



E-NEWS



The General Conference of the New Church **News**

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Rise and Shine Radio Show

Our Spiritual Leader, Revd Jack Dunion, broadcasts his own online radio show every Sunday at 9am on River Radio (formerly Leven Radio):

<https://riverradio.uk/>

The link below now gives access to all backdated Rise & Shine programs:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/>

Reptile Time

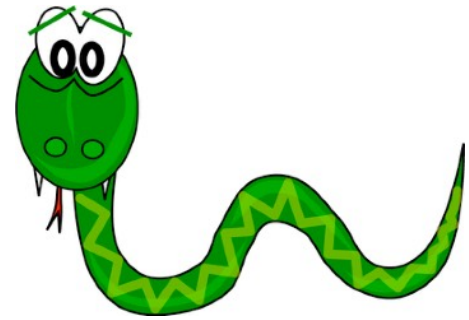
Jenny Jones reports:

Join the Youth and Family Team on Saturday 27th March at 3.30pm for “Dylan’s Reptile Time”. This will be an hour to get up close to a variety of reptiles including spiders and snakes.

The hour will be interactive and you will get the chance to find out all about your favourite (and not so favourite) reptiles!

The session will be followed by a discussion time in age groups; children, teens and adults to explore the story of Adam and Eve, focusing in particular on the role of the snake.

Please message Robert Clark (robert.clark@gcnc.org.uk) to let him know that you would like to join in and receive the Zoom Code.



James Otterson 1920-2021

Revd Bruce Jarvis writes:

Named James but known throughout his life as Jim, and by many in the Scouting movement as Skip, Jim Otterson slipped peacefully into the spiritual world on 20th February, just shy of four months after celebrating his 100th birthday on 25th October 2020. February 20th was also the 25th anniversary of his marriage to Dorothy, who was by his side in their home when he left us.

Jim was a Sunderland boy from a coal mining family, and knew at first hand the hardship of life in the 20s and 30s, including seeing fellow pupils coming to school in bare feet. He knew and personally experienced the rigours of



WW2, volunteering in 1939 for service in the RAF. He served throughout the war as a wireless operator, and then afterwards was posted to India, a tough assignment for so many young men. While on leave in 1942, Jim married Irene. Post-war, conditions were still very hard, and many newly discharged servicemen found it impossible to find housing, meaning the couple had to live with Irene's parents. Jim and some other ex-servicemen took it into their own hands to occupy houses on an abandoned ex-army camp, which they named "Liberty Villas". Sympathetic public opinion quickly gave support to this action, and Jim, Irene and their son James, lived there for four years, before being allocated a council house.

It was in 1956 that Jim and his family bought a house on the Seaburn Dene estate, just starting its life on the northern outskirts of Sunderland, at around the same time as the Revd Eustace Goldsack and his wife moved into a house on Shields Road. Before the war, Revd Goldsack, who was the Minister at Newcastle New Church, delivered public lectures around the north-east. In 1940 a group was formed in Sunderland, meeting in rented rooms



over a butcher's shop in the town centre. Ministers and students visited, and in 1942 the group was recognised as a society of the General Conference. After pastorates in Kearsley and Keighley, Revd & Mrs Goldsack returned to plant a New Church congregation on the estate. The infant community was largely comprised of young families, most of them owning a house for the first time. They came from all over the area, and were needing to build relationships. Under the Goldsacks' inspiring leadership, groups began to meet in their house and garage, and from 1958 in

the community hall rented from the estate developer.

As a boy, Jim was involved in cubs and scouts, and went on to become a leader. He met Baden Powell at a jamboree in the grounds of Raby Castle. So when approached by Revd Goldsack, Jim and Irene immediately set to, starting what was to become one of the most successful groups in Sunderland, eventually with its own premises on the Dene field. The 26th Sunderland (Seaburn) Scout Group provided Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Venture Scouts. It's worth mentioning here that Ted and Marjorie Bottomley and their family had recently moved to the area. The Bottomley brothers had been great Scouters at Keighley New Church, and Ted was another enthusiastic mover and shaker in those early days. For several decades Jim was Group Scout Leader, until age required him to retire. He retained his links, though, with a very supportive group of parents; and then became heavily involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Little did he know what, years later, it would lead to.

Jim was a committed Christian, and he found a real spiritual home with the infant Seaburn Dene New Church community. He signed the members' roll in 1960. It was in 1985, about the time of his retirement from work, that he underwent the sad early loss of his wife, Irene. But he showed his character in the way he stoically got on with life without complaining about his lot. His deep trust in his Lord, along with his commitment to other people and to his Church, sustained him over the coming years. He was a pastoral visiting team all on his own, calling on Church members and on the many friends he accumulated over the years. At an age when most people have long hung up their boots, he took over the care of our Church grounds, tending them for many years, and always ensured there were plants in the trough inside the front door.

I mentioned Jim's voluntary work with the DoE award scheme. The local organiser was Dorothy Powell, and over the years he and Dorothy became good friends. It was a great joy

to all his friends when in 1996 he and Dorothy married, and spent 25 happy years together. The Church benefitted from their union in practical ways. *"What can I do to help?"* was a question never far from Jim's lips. One need he was well aware of was the task of raising money to help his beloved Church pay the bills. When Dorothy had the idea of organising a card-making class, Jim was all for it. In fact, he joined in on the Monday evening meetings at the Church. He wasn't inclined to be making cards, but he did perform the vital task of making the refreshments. I'd drop in from time to time, and Jim would usually be found sitting on a stool in the kitchen reading a book, or in cold weather he'd sit on one of the easy chairs in the corner of the room. Regularly on a Sunday morning, he'd come into the Vestry with a bag of money for the Church. Dorothy provided the card-making materials for the Group, and the proceeds were donated to the Church.

Again, at a time of life when most people tend to be taking a back seat, Jim, along with Dorothy, joined the Church Council. He could see a need, there were vacancies, and he just wanted to do anything he could to help. Remember, he'd been in at the beginning when the New Church was establishing itself as a Church to serve the infant community. Along with the Revd Eustace Goldsack and others, he'd helped to pull people together, and over half-a-century on, his commitment was as great as ever.

Perhaps most of all, Sunday worship was right at the top of Jim's priorities. He just loved to be there, and was always pleased to be invited to read from the Word. Standing tall and erect, with his low, slightly gruff voice, his sincerity came over. And never was that more true than on Remembrance Sundays when I always asked him to read from Laurence Binyon's poem, *For the Fallen: They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old....* His own



wartime service meant that those words had a personal resonance. It was difficult to hold back the tears and emotions as we watched and listened. How it pained him in these last few years that physical limitations meant he was unable to take his place among us.

One of life's true gentlemen, throughout the years Jim remained devoted to his Lord and to people. Right to the end of his earthly life, prayer, whether in his home, at Church, or on the phone, was a "must". His life was an expression of that key teaching of our Church: *All religion has to do with life, and that life consists in the doing of what is good.* As our Lord says to us, *Well done, good and faithful servant.....Come and enter into your master's joy.*