

# Good News!

from across our Synod

## Lockdown Opportunity for the World Church Group

Barbra writes, we may not be able to meet in person but the North Western Synod World virtual Church Group meeting was truly international with Yao- Yi Lui from Taiwan joining us. Yao – Yi, a minister from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan who spent 2 weeks in the Synod last year.

Taiwan was mentioned on Radio 4 Today's programme today saying things were almost back to normal. Yao – Yi told us he could continue his ministry as churches were allowed to have services with less than 100 people. He also told us that the hospital where he was a chaplain was small and so had no Covid 19 patients. His fiancée however, who is a nurse, will have come in contact with them. He had a message from the Chaiyi Presbytery saying prayers were being offered for Taiwan.

We had an inspirational report from Daleen about the CWM Conference she attended in the Netherlands where she learnt about several projects worldwide including a theatre group in Taiwan consisting of people with a wide range of disabilities. Angela told us about contact with the German Palatine Church and George fed back about the postponed visit to the Waldensian Church in Italy.

We are also looking for someone to appointment as a Synod Intercultural Co-ordinator and a Commitment for Life Advocate.

It was exciting to hear about churches in different parts of the world and share with an enthusiastic group of people.



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## Lancashire Area

**Elswick:** Our Eco Journey in isolation is bring us together

Here at Elswick Church we are fortunate to be located in the beautiful Fylde countryside and to have large beautiful grounds which we use as much as possible. Combining this with another of our blessings, our vibrant Junior Church, we recently held an Eco Day during February half term for children and young people in years 6 and above. Due to the help of Daleen ten Cate, Leo Roberts and Ruth Platt from Christian Aid, the day was a great success – despite the weather – with visitors from St Anne’s, Penwortham, Halton, Darwen and Blackburn joining us.

Despite the social restrictions currently in place, Daleen and some church members resolved to start the process of becoming an Eco Church. Using Zoom we were able to conduct an initial audit of where we are and what we can do to become greener. It was a real pleasure to see each other face to face (virtually) and to take positive action for when we can all meet in Christian fellowship and worship together again.

Some actions will need to be on the back burner till we are out and about again but, in the meantime, we have committed to taking the following actions:

- Sharing the “30 Days Wild” challenge with our Junior Church Facebook group. It’s full of ideas and challenges to help you be outdoors every day in June. The children are already keen to start and are sharing with us what they are discovering. The photos show one of our young members enjoying the challenges, she couldn’t wait till June! One of our Junior Church leaders is posting photos of what she spots on her daily exercise.

- Asking our children to create posters and signs to encourage recycling at church.
- Sending out an eco-newsletter to signpost church members to the Ecosia search engine which benefits the environment each time you use it, and to complete the WWF carbon footprint audit.

We are now eagerly awaiting the results of our Eco Church audit. We hope that maybe other churches may be able to consider becoming a little greener or in planning positive changes looking towards the end of these unprecedented times.

Heather Twigg - Elswick Church

Sign up for 30 Days Wild

<https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/57739/petition/1>

Information about Ecosia

<https://www.ecosia.org/?c=en>

Carbon Footprint Calculator

<https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>



Planting sweet peas



Litter picking

For your congregation to become an Eco church, please contact your Missional Discipleship Mentor or the Synod's **Green Apostle Team:**

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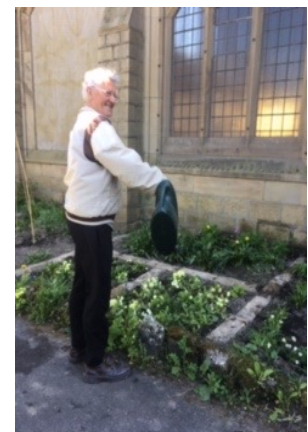
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**Revenge Fold** United Reformed Church - Blackburn

## Memory/Eco Garden & the Garden Gang

Elizabeth writes, earlier this year we were pleased to report that we received a grant from Churches Together in Lancashire for an eco-project in our church garden. The aim is to increase the biodiversity of our church gardens by planting wild flowers, conserving those that are there already, together with sweet peas, cosmos daisies and sunflowers amongst others, grown from seed by our memory café guests. Some of the practical folk amongst us will, in due course when materials are available, make raised beds for growing vegetables, and fit a water butt. We are also planning to make bird boxes and a cross-shaped bug house on the church wall. The other crucial aspect of this project is to involve as many people as possible across the different generations in our congregation, together with our uniformed girls' groups, gathered youth group and memory café guests. Due to the current restrictions, the volunteers working in the garden at present live locally and work separately. It's a great way of exercising outdoors and we praise God for the lovely weather which has enabled us to make a start on our eco-project!



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## A VIRTUAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Lorraine writes, long ago when we lived in a world where people could sit together and take part in activities as a group, Revidge Fold URC would hold a Prayer Breakfast every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month led by Community Minister Mal Breeze and my husband. Then Mal went on Sabbatical and so I took a deep breath and said I'd lead the three he'd be absent for.

So, I planned and led the first two on Grace and Hope, wobbly at first but with growing confidence and encouragement I was looking forward to the final one but then Covid19 happened and it was cancelled, that was that until Zoom came into my life.

Following a successful Easter Zoom Communion led by Mal, I again took a deep breath and suggested that we could do a 'Virtual Prayer Breakfast' led by me and it was a success. Members of all three churches (Revidge Fold, Trinity Brownhill and Westbury Gardens) and others participated, and some did readings.

With God's Grace and Mal's support and technological assistance, this techno phobic managed to lead a virtual meeting on 'Trusting God' using reflections from Eddie Askew's book *Slower Than Butterflies*.



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## Greening of the Cross and Prayer breakfast in Blackburn



Ann writes, our Community Minister Mal Breeze, made it possible for those who so desired and have internet access to share Communion on Easter Sunday.

How was this possible!

Twenty-five members from the churches in Blackburn came together separately via technology, new to us all, in the form of a conference through Zoom Rooms. During the previous week Mal had initiated trial conferences with several people, receiving feedback which allowed him to iron out any problems.

Easter Sunday arrived and by 10.30am everyone was in the Conference Room. We also had a gentleman from a URC Church in Darwen join us. He wished to share the experience with a view to setting up the system in with the Darwen churches.

Having received the planned service via email we were able to print this off to follow and respond where instructed. The bread was broken, and the wine blessed in each household. What a joy it was to see and share a service with one another after four weeks apart. We look forward to joining together again for a Prayer Breakfast on Saturday and possibly more Sunday Services using the same technology and are encouraged that new people are joining in.

As we were unable to worship and decorate our Easter cross with flowers, we placed in one of the windows at the front of the church so everyone passing could see it. The fresh flowers have now been replaced with artificial ones and it will remain in the window for the duration of lockdown as a symbol of hope in these surreal and challenging times.



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## Messy Church at home on line

Barbara writes, lock down! Pantomime cancelled, Messy church cancelled, all church activities cancelled. What to do? Then a friend mentioned that her cousin's church had done a Messy Church at home on line. So not daunted by this idea we got a team of 6 together and made plans.

We decided we should put Bamford Chapel and Norden's Messy Church at home on line on Easter Sunday with a pre-video saying what equipment was needed on the previous Sunday.

We did two craft activities, a fun food activity, a treasure hunt and finally finishing with an Easter celebration telling the Holy Week story. Professor Potty made an appearance with 2 experiments about surface tension too.

It was fun preparing but hard work. Addie learnt a lot about video editing. We have planned another **Messy Church for 24 May with a pre-video on 10 May. The theme will be Rainbows.**

You can still see our Messy Church at home on line by going to the Bamford Chapel and Norden website and clicking on Worship followed by Messy Church or by following the link on the Chapel's Facebook page. There has been 78 views on You Tube and 464 views on Facebook of the pre-video and 51 views of the Messy Church video on You tube and 51 views on You Tube.



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## Penwortham United Reformed Church

Gill writes, the first week of lock down Steven Mitchell (CYDO from Mersey Synod and member of Penworthan URC) asked if we would like him to host a Junior Church via 'Zoom'. He sent out invites to all our families and everyone joined us for the first session. He was wonderful and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. We have followed the Easter story over the last few weeks, had time for prayer and reflection, and to focus on our faith.

We have played bingo, rolled Easter eggs, had a treasure hunt, made paper planes, eaten Easter eggs and other foods, made words with our bodies and played Pictionary. It has been very loud and very active and the children, and adults, have got involved. Charlotte lead us in a prayer she had written, and the Lord's prayer, and it was lovely to see and hear the children saying the Lord's prayer (very loud) in their own homes. We didn't quite all say it as the same time but it sounded wonderful. I lead the second session and two other Junior Church leaders have volunteered for the coming weeks. We all really look forward to meeting on Sunday morning.

It is lovely to have the fellowship and see each other in our homes. The sessions have kept us all in touch and this is so important during lock down. We have kept our routine and Sunday morning now still involves Church but in a completely different way.





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## Blackford Bridge URC

Doreen Nield and Liz Bent, next door neighbours, who attend Blackford Bridge URC have been keeping their spirits up with keep-fit exercises in the front garden.



It started in Doreen's Close, when the local neighbours were doing some gardening, in the sun. Doreen suggested they should all come out and do keep-fit on a Saturday afternoon. Another neighbour agreed to provide the music on her CD player. Doreen said she would share the exercises from her younger days at night-class, and now she leads a small group to do their communal exercises each Saturday, in their front gardens.

They even do a little Line-Dancing, which Doreen's husband Geoff likes to join in with.

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## The Great Marton URC Sewing Beez

Val writes, God has given people many talents to share and as we go through this pandemic people are using these talents in many different ways. My friend Nigel, a funeral director and celebrant working on what is now known as “the front line” came up with making face masks for the community. I know Nigel through my love of theatre as we do shows together and Nigel also makes costumes. So there he was making masks, I’m no sewer but I can cut out patterns and had some material (old curtains) so we started on our production line. Nigel also put a call out on Facebook for material, this is when a group of people also offered their talents and our new group called the “scrubbers” was formed. Cutters, sewers, pickup & delivery. All done through social isolation. We are getting asked for masks, scrub caps, scrub bags and scrub tunics from people working on the front line, from district nurses, rest homes and others. We are happy to supply to anyone in need for free but made and sent with our love.

Most of our group are unknown to each other but working for a common goal, and one day when this pandemic is over we will meet and reflect that our talents that God gave us, just may have helped in some way. If you too want to help we have now set up a go funding page on Facebook to buy more materials, any left over money at the end of this pandemic will be sent to the hospice.



Margaret writes, I have been a quilter for the past ten years and do enjoy producing pictures with material. I wanted to help with the current situation but am limited to a bit of exercise each day. I have contacted one of our ladies from church Marton URC and someone can pick my sewing up so I am producing some face masks which I understand may be going to the hospice. It is good to be able to help in a small way.

Tona writes, as the leader of the Marton URC Charity Sewing and Craft Group and the Pastoral Team, I wondered how I could use my sewing and pastoral skills in this time of isolation. I have heard from a doctor that they needed masks at the hospice for their community nurses to use during their home visits. I have cupboards full of material and in a week I managed to sew more than sixty masks from bits of material in my cupboard. It is wonderful to know that God can use any gift of us to transform the world in a small and practical way. Faith in action and compassion goes a long way.



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## South Area

### Stepwise and Zoom



Alison writes, last Tuesday we held our first ZOOM INTO STEPWISE group, and we have taken our first brave step together. Gathered from across the Missional partnership and beyond we took a little time just to say hello before launching into the first session.

Zoom is not the easiest platform on which to do small group work but I think we did EXTREMELY WELL. Managing not to talk over each other too much and risking, in our breakout rooms at least, to begin to share our questions and our thoughts.

We did not complete a whole 'session' from the material in the hub but that's ok because zoom is mentally and physically 'hard work' and we need to be gentle with ourselves and each other.

I think we have made a good beginning..... at least no body backed out half way through! .....and I look forward to getting to know this group and sharing with them in more depth as the time goes on.

### Chorlton Central

Members of Chorlton Central Church each painted a letter at home and posted them to one of our Deacons to stick together to make a colourful banner thanking the NHS staff and all Key Workers, to be displayed on the railings outside our church.

