

## **And God sent us.... a power cut.**

The letter telling us that the Electricity Board intended to cut off the power to the church on a Sunday, whilst work was done in the street caused a bit of a fluster. The Church Wardens declared that the morning services would be alright as the residual heat would see us through to the end of the service. "But Café Church can't happen in the afternoon it will be too cold. What will you do Penny?" I can't remember now who had the bright idea to move Café Church to a Café. It seems so obvious and we have become so used to it now.

Like many churches we had been running something called Café Church for a couple of years. Sitting around tables with a much more informal format and attracting some of the seasonal visitors to our seaside town, it seemed to be a good outreach strategy. On the day of the power cut we were hospitably received by The Coquet Tea Rooms at the heart of our main street and now meet there once a month. We continue to worship informally, share thoughts and activities around the tables and welcome anyone and everyone to join us. But it is a very different matter having Café Church in a commercial Café which is still open to the public. I find it very exciting that we never know who we are going to meet. There is a core "congregation" composed of members of our own and other local churches but it is the unexpected visitors who provided the surprises. And it is the visitors who are surprised too, coming in for a cup of tea at the end of a Sunday by the sea they didn't expect to find themselves joining in a service! Very few have left when they found out what was happening; those who having been assured that they can still have their cuppa and can ignore us if they want usually end up joining in. New friendships have been made with local people who popped out to the Café and we are now known to many from all over the UK and beyond .

Each month we have a topic and after a simple time of opening worship we think together and do some kind of activity that gives us chance to share and then to pray together. It is very much public space and I often have to break off to welcome and explain to new customers what is happening. Our regulars are sensitive to making people welcome and sitting with them if appropriate to help them feel a part of what is going on. I take the service and lead the activity leaning up against the ice-cream freezer which is a handy place to base myself and my music player.

I am aware that we are a bit unusual in what we do or rather in where we do it. Lots of people do as we did at first and talk about doing Café Church using their own buildings but less of them operate from a real Café during open hours. I would love to talk to others who do something similar as I am sure we can help each other to find new ways forward. Please contact me [pennyhorseman@gmail.com](mailto:pennyhorseman@gmail.com) if you would like to share ideas and thoughts. And if you are on holiday in Northumberland on the first Sunday of the month you would be most welcome to join us. (The cakes are very good).

Penny Horseman is a Church Army Evangelist based at St Cuthbert's Amble on the Northumberland coast. She is best known for her involvement with the Jesus Deck ( that's another story).

