

# The Cost of Living Crisis Assistance

## **Gateshead Council** **Warm Spaces**

**PROVIDING SPACES WITH  
RESPECT, DIGNITY & WARMTH**



We are thrilled to have so many of our churches registered with the Gateshead Council Warm Space scheme - providing a warm space for the community and helping to alleviate some pressure due to the cost of living crisis. While other churches are in the process of registering, those currently in the Gateshead Council directory are:

**Blaydon (Trinity)** Mondays 10am-12noon

**SRMC** Mondays 9:30am-1pm

**Greenside Cafe Church** - Fridays 9am-11am

**Whitehall Road (Peace of Mind)** 9:30am-2pm

**Ryton** Tuesdays 10:30am-2:30pm

The whole directory can be accessed here: <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/21164/Warm-Spaces>

## **Thinking Finance? NEfirst Credit Union**

NEFirst Credit Union formed by the merger of smaller North East based Credit Unions who have been providing savings and loan accounts for their members for more than twenty years.

NEFirst Credit Union covers the whole of the North East, including County Durham, Northumberland and all of the boroughs that make up Tyne and Wear. Anyone who lives or works in this area is eligible to join.

The benefits of being a member of NEFirst include:

- Access to straightforward, secure savings accounts;
- The availability of loans at interest rates that are much lower than many loan providers (especially door stop lenders, pay-day loan companies and pawnbrokers);
- Some free life insurance on savings and loans.



Credit unions typically offer lower fees, higher savings rates, and a more personalized approach to customer service for their members. In addition, credit unions may offer lower interest rates on loans. It may also be easier to obtain a loan with a credit union than a larger bank.

This is because of their not-for-profit business structure. Rather than paying shareholders, credit unions reinvest their earnings back into their members,



## **National Energy Action - Working to End Fuel Poverty**

National Energy Action is a national, Newcastle-based charity working through partnerships and collaboration with a goal of ending fuel poverty across the country by:

- Providing advice and support to people struggling to heat their homes affordably, either directly or via community engagement projects and outreach
- Campaigning and advocacy to ensure that the needs of fuel poor households are at the heart of policy decisions
- Undertaking research and sharing insights
- Developing accredited training and qualifications to improve standards of energy advice.

To access NEA for advice about the energy crisis or to make a donation their website is: [www.nea.org.uk](http://www.nea.org.uk)

Recently they have been advocating for those who are financially secure and can afford the increase in energy prices comfortably to consider donating the £400 universal government support being given to every household. If those donations were made to the NEA the government support could be redistributed specifically to those facing crisis, easing the burden and worry from the vulnerable.



# AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

2022

## Letter from the Superintendent

Every seven years the Methodist Church gives its ministers a three month Sabbatical; time for re-equipping, refreshment and renewal. This time around I planned to continue to get to know the local context, as life has been so restricted due to Covid-19 since my arrival in September 2020. In preparation document I wrote: 'I believe my calling to the Southwest Tyneside Circuit is to encourage and facilitate fresh approaches to mission. Key to this will be a good understanding of the local context and the mission that has been undertaken to date ... The Sabbatical will give me time to reflect on what I have discovered [so far] and get to know people and organisations within the area that at present do not connect with the church.'

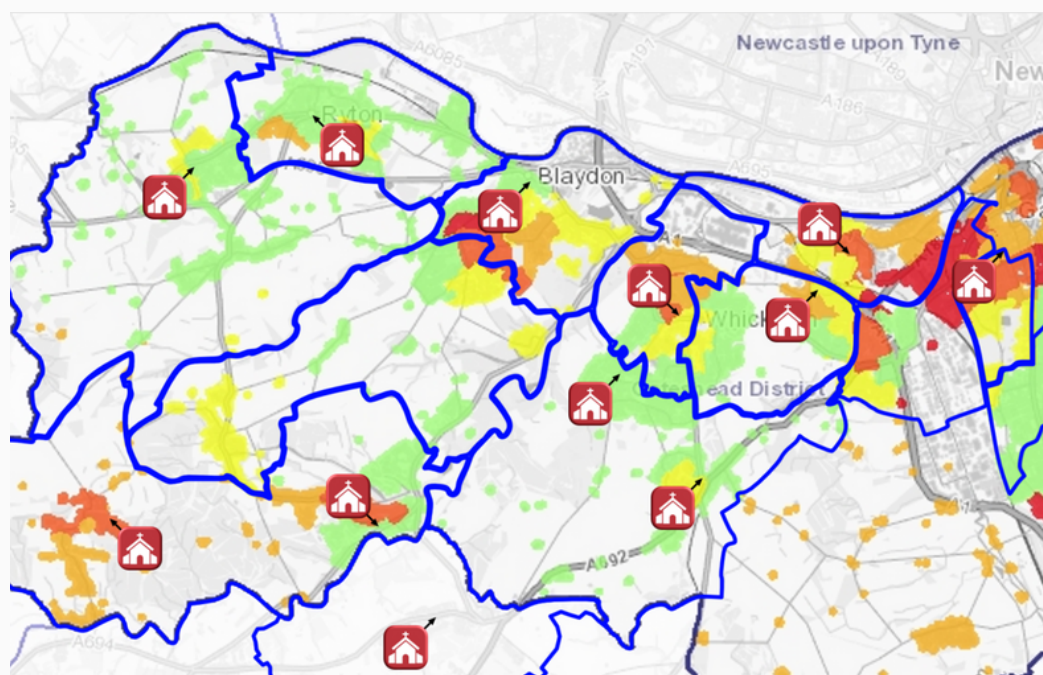
Back in November 2020, in preparation for a Circuit Leadership Team Away Day, I had come across the Indices of Multiple Deprivation on the Gateshead Council and County Durham websites. I was struck by the level of need, represented by the red or dark orange on the map in certain parts of our circuit, whilst other areas were much more affluent. Now in the summer of 2022 I intended to get beneath the statistics and discover more.

I wonder how you begin to get to know a new place, if you have moved to a new area or go on holiday to a different destination. I decided to walk around the area, taking the bus to different parts of the circuit, and talk to people who know Gateshead from a different perspective. There will be opportunity to tell you more when we meet but in this letter I want to share a little of conversations with people I had met.

In May I arranged to meet with Natalie Goodman, the deputy lead for the Public Health Department of Gateshead Council. Natalie explained that the overall aim of the Public Health Department is to work for improvement in health but this is a long game as the emphasis is on encouraging lifestyle change. She told me that the greatest concern in terms of public health is the poverty and deprivation within the borough which is getting worse. The Council is seeking to address this by careful allocation of the Prosperity money, funds allocated by central government as part of the levelling up agenda. This summer funds were being offered to community groups to provide Warm Spaces for those who are unable to heat their own homes. A month later I met with Michael Walker, the Poverty Lead for Gateshead Council.

I asked Michael about the scope of his role, and he responded by saying it was a mix of policy, partnership and influencing. He added "one person cannot solve the problems. Poverty will only be solved by fundamental change at various levels including central government." He spoke of the good collaboration that takes place between various sectors in Gateshead already, and the potential for more working together. His priority back in June was ensuring the council played its part in addressing the impact of the soaring energy prices and the food poverty that is impacting so many people.

*Continued on page 2.*



# News and Events from Around the Circuit

## Letter from the Superintendent Continued

My first visit in July was to meet Liz Twist MP in her constituency office in Blaydon. Her concerns were the impact of the rising bills for energy, the increasing cost of food, and the limited increases in wages being offered to public sector workers. Liz also spoke about the cooperation and goodwill between various organisations, charities and the council within the constituency.

During the course of my Sabbatical I have taken time to reflect on what God is saying in this current context, and concluded that our role is to feed the hungry and provide shelter for the vulnerable (See Matthew 25: 34 – 36) as we 'Share the love of Jesus: in this time; in this place'. I was delighted on my return to regular duties to discover that several churches had signed up for the Warm Spaces scheme, but this is just the beginning. Over the coming months I pray that we will engage in meaningful conversations with our neighbours, gain an understanding of the problems that people in our area are encountering, and work with other agencies to offer help to the needy. As the Methodist Church in this area we have much to offer: twelve buildings across the Southwest Tyneside area; more than five hundred members with unique gifts and talents; and the empowering of the Holy Spirit to enable us to reach out with the compassion of Christ.

May God bless you and your communities in the days ahead.

Ann Varker.

## ***Brick Church Launched with First Event at Centenary, with more to come***

The first session of Brick Church was held at Centenary on 12th of September. The children had a fun filled evening using lego-bricks to explore the bible.

The sessions are 3:30-4:30 at Centenary Methodist Church, Crawcrook, on Mondays - 10th Oct, 14th Nov and 12th Dec. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult and refreshments are available.

The sessions are currently held at Centenary, but if this is something you think your church would like to explore, then please email [sam.cree@swtyneside.org.uk](mailto:sam.cree@swtyneside.org.uk) our Circuit Youth and Families worker who is excited to expand these sessions to more churches.



## ***Belated 151st Anniversary Celebrations at Spoor***



Spoor held a lovely celebration of 151 years of worship in Whickham (delayed from the planned 150th celebrations). Ex ministers and members who had moved away were all invited to join the festivities. The community came together over food and reminiscent chatter filled the air. There were some much missed members unable to attend due to Covid.

The anniversary cake was cut by Spoor's oldest member, Mrs Vera Greener.

## ***What's On Around the Circuit?***

In the next newsletter we are hoping to have a full What's On list including the regular groups, and special events from every church within the Circuit.

If you could please contact the circuit administrator via email on [admin@swtyneside.org.uk](mailto:admin@swtyneside.org.uk) with details of the groups you host, or provide a named contact who would be best to contact directly.

# Serving the Community over the Summer

## ***Teambuilding Holiday Club at Ryton***



Ryton Church had a wonderful three day holiday club. The theme was 'Teambuilders' which involved lots of fun and games as well as looking at what the Bible said about being on God's team.



## ***Greenside Family Funday with Picnic***



Greenside Café Church held a free Family Fun day and Picnic event funded by Gateshead Council Brighten the day. in August.

This free event was attended by 46 children aged from 0-12, accompanied by 21 adults, 9 helpers and 4 attendees from Gateshead Council. There were families from Greenside, Crawcrook, Ryton, High Spen, Chopwell and even Leam Lane and Washington.

We played with toys and games, did crafts, had stories, ice creams, fruit and picnic food and lots of fun. The Children were all given a book to take home through Borderline Books.

## ***Junior Church on Zoom Day Out at Whickham Thorns***



Junior Church on Zoom held an in person day out this summer with an activity filled day at Whickham Thorns. It was a special day where the children could meet face to face, many for the first time as well as enjoying many of the teambuilding and competitive activities together.

