possibility of defining our own response to the natural beauty we were part of. This experience was to be hands-on and not theoretical or even biblically based – and it struck me that the activity was entirely in tune with Celtic Christianity, which very much expresses itself and the glory of God in terms of our experience with the elements of the natural world: with them as a touching-point of reference.

The beach constituted sand, rocks, stones, sea-rounded glass, seaweed brown, seaweed green, rock pools, sea and sky. We communed separately and together as we



gathered-in our expressions which were to be - and found ourselves moving towards the sea looking at the jelly fish in the rock pool doing what

jelly fish do; one of us skimmed stones along the surface of the sea and we picked our way over the rocks, slippery surface of the brown and green seaweed. Our Land Art expressions were unsurprisingly varied, but with some common constituents (we all included the constituent elements of glass) – with Margaret's build of stones and rocks relating one to another. Cecilia's "Brickwork" expression consisting of decreasing sizes of sea-worn reddy brown brick in a lateral undulating line with a twisting shell-like feature at the tip and Cecilia was moved to creating poetry from the experience. Hannelie's expression was again one colour similarly reddy brown and was both particularly laterally undulating which twisted its way considerably over the natural beauty of the rocks directly beside the sea. My expression was **enclosed with definite**

borders - (I am working on this folks, but even as a gay man I am not always entirely exempted from the need for control). Enclosed and set between two large rocks my expression was nearing its completion and just as I had drawn a starfish in the sand and placed a stick of seaweed in my defensive encasement, a butch Pit bull terrier appeared as from nowhere; causing the starfish to disappear and took away what I saw as the significant stick of seaweed and all seemingly oblivious to my aesthetic expression. To top this, the said dog was dressed considerably in leather- some would say appropriately studded, whilst others would not. I was able to resurrect my expression but the dog experience in all probability was now a part of it and a cause for reflection. We enjoyed the expression of a communal prayer before leaving the beach.

This session beautifully fitted with previous Art and God series expressions – they having been poetry and pictorial-art - all relative to ourselves as God-given individuals. We have been enabled to move towards transcending physical matter – the metaphysical like the poetry of John Donne, George Herbert (etc.) and moving towards the nature of existence or of truth and knowledge through subtlety of thought, imagery and delicacy. The metaphysical enables us to `lift the lid` - to actually **see** something of the beauty which lies within us and to glimpse something of what is our real value and potential.

Thank you so much Hannelie – I remain convinced.

Roger Chapman



MCC School of El Tamarindo.

MCC Youth Mission To The Dominican Republic June 2008

As many of you may know I applied for and was asked to be part of the first MCC Youth Mission ever to the Dominican Republic, this trip was ground breaking stuff as it had never been done before and I feel privileged to be part of history in the making within the denomination. When Claire asked me to write a article from the newsletter, I thought "What am I going to write?" Not because there is nothing to say, but because there is so much to say! With this article I bring special greetings from two different MCC Churches and an MCC School for you all.

The week long Youth Mission began with the team of 15 young people gathering in Miami Florida, each from different backgrounds, different personalities, each with their own story and shape to fill on the trip thirsty to make a difference to the children, families, teachers and wider community of the **MCC School of El Tamarindo**. Nancy Wilson and her partner Paula came to bless us and see us on our way. The aim of our role in the MCC School was to run a bible school for 70 children with the theme a "Far Reaching Faith" based around the story of Noah's Ark. We had activities and games for the street children, carry out vital maintenance and building work and the creation of a Noah's Ark Mural. These children were fed both breakfast and lunch as part of the bible school. My role was the lead teacher for the 3-8 year olds and they were a handful like the kids in the UK, but they were so happy despite everything they face each day.

The fourth day was a special day for the children as 47 children were packed into mini buses, meant for only 32 people at the most, and taking them to go to the beach for the very first time! Note DR driving and road safety is crazy! They were treated to beach toys and activities, a picnic. Finally, we held a joint time of worship with the MCC Youth Mission Crew and the MCC Santa Domingo Young People. We also wanted to share in a time of fellowship with MCC Santa Domingo and their Congregation, which is made up completely of a young people. We made new friends and encourage them in their church plant. We spent the whole day with them in the capital Santa Domingo.

When we set out on a journey that none of us knew what to expect, the things that we expected to find hard such as drug dealing and prostitution weren't so hard to deal with or face, it was the poverty, children not having food, water and medical care. It was also hard to watch open injustice and often sights of guns and violence. The Dominican Republic is beautiful like many other Caribbean countries and it sounds like it was all fun but in the beauty there are dark shadows.



The children queue up

I can honestly say that the trip has changed my life forever. There are things that I will never forget as they touched me deeply. Thank you to you all for your support, care and gifts that helped me answer Gods call.

Please come to my Dominican evening to find out more about my trip in detail and what happens next! I will be holding an evening to tell you all about my trip on Friday 8th August at St. James' church at 7pm. Do come along and be prepared to take a few steps into the real Dominican Republic.

Abby



Abby with some of the kids

The first three days were action packed with craft activities, the creation of the mural, singing songs, oh boy, do the kids worship!, playing games till you dropped and teaching and learning with each other. Maintenance projects included painting the whole school inside and out, making the electricity supply more reliable, repairing the tiled stairs, fitting a toilet and many more tasks.

Pastor's Report – July 2008



What a whirlwind month! Monica and I had a great holiday and I came back to church ready to go. This was just as well, as July seems to have been a non-stop month. John, Claire, Eric, Ernie, Hannelie, Andy, Margaret, Cass and others worked hard to make sure that our presence at the Newcastle Pride was outstanding. We heard amazing faith stories, we were able to give out information to help people combat bible bashers, and Eric gave out so many church fridge magnets, there must be one in every lgbt home in the NE!! Thank you to everyone for all their hard work. The photo above shows just some of the MCCN angels of the North that represented us on the march.

Our Pride service really built on this energy and it was so exciting to see folk that we had talked to at the Pride stall, turning up for church the next day. It just confirmed to me that there are many people who really have a hunger to find a place “where you can be yourself with God”, as Claire put it on our publicity material. Please keep praying for all the people who still don't quite believe that God could love them.

This weekend, we launched another important milestone in the life and ministry of MCC Newcastle – “*Angels of the North*”. The feedback that we got at IDAHO in May and again at Pride is that people need a beacon of hope, they like having a vibrant and active church as part of their community. They want to know that we stand against injustice and oppression. In order to do this well, we need to be strong and have good foundations. We also need to be “out there” and visible. Everyone has a part to play, everyone can be an Angel of the North, giving hope, encouragement and showing God's love for all people.

In August and September, you will notice two activities connected with this theme. Over the next seven weeks in worship, you will see that each Sunday has a specific theme and a colour associated with it.

Red – Justice **Orange** – Community **Yellow** – Outreach **Green** – Stewardship
Blue – Wholeness **Indigo** – Service **Violet** – Spiritual Growth

Each week we will be thinking about different ways that we, as a faith community, can make a difference to each other and to the world. Some of us are passionate about justice and love organising protests and petitions. Others of us find that we are drawn to prayer more easily. Some of us would die of embarrassment if we were asked to read a lesson in church, but we are very happy to come in early and set out the chairs. God intentionally made us all different, and gave us different gifts, skills and personalities.

The second activity associated with Angels of the North are Spiritual Gifts parties! This will be a chance to share a meal together and then spend some time discussing what spiritual gifts are. Everyone will have the opportunity to complete a Spiritual Gifts questionnaire, which offers some guidance on what your gifts might be. You will then have the chance to see how you might use your gifts in ministry. Everyone is called to be in ministry, but everyone has a different SHAPE.

- **Spiritual Gifts** – these are gifts that instinctively part of you, Paul lists many of these:-
- **Heart** – what you feel passionate about
- **Aptitude** – what you are good – we are good at some things and NOT good at others
- **Personality** – some people enjoy working as part of a team, some would rather work alone
- **Experience** – life has taken us on different paths, some of us are older, some of us are wiser!

It will take all of us to change the world in Christ's name. I hope that you will feel called to play your part in this exciting faith journey together!

God Bless

Leah

And finally.....MCC Social: Summer BBQ

A while ago I was asked to hold a social event at my house: A summer BBQ. I agreed with out thinking much about it. It was a few months away, so I didn't worry too much about how I would fit everyone into my small house with its small, untidy and unattractive yard.

Summer seems to have come very quickly, and, before I knew it, the BBQ was just around the corner. Luckily by this time, my partner Traci had moved in with me and managed to make my unattractive yard look rather pretty and set about getting me organised for the event!

There was a big turn out and we somehow managed to squeeze everyone in. In true MCC fashion, everyone was very generous and brought lots of food and drink with them. Despite our inexperience in barbequing we managed to provide people with all kinds of barbequed food; vegetarian and non vegetarian. Although as the night went on I gave up and decided I just wanted to dance! Everyone seemed to have a good time; a high point was when George taught us how to do the Macarena! Later on we moved to the bars at Newcastle's gay scene and danced and sang some more!

Big thanks to everyone who turned up and made it a smashing time!

Alison

MCC Newcastle Church Leadership

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Abby Brown | Social Team | social@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Ian Martin | Pastoral Care | pastoralcare@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Claire Denham | Newsletter Editor | newsletter@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Cecilia Eggleston | Pastor | pastor@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Helen Fenwick | Board Member | contact@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 | worship@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Emily Watson | Lay Delegate | laydelegate@mccnewcastle.org.uk |

Other Useful Contacts

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Prayer requests | prayer@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Counselling Team | counselling@mccnewcastle.org.uk |
| Stewardship | stewardship@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.