

## Stockton Road Church News November 2024



### **Mark 12: 30-31**

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall  
love your neighbour as yourself”.*

We are a union of Presbyterian and Congregational churches at the heart of Sunderland city life, growing from a past rich in mission and hospitality. We embrace this heritage utilising the Five Marks of Mission to guide and enable us to take forward current opportunities for mission and service.

## NOVEMBER REFLECTION

### DANIEL 7: 9-10, 13-14

The Book of Daniel is set during Israel's exile in Babylon (c597-538 BC), but was probably written for a later crisis around 160 BC that raised essentially the same issue: 'How can we live faithfully as God's people when the powers that govern the world are against us?' This passage is part of Daniel's first of four visions in the second half of the book. They all have much the same message. God's victory over his people's enemies is assured and will soon be entrusted to his faithful people.

Daniel sees four terrifying beasts, symbolising four earthly rulers, emerging from the sea. Then he sees the heavenly throne room, where God, 'the Ancient One', presides over the heavenly court. Here is a picture of God who is beyond human imagination. God's shining, fiery appearance symbolises everlasting power, glory and holiness, worthy of all worship. The fourth beast with its 10 horns is put to death, the other three lose their authority but still live. Then Daniel sees 'one like a human being' (some Bible versions translate this as 'a son of man') coming with clouds before God's throne, and this figure is given universal and everlasting dominion. Here is a picture of humans – 'the holy ones of the Most High', God's people who, like Daniel, remain faithful despite oppression – who are promised a share in God's victory over evil empires.

Jesus reinterprets Daniel's vision and applies it to himself, to show what it means to be God's Messiah (see also Mark 8:31-9:1; 14:62). Like Daniel, Jesus trusts in God's promise to vindicate him and his faithful followers in the face of every evil.

Did anyone watch King Charles' coronation in May 2023? I wonder what struck you from the service. There seemed to be a marked contrast between the symbols of power and authority in much of the service – the crown, the sword, the elaborate clothes, and the humility and simplicity of the anointing – with the King in just a simple white shirt and hidden from view by the Anointing Screen. Perhaps it was not what people were expecting? In the same way, Jesus was not necessarily the kind of king people were expecting. Did the reading from Daniel challenge some of the ways that you usually think of Jesus?

Lord Jesus, we praise you for your kingship of all that is good and generous;  
we praise you for bearing witness to the truth;  
for bearing the burdens of those who are struggling;  
for bringing strength to those who admit their weakness;  
for bringing purpose to those who name their emptiness;  
for bringing hope to those who acknowledge their despair;  
for painting a picture of a kingdom where all are called and all belong, we praise you.

May you be enthroned in our lives, and may we seek to live according to your will, as members of your kingdom, this week and always.

Amen

## **Lectionary Readings**

**3 - 9 November - Love, actually**

Ruth 1:1-18; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9.11-14; Mark 12.28-34

**10 - 16 November - Giving beyond obligation**

27: Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17; Psalm 127; Hebrews 9.24-28; Mark 12.38-44

**17 - 23 November - What song shall we sing?**

1 Samuel 1:4-20; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Hebrews 10.11-14(15-18)19-25; Mark 13.1-8

**24 - 30 November - King Jesus: Pictured and promised**

Christ the King: Daniel 7.9-10,13-14; Psalm 93; Revelation 1.4b-8; John 18.33-37



**Church Services November**

**Services at 10.45am in the Sanctuary unless indicated otherwise**

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Nov 3rd  | Revd Jane Rowell. Coffee and Croissants in the Lower Hall. |
| Nov 10th | Barbara Ledger. Remembrance Day.                           |
| Nov 17th | Revd Dr David Whiting.                                     |
| Nov 24th | Revd Jane Rowell.  |

## **Weekly Church Activities (all welcome)**

Bible Study Group                      Tuesdays at 10.30am

Food Cycle Lunch                      Tuesdays at 12.30am

## **Diary Dates**

Church Meeting                      Thursday November 28 at  
10.30am

## **FoodCycle**

As many members will know, since September 2023 we have had had a close partnership with FoodCycle to provide a free weekly three-course meal open to all at 12.30 on Tuesdays.

FoodCycle is a national charity which aims to reduce food poverty, loneliness and food waste by offering meals with company. It is supported by other charities, corporate sponsorship and personal donations. In addition to our Church and the Grindon Church Community Project, there are eight more venues in the North East - at Newcastle, Gateshead, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. The only paid staff are Louise Green, the Regional Manager, and Sadie Adams, the Project Support Officer.



The lunches depend on three cooks and seven hosts who welcome guests and serve the meals. The hosts can also signpost guests who have other issue than food to relevant organisations.

The cooks and hosts are all volunteers and include those who are retired, who are students or who have just arrived in the area and wish to meet local people. Other volunteers are unemployed; the work experience gained at FoodCycle has helped several gain permanent jobs.

The food for the meals would otherwise have gone to waste. It is obtained from supermarkets by another charity, The Bread and Butter Thing, and passed on to FoodCycle. The meals are vegetarian to cater for the largest number of guests. It is only on the morning of the lunch that the cooks know the ingredients and can decide on the meal. Those enjoying the meals particularly appreciate the innovative soup recipes. If there is any food unserved it is available to be taken home, as are surplus fruit and vegetables.

The around 30 guests at the weekly meals are a cross section of the local community. Some come because it is one day a week they do not have to provide a hot meal. Others welcome having this in company rather than eating on their own, while homeless people, or those living in hostels, are also guests. There is a variety of age ranges including children, particularly during school holidays.

Several Church members also enjoy FoodCycle lunches. Since September 2023 1,775 meals have been served and 3,878 tons food used, which would have otherwise gone to waste.

The partnership has been very positive for both the Church and FoodCycle. For us it has been an opportunity to welcome and meet people who would not usually come through our doors. It also justifies our decision to refurbish our main hall three years ago, in the hope that it would generate greater community use. Food Cycle's Louise has written that Stockton Road is a fantastic space and one of our most beautiful venues and the room that we have is light and airy.

Following the positive outcome at Stockton Road, the provision of a three-course evening meal at Grindon Church Community Project began in June. It now has an average of 25 guests and many local people are enjoying the free meal and the chance to socialise on Thursday evenings.

The partnership with FoodCycle has been a success for all those involved. The URC is providing space for an important service for our communities. For FoodCycle, Lousie feels that we have really great relationship with both Stockton Road and Grindon-we have great support. They're both lovely spaces.

The principle behind FoodCycle is that no one is asked to pay for their meals. Donations towards the cost of the service are, however, welcome and can be made online at [www.foodcycle.org.uk](http://www.foodcycle.org.uk) .

Neil Sinclair

# **ALISON'S THANKSGIVING SERVICE**

**22.9.24**

We were pleased to welcome over 50 guests to Stockton Road on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was lovely to see so many people joining us to give thanks for Alison's ministry here in Sunderland and over her whole career as a Church Related Community Worker.

We were especially pleased to welcome our Synod Moderator, the Revd Kim Plumpton, to help us mark the occasion by leading our worship.

The service was followed by afternoon tea in the Lower Hall.

## **The Project**

Our current Community project goes back to 2014 when the Sunderland and Boldon Partnership of United Reformed Churches applied for a Church Related Community Worker to support them in becoming more involved in their local communities by providing hospitality, space for community support activities and linking with local organisations and networks.

Helen Ogilvie was appointed and with her help, Roker URC became an important community resource, still flourishing, developing and much valued today.

At Stockton Road, we had the privilege of working with Helen to define our mission by identifying the elements which make up our local community and taking the first steps in outreach by engaging with art-based activities and refugee and asylum seeker support. Before long, however, it became obvious that major building work and refurbishment was needed before further progress could be made.



After a long process of planning and acquiring funding, work was completed during the first half of 2020 and, following Helen's departure, it was at this time that Alison was appointed to develop the second phase of the project. The Covid pandemic made this a very difficult time to begin her work, depending as it does on meeting and interacting with people. Alison's efforts to get to know the congregations by walking to people's houses to distribute over 150 of her labyrinth pebbles were much appreciated.

At first, Alison's focus was mainly with Roker, but it soon became clear that Stockton Road needed support in moving forward with new initiatives. And so, Alison exploded into our midst like a firework! The creative ideas came along at dizzying speed, leaving us at times wishing we were any number of years younger as we tried to keep up.

It has been immensely rewarding to work with Alison. From the start, the emphasis has been on finding projects and activities that we could sustain, rather than ones that would disappear when she left. Our Garden Project is about opening up the church grounds for community and church use; in our Heritage Project we have opened our doors for successful activity days highlighting the history of the church and welcoming visitors, some of them thinking we were closed, and others venturing inside for the first time. Cultural Spring offers taster arts and craft activities; fruitful links have been developed with ICOS (International Communities of Sunderland), Durham Wildlife Trust, Nissan volunteers, while the charity, FoodCycle, provides weekly community meals.

As well as these new initiatives, Alison has enabled and encouraged us to develop relationships with our existing organisations, some of whom have been with us for many

years – the Kathleen Knox School of Dance, Guiding organisations and the Nigerian church, Mountains of Fire and Miracles Ministry. This has been very rewarding.

This list gives just a flavour of Alison’s work with us; there is much more to add. Her unstinting efforts on our behalf have not only helped us to develop our mission here but have also provided spiritual, pastoral and practical support in many ways. Mention must also be made of her involvement with the wider community in Sunderland and her work for Synod.

It has been an exhilarating ride, sometimes exhausting and challenging, but we have learned so much. Knowing what’s possible is clearer in our minds and we can now ask the question “What do you need and how can we help?” more confident in the knowledge that we can handle the answer.

I want to finish with a comment that someone from Alison’s project in Poole, Dorset, kindly sent us after hearing that she is retiring, “She is a bit like Mary Poppins in a way, I am sure she leaves you stronger and more engaged with community”. This is absolutely true!

We can’t imagine Alison retiring and taking it easy, but we hope she does, and enjoys spending more time with her family, her grandchildren and doing the things she wants to do.

Elisabeth Meikle

# Love, Amelia

Don't forget to check out Love, Amelia's Wishlist and if there is anything you can give from the list it can be left in/beside the box in the church foyer. Check out their website for more information too: [www.loveamelia.org.uk](http://www.loveamelia.org.uk)

**November Wishlist**

- Toys in excellent condition
- Women's toiletries/gift sets
- Bottles (new only)
- Cold water & Microwave sterilisers
- Moses baskets & cribs
- Cots, Cotbeds & Todder beds
- Prams & Strollers

Please only bring items from our wish list  
No clothes till January please

**LOVE, AMELIA**  
3 Glaholm Road  
Sunderland, SR1 2NX

[www.loveamelia.org.uk](http://www.loveamelia.org.uk)  
[hello@loveamelia.org.uk](mailto:hello@loveamelia.org.uk)

Love, Amelia

Scan for Amazon Wishlist



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