

**GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED
CHURCH**
Newsletter April 2021

EASTER - CHRIST IS RISEN! RISEN IN DEED!

What was that first Easter Day really like? Many of us a familiar with the story and the biblical accounts make it sound straightforward. In fact, it was a day of surprises, of confusing stories and conflicting emotions, a day in which faith and doubt, fear and hope alternated.

Mary and other women had seen where Joseph and Nicodemus had placed the body (Mark 15: 47). Early on the Sunday morning they came with heavy hearts to pay their last respects only to find the tomb empty. For John there is the beginning of faith but it is not complete. None of them grasps the full significance or understands what God has planned all along, although the body has gone and the arrangement of the linen does not suggest a body stolen. (Had had the body been taken by human hands, the grave clothes would have been taken or laid discarded on the floor.) Full certainty came later, based on the facts they observed and their meetings with the risen lord. On the basis of their testimony we can every confidence that Jesus is alive. We can see that is a day of great joy, a day to celebrate the defeat of death and the gift of new life. Things will never be the same again.

Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (John 20:8)

(Extract from Scripture Union Daily Bread)

Mary Robson

It is with sadness that we have learnt of the death Mary Robson, a long-time member of Guisborough Church.

Although Mary had not attended the services for around ten years, elders, Jenny Reynolds and Sandra Verrill have been in regular contact with her at home in Guisborough. She recently went into Brotton Hospital but later died in James Cook University Hospital on Sunday, 28th, March, aged 95.

Mary became a member of the church by profession of faith in May, 1968, so being part of our

fellowship for nearly 53 years. As member she was, for a number of years, the church caretaker and served as a teacher in the Junior Church alongside the late Joan Bulmer.

Mary was a kind, gentle 'people' person - always showing a genuine interest in others - their interests and concerns, and in conversation known to come out with occasional quietly understated witty remarks. She was a woman of quite natural humility.

Ray Tunnicliffe.

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

The United Reform Church expressed its sadness at the news of the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on the 9th, April, aged 99. Our prayers and condolences go to HM the Queen and all of the Royal Family who will now be bearing the grief of the loss of a loved father figure and supportive consort to the monarch.

Much will now be said about his life and times, but of his legacy one thing may remain with us for years to come: the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Scheme. With this simple idea the Duke provided a platform for young people to achieve knowledge and skills in various activities from sport, outdoor pursuits, the arts, science and in other areas of everyday life. Such experiences provided a good character foundation for generations of youngsters as they moved forward into adulthood. For the Duke, this alone is a worthy memorial.

The Guisborough Bridge Association

This month of April marks the 20th anniversary of the 'The Bridge.' We offer our congratulations to the association and all its members for all of the good work they have done for the community during that time.

At present their projects include:- Food Stop (Food Bank); youth projects; school work; children's holiday club twice a year; parenting work; soup and roll and coffee mornings; home made food and chance for a chat; Night Light (Street Angels); Christmas Day meal open to everyone; Monday Friends; a Recovery Forum and Support

Team; Kemplah House lunch club for the elderly and infirm and more.

So much they have done, so our best wishes for the next 20 years.



An Occasional Leaflet Box

The leaflet box, shown in the photograph, attached to the front gate pillar is intended for occasional use in offering our newsletter to passing members of the public. It is designed, so that it can easily be removed and placed in the church when not in use. In normal times such leaflets can usually be displayed in the library, Sunnyfield House, the Priory Kiosk and, later this year, in the heritage centre based in the newly restored Town Hall. A simple idea to raise public awareness of our presence in the town.

The Electronic Communication of the Gospel.

Way back in 2018 I spent some time in Darlington Reference Library doing research for a history of St Andrew's Mission, Thornaby, when my attention was drawn towards a curious newspaper article about a telephone. The date was July 1880 the year in which the first telephone book was published in this country - offering a novel way to talk to friends or business customers for those people able to afford this new device. The story reported

was of a man, living in the Darlington area, ill in bed and desperate to attend a special church service. The solution was simple: a phone was installed in the church, so at the start of the service the man phoned up and happily listened in. In this early incident we have an example of live audio streaming 141 years before such services practiced in some churches today. There can be little doubt that this long forgotten event would have been a 'one off' but does this have to apply to the new means of spiritual communication being actively practiced because of the pandemic restrictions?

Are such means of communication to be abandoned when restrictions are lifted, rather like air raid shelters, air raid wardens and the Home Guard after WWII, or does this raise wider issues of how we communicate the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus to a modern, largely secular community?

It has been reported that the start of the pandemic 'some' churches quickly adapted to other forms of worship - streamed worship, online platforms (Enabling people to express a view on faith, which can seem by others) telephone services, delivering printed services - which often encouraged more people to 'attend' Sunday worship. In Guisborough St Paulinus R C Church streams the weekly mass online, St Nicholas Parish Church, similar and the Methodist Church is now described as a church, without walls. We in the Guisborough URC have received weekly online service notes from our friends Revs Margaret and Ken Harris and also Thursday prayers from church elder, Madge Baird. In addition, from, midway through the pandemic, there have been monthly editions of Group News and a Guisborough Church newsletter. But how effective is this form of spreading the 'Good News?'

For positive reports we have an article in Reform, the URC's National Magazine, where Alex Clare-Young writes about 'Churspacious' an online media church. This church is reported to have 500 members all of whom are 'an active part of our church life.' It is also claimed that 'many are folk we don't often meet in church buildings' which is a clear advantage when promoting the Gospel. It is also pointed out how a social media church can give comfortable access to people who are chronically ill or disabled - so the bed-

bound man in Darlington in 1880 could be considered a pioneer.

However, a crucial point made about social media is that, for an online church, it is a means of providing a safe environment for many who have struggled with traditional churches, bound by the conventions of regular worship. In this situation listening becomes an important issue. Not just listening to a minister but to other members, exchanging ideas and through the ease of use of the internet gradually building up a stronger faith. This is not a passive listening, as to a minister's sermon, but an active exchange that builds up understanding of the Christian life.

However, it is not all good news. In recent times teachers were tasked with caring for small groups of children of key workers while at the same time having to prepare and send out online work for pupils at home. This will proved to be an unsustainable burden in the long term. And so it could be in churches when normal service returns.

Another view expressed is that the church is an institution that thrives on fellowship and personal support. With lockdown, creating the need for on line communication, there is the danger of developing the mentality of being an individual rather than being part of an effective family in Christ.

In the long term the effects of lockdown may be create a church that is more flexible, a mixture online and traditional - with greater creativity and requiring a more outgoing approach in the local community.

RT

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Founded 1798

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