

December - Group News - 2020

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Welcome from Jan

In Him was life and that life was the light of all. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it' John 1: 4-5

Dear Friends,

There is an organisation called Toc H which is a charity dedicated to breaking down barriers of prejudice and intolerance in society. It was started in Belgium, by a minister, Rev. Philip Clayton, known affectionately to his friends and colleagues as Tubby. He started the charity for soldiers serving in the front lines, - a club open to all, irrespective of colour, culture, creed or rank and it became a beacon of light in a world that seemed to have been plunged into darkness.

Those who visit Belgium today, and walk among the mass rows of gravestones that dominate the landscape in that part of Belgium, it is astonishing that anyone managed to keep hope and faith alive amid scenes of such dreadful carnage: and yet somehow the light could not be extinguished. As Tubby Clayton put it, 'All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of one candle.', which is another way of expressing those wonderful words from John's gospel.

There is much in the world today , and especially this last year, that seems to suggest sometimes that darkness has gained the upper hand and that evil has defeated good; but faith reminds us that from the darkness of Calvary dawned the day of Resurrection, - light that can never be extinguished.

However dark life may seem, God has promised that His light will ultimately break through.

May the Lord bless you and keep you all. Shalom.

Blessings

Jan

Fisherman's Talk

Once upon a time there lived a fisherman and his wife who lived in a humble cottage with a tiny garden and a well. But the fisherman's wife was discontented. "Why should I have to live in this hovel with no electricity, running water or kitchen?" One day the man caught a strange and beautiful fish, a fish that spoke to him. "Please throw me back into the sea" it said, and I'll grant whatever you wish." "I wish my wife had a house with water, electricity and a kitchen" he said. When he returned home that evening he found his wish had been granted and his wife was very pleased. But as the months went by she began to grumble, "why should I have to live in this pokey house? I wish I was a duchess with a mansion and servants, why did you ask for so little? Driven by his wife's complaints the fisherman rowed his boat out to the spot where he had caught the fish. No sooner had he called out than the fish appeared and agreed to his request. But it wasn't long before the duchess was complaining. "I wish I was a Queen and wear a crown and sit upon a throne, go and see your fish again. So he did and again the fish granted his request. But his wife wasn't content for long, "what I would really like would be, to be God, I'm sure your fish will understand." Reluctantly the fisherman set off to talk to the fish who yet again agreed to his request.

However when he arrived home he found no palace, no mansion, no house; not even his little old cottage was there. But then he heard crying and noticing a cave in the cliff face, he went closer. Inside, it was fashioned into a rough stable, there were two oxen and a donkey and in the manger lay a little baby.

adapted from 'The Fisherman and his wife.'
Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown...
of lowly birth and in great humility, you came to earth for me.

Guisborough

Here in Guisborough the Elders and members of the property committee have been working where possible through the pandemic, to complete the refurbishment of the church sanctuary. There has been progress to create a versatile and beautifully refreshed space for both our own worship and for the use of the wider community.

However it is a big responsibility and no easy task to ensure that it is the safe and secure place for people to enter, that present government guidelines require. We will let people know when we feel it is right to open for private prayer and worship. At that time we look forward to celebrating together again.

Until then, you might still picture worship as it was, with our family and friends surrounding us in their usual places in the pews, singing enthusiastically, Madge at the organ and a worship leader at the front. Hold that picture, focus for a moment and pray for those you see and for the purpose and mission of the next chapter of Guisborough United Reformed Church 2021.

Seasons Greetings.

Joyce Basham

From Rosemary (Uganda)

Latest news from Rosemary is there's been a big spike in corona virus cases in Uganda, cases mostly in urban areas and specially border towns (remember they are land-locked) but not so much in rural population; deaths (197) mostly among those with diabetes and lung conditions. Their hospitals have few ICU beds and ventilators. Presidential election campaign has started - the constitution apparently does not permit postponement - so supporters are congregating together. Rosemary had another malaria attack recently but her three nieces put together a surprise party for her birthday with balloons and a large cake to cheer her up. They are so grateful for our continuing help.

From Group Treasurer

I am sure that you will have realised that there are some savings to be made by not holding Services and the largest of these is Preaching Fees. These are paid by the Group so this year it was agreed that there should be a refund of the contributions made by each Church for other Group costs. Seven months contributions have therefore been refunded. However other expenses go on for the three Churches such as the Ministry and Mission levy, Maintenance, Insurance, Heating, and Caretaking.

Having spoken to the treasurers: David, Peter and Brian the message was the same - that collections are down. This is not surprising at all when there have been so few services held. The treasurers are therefore particularly grateful to those who give directly to the bank since this is regular cash flow, whether or not the Church is open for worship. Thank you too to those who have sent cheques to the Treasurers to cover their weekly giving.

New envelopes (orange) will be issued for 2021. If you currently do not use envelopes and would like to please see your Treasurer. If you have not been able to give your usual amount in 2020, and if you are able, please consider adding it to your giving for 2021.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a safe New Year to follow.

Jane Tomlin (Group Treasurer)

From Editor

I hope that the coming year will bring a bit more normality back to our churches although I suspect it will be Easter before we will be able to return to a more normal church life. Meanwhile if church members are able to provide snippets from our congregations, I will try and keep producing a shortened newsletter. Can we try for the next one at the end of January?

Roger