

Pastor's Report – January 2010

As regular readers know, the Pastor's Report usually sits on page 2 of the newsletter. However, the news from our Leadership Day is so exciting, our editor Claire has graciously permitted me to use the front page!

Have you ever been in a room with a group of people, trying to come to an agreement on something?

Sometimes, it can go really badly and it feels like you are not going to get anywhere.

Sometimes though, the ideas just flow and there is a special energy in the room. Everyone contributes to the discussion and when the agreement is reached, everyone is happy and excited with the final outcome.

On the last Saturday of January each year, the church leaders of MCC Newcastle always spend the day together. We prayerfully reflect on the previous year and turn our minds and hearts to what God is calling us to be and to do in the year ahead. This January, we met to discuss the feedback from Harvest for Our Future:

Helen B and Charlotte N from the Board, Charlotte W (Kairos service), Kate (Welcome Team), Mikee (Worship) and Jonny (Music and Taizé) gathered together. Katie, Richard and Claire all sent apologies.

We sat in worship and prayerfully read through all your comments- from the vision parties, from the ideas boards that we had in worship, from conversations that I had with individuals from time to time.

Do you know that 26 people attended the vision parties? Other people added their ideas using the post its on the boards. All of these comments and ideas were gathered together in one document and this is what the church leaders spent their day reflecting on.

We asked ourselves two big questions?

What is it that makes MCC Newcastle so special? (what is our DNA?)

What are we called to be and do in the world?

We read through all the feedback from Harvest for Our Future and highlighted all the different values that came up again and again. For many people, the ministry that is valued the most about MCCN is our worship and how it takes us deeper. Being made so welcome and finding a place which we can finally call our spiritual home also came through very strongly. MCC Newcastle is a great place to be yourself. We enjoy being able to get involved in ministry and finding the right place for us. As a faith community, we look after each other and enjoy being together.



All Your Diary
Dates, Events for
February

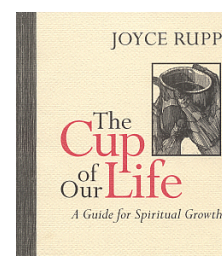
PLUS

Pastor's Report—
**our NEW
Core Values and
Mission**

**Bible feature ;
New Year, New
birth, New you**

Book Review
By Cass on Giles
**Fraser's
Christianity with
Attitude**

**Getting ready for
Lent**



**"Simply be open and
allow yourself to be held
in the shelter of God. ...
Do not doubt your own
spiritual experience."**

- Joyce Rupp

Continues over

Pastor's Report – January 2010 continued

From all your feedback about what makes MCC Newcastle so special, we grouped the ideas together and developed these draft Core Values – the most important ideals that we share:

At MCC Newcastle, we value:

- the fabulous and the beautiful in each of us
- a warm, safe, welcome home
- worship that deepens our intimacy with God
- the strength we have together when we are each doing what we are passionate about
- love, fun and laughter

Does this describe the MCC Newcastle that you know and love?

Are these the Core Values that form the basis of who we are when we are together?

Do these statements sum up our DNA for you?

Once we were sure that we had done all we could to capture the Core Values that we all share, we turned to our second question –

“What are we called to be and do in the world?”

Again, the church leaders read through all comments and ideas that you gave us through the vision parties and the comments boards.

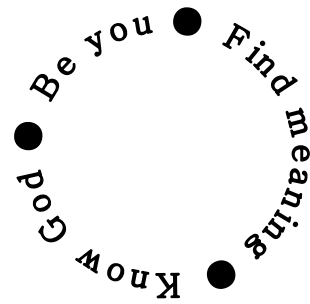
For so many people, MCC Newcastle is a place to find or rediscover a relationship with God. It is an opportunity to deepen our faith journey and become fully ourselves. It is also a place where it is ok to take time to “top up” our spiritual batteries and then get involved in ministry when we are ready. Many people talked about how we reach out to those on the margins, people who are perhaps struggling to be fully themselves, because of society's, or other churches', attitudes to them.

From these comments, we thought about what MCC Newcastle is specifically called to be and to do. What is our purpose together, what is our **Mission Statement?**

This is the draft Mission statement that we developed:

Be you • Find meaning • Know God

As this is a never ending process, it is best shown as a sacred circle:



It was a wonderful moment on our leadership day, when we crafted these statements. It really felt as though the Holy Spirit was really moving in us and through us.

Now, it is over to you!! What do you think of these draft statements?

Are the Core Values what you truly value about MCC Newcastle?

Is the Mission Statement really what we are called to be as a faith community?

During the Sundays in Lent, we will be using the draft Core Values as the basis for the sermons in worship. It will also be a chance to reflect on the draft Mission Statement – Is MCC Newcastle a place where you can really “be you”? Does it give opportunity to find meaning and know God?

And there is more.....

There are two more aspects to this journey together and it is important that as many people as possible are involved in this discernment process. On **Saturday 27th March**, we are having a Vision morning at St James'. This is your chance to bring your ideas and dreams for the next two important questions:

What are the bedrock beliefs that we share?

This is not about difficult theological questions, but key aspects of what we believe as a faith community,

What symbol or phrase sums up the vision that we hold together?

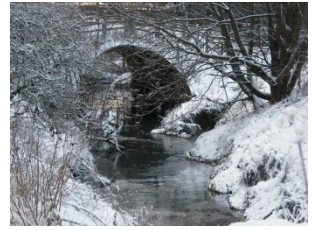
It is hard to sum up a vision of all that we strive for in one sentence. However, a symbol can describe so much – some of us remember the “Angels of the North” theme that we had a while ago.

On our Vision morning, it will a great opportunity to have fun together, share ideas and hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through our shared voices. Everyone is welcome to join in!! There will be more information available at church and on the website. It is another chance for us to be fabulous and beautiful together!!



Bible Feature

New Year, New Birth, New You



Amidst the celebrations of New Years Eve, whilst I was happily doing the conga around the room with my step

granddaughter Chloe,

I noticed that not everyone was smiling. A couple of people were crying and upset. I was soon to find out that they either regretted something major from the past year or wanted to make changes in the new one. I'm not talking about New Year resolutions to eat less chocolate, but massive life changing things, like grieving for a failed relationship or wanting to make a difference maybe by doing something different.

I found myself offering prophetic advice in saying "The past has gone, you cannot change it, but, the future is all yours do with what you want."

During the following days I started to consider this topic a little deeper and found myself analogising this with being re-born as a Christian.

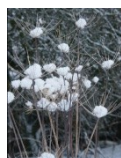
In 11 Corinthians Paul tells the people of Corinth "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new."

Wow....what an offer eh !

Even Jesus recognised the importance of Baptism when in *Matthew Chapter 3, Verses 13-17* John the Baptist reluctantly baptises Jesus when He says to him "Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires." After Jesus was baptised "the heaven opened to Him, and he saw the spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on Him." Shine Jesus shine !

I was thinking of some of the phrases we use to indicate cleanliness. How about these few;

- Squeaky clean
- As white as snow
- Clean as a whistle
- Shiny and new
- As pure as the driven snow



Can you think of some ?

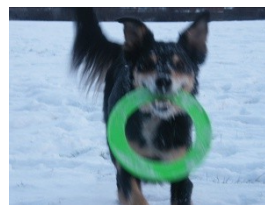
I'll bet they include the words shiny, white and snow.

At MCCN every Sunday we say confession and absolution to confess to God all the words, acts or deeds that we have committed in a not so Christian way. Having made that confession we can then ask God for absolution. Thus, we are pardoned, released and are free from sin.

In this way, we are made clean and given a fresh start by God time and time again.

Wow....what a loving God !

As we all know we've recently had more snow than we've ever had for



years and years. We certainly had over a foot on Teesside. Despite having a heavy cold, I was determined to make the most of it and, having found

a broken sledge, and with no one looking but Jess, I found myself hurtling down a steep hill, panicking that I would not stop before the beck !

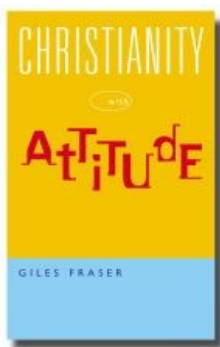
After three goes I was exhausted but I had had real fun. I usually walk the same routes with the Jess and, during the snow, it was no different, and yet it was. Everything that seemed familiar had changed in some way and several times I actually lost my bearings! The countryside looked crisp, white and clean. A new year of white snow to make all things white, clean and new.

Who knows, maybe it is God's way of saying I make a new year for you with pure white snow and I'm going to let it fall on everyone, every where and every thing. Maybe, just maybe it is God's offer to you of rebirth and cleansing.

I have a little book called "The Golden Treasury of Bible Wisdom" and in that I found this little saying wrote by anon:

You can't whitewash the old heart and expect a new spirit. Allow God to make the exchange of a lifetime, and give you a new heart and a new spirit for a new year. Old things will pass away, and all things will become new. AMEN

Claire Liebig-Denham



Christianity with Attitude by Giles Fraser

“Christianity with Attitude” is a collection of Giles Fraser's articles from The Guardian and Church Times and from his contributions to Radio 4's Thought for the Day. He believes that as the Biblical writing was "fierce" as it was written by and about people who believed in something as though their lives depended on it, that modern Christian writing should also show the same kind of belief and vigour.

A Church of England vicar, Fraser often fights against what he sees as unjust or unChristlike about the Church. He rails against the C of E's position of "I'm not homophobic but..." His anger over the treatment of Jeffrey John (who was to be the first person in an openly gay relationship to be nominated as Bishop, but was asked to step down by Rowan Williams) is raw, as he viewed the Archbishop of Canterbury to be a personal hero. Among many articles where he fights against aspects of the C of E he finds frustrating is an article about mission within individual churches, especially members of churches who like their church the way it is, and find change to be both unsettling and distasteful. As MCC Newcastle is undergoing change and growth this was especially enlightening to my own views of how things should be.

There are also many more articles that are passionate but also positive. Fraser talks of his grandmother who has dementia, and reflects that she appears almost happier and free now, than the years of anxiety and low self-esteem that she previously lived through. He writes about quitting smoking, whether the children of vicars are more likely to go off the rails and how society much prefers Jesus the Christ child who is there to be adored to Jesus as an adult, a radical and who had attitude.

The articles are between one paragraph to four pages long and cover a wide range of topics making it easy to dip into for a quick read as well as a good read in the bath. By Cass

MCC Newcastle Financial Report

Every week, people give generously to the ministry of MCC Newcastle through the offering plate at Sunday worship, or through the bank by Standing Order.

We also receive donations from time to time.

Thank you to the person who regularly sends anonymous donations to the church office.

We know that you read our newsletter!

Thank you for your most recent donation.

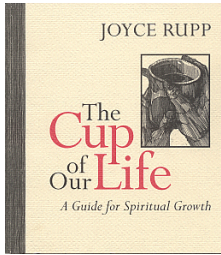
Sunday service	Attendance Dec	Attendance Jan
Week 1	20	14
Week 2	30	18
Week 3	53	34
Week 4	14	24
Week 5		31
Average Sunday attendance	29	24
No. of different individuals attending over month (regulars)	50	51
		Snowy!!
Offering in plate	£83.45	£456.50
Offering through standing order	£1880	£1700
Total monthly offering	£1963.45	£2156.50
Budget for 2009/2010	£35,520.00	
Total income to end of Jan 09	£28,986.75	
Total expenditure to end of Jan 09	£21,255.81	

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Haiti offering. We raised **£169.16**

If you would like to start a Standing Order or want to sign a Gift Aid form, they are available every Sunday, by the kitchen hatch!

If you would like more detailed about the church finances, please contact our Treasurer, Katie at treasurer@mccnewcastle.org.uk

Getting Ready for Lent



Did you know that Ash Wednesday is on 17th February?? Some of us are still picking up pine needles from the Christmas tree and finishing off boxes of chocolates, and soon we will be in the season of Lent.



Lent lasts 40 days and many Christians use it as an opportunity to take part in some kind of spiritual discipline. This might be giving up something to remind us that God is what really matters (I know, even more than chocolate). It also reminds us of Jesus' time in the desert, before he started his public ministry, which is why we observe Lent. Rather than giving up something, others decide to do something positive, perhaps make an effort to be kinder, less grumpy etc.

Some people use Lent to really concentrate on their prayer life or reading more scripture or other books that challenge in our faith journey. There are people who manage these things well, but most of us find it is easier to keep to a discipline if we are supported by others on the same path.

This Lent at MCC Newcastle, there is a chance to do both – try some new spiritual disciplines on your own and meet with others to share your struggles, your delights and what you have learned. We might even be able to get a group to meet online!!

Joyce Rupp has written an excellent book called “**The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth**”. You start by choosing a cup or a mug which you use each day to help you to focus on the topic being addressed. Each day for 6 days there is a short reading, a breathing prayer, a short passage from scripture, and a thought or exercise to keep with you during the day. On the 7th day, there is a chance to reflect on the week. You can take as little or as much time as you like on each exercise. Because each reflection appeals to different senses or different ways of finding God, it is a great way to try new things and to find out what works or doesn't work for you.

During Lent, there will be a chance to meet up once a week and discuss our journey through this book. It is NOT a way of checking how good you are being, rather a way of sharing our experiences.

“**The Cup of Our Life**” is available from www.amazon.co.uk. You may need to order it from bookshops. It is a beautifully written and illustrated book. If you are difficulty getting a copy, let Charlotte N know.

If you are interested in being part of the Lent book group, talk to me. It is amazing what you can learn about God from holding a coffee mug!

Cecilia

Creating A Life that Matters!

The first module of Creating a Life that Matters has already finished. We lost one session to snow (this seems to be becoming a tradition) but the group has continued to meet and learn more about what it means to “Rediscover Relationship with the Sacred”. There are seven participants on the course and it has been very interesting to hear about our different faith journeys and experiences of God.

The next module “Rediscovering Relationship with My Self” starts on **Thursday 4th March**. Hopefully by then the weather will have improved!!

Goodbye to Dorothy

After two years, Tea with Dorothy in Newcastle has retired gracefully.

A HUGE Thank you goes to **Eric** who has served countless cuppas and to **Ernie** who helped to get the group started.

During its time, TWD has inspired Good Hope MCC in Cape Town, South Africa to start a similar outreach. Age Concern in Sunderland and in North Tyneside has started Tea With Dorothy groups for older LGBT people.



YAM

**(Young Adults Ministry) is for everyone from 18 – 30s.
We have a social once a month.**

Contact Charlotte N via our Facebook page for more information on this month's social.

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 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.

Events and Activities

New This Month!! Lent Book Groups – We will be using the “**The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth**” by Joyce Rupp. Order your copy now so that you can join the journey through Lent! There are groups in Newcastle, Co. Durham and Teesside. Come along and share your experience of going deeper in Lent.

Sunday Worship

MCC Newcastle meets **every Sunday** for worship at 6.30pm. We meet at St. James United Reformed Church, Northumberland Road, Newcastle NE1 8JF in the church hall. Our worship services are open to all.

New This Month!! Our sermon themes for Lent are based on the draft Core Values that have been developed using all the feedback from Harvest for Our Future – where we have been sharing ideas and dreams about what God is calling us to do and be in the next ten years.

The **Scarborough Group** meets on the **second Sunday** of every month at 4.30pm at the Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough. Join us for worship and a fellowship meal.

Worship on Wednesday – WOW!!!

The monthly **Taizé service** is a quiet reflective style of worship involving singing of simple chants, often in Latin, and periods of silence. It is a perfect way to take some quiet time out from a busy week. Jonny is leading this worship, so see him for more details. The Taizé service is in the main church every **second Wednesday**.

Kairos Service - Come and enjoy this free flowing worship experience. Sing and pray as the Holy Spirit moves you. Another opportunity to go deeper with God. For more information, talk to Charlotte W or Mikee.

Socials

Squash!! – Come and celebrate Valentine’s Night at Mikee and Jonny’s in Heaton! Let’s see how many people we can *Squash* into their home!! Everyone welcome, after worship on Sunday 14th.

YAM (Young Adults Ministry) is for everyone from 18 – 30s. We have a social once a month. Contact Charlotte N via our Facebook page for more information on this month’s social.

Spiritual Growth

Creating A Life that Matters (CLM) – this is a year long course that looks at three aspects of our faith journey: Rediscovering Relationship with the Sacred, Rediscovering Relationship with Myself and Rediscovering Relationship with My Passion. CLM starts again on 4th March.

For more information, phone/text the church phone (Cecilia or one of the church leaders)
07770 543407

or visit www.mccnewcastle.org.uk

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

February 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 CLM Hall and Room 1 7pm	5	6
7 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall	8	9	10 Taize service 7pm main church	11	12 Lent book group Witton Gilbert 7pm	13 YAM social Contact Charlotte N
14 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall Squash!! At Mikee and Jonny's after service	15	16 Lent book group Thornaby 7pm	17 Ash Wednesday Lent book group Heaton 7pm	18	19	20
21 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall Cecilia on leave 1 st Lent	22	23 Lent book group Thornaby 7pm	24 Lent book group Heaton 7pm	25	26 Lent book group Witton Gilbert 7pm	27
28 Sunday Worship 6.30pm, church hall Cecilia on leave 2 nd Lent						