

SAFEGUARDING SUNDAY

Protecting and safeguarding vulnerable people is the central message of the Christian faith of justice and peace. God calls us to protect the week (James 1: 27), Speak up for those whose voices are not heard (Proverbs 31: 8), follow Jesus example of a servant leadership (Luke 22:26), and pursue God's heart for justice for all (Micah 6:8) we are all invited to join God's mission to bring healing to the broken hearted, restore justice and offer freedom and light where there is pain and darkness.

On Sunday, the 20th, November, Dr Donna Moore was the leader in worship for our Safeguarding Sunday service. An important element in the worship was when all members were invited to discuss what safeguarding meant for the church. Various views expressed and ideas were put forward - all pointing towards the notion that caring for the weak and vulnerable was the most important part of having faith in Christ our Lord Jesus. "Faith without works is dead," wrote St James in his new Testament letter - a point that we all should recognise as an essential part of our Christian life.

In the sermon Dr Moore put forward the idea of a different kind of leadership. It was pointed out that this year, in Britain, we have had three leaders - three Prime Ministers whose principle task is to work for the benefit of the whole country - to care for us all when we need it. At this time with the serious cost of living prices many people need care and help just now. Good leaders lead by example and worked tirelessly towards support for the weak and vulnerable. Jesus was such a leader. He had that special power to help those people who needed it. He healed the sick body and mind and stood up to those people in authority who abused their power. He did not have power for its own sake, or use it for his own benefit but only to help others. The example he showed us all was, that when we are in a position to help people less fortunate than ourselves, then we should do just that.

CHURCH MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

New Ideas: Fellowship Worship: We have been without a minister for over six years. During that time we have managed to present services effectively by the work of our pulpit supply secretaries, Jenny Reynolds, and now, at the present time, by Madge Baird. In addition, other members have let us in worship throughout this time. However, to give us a feeling of spiritual direction it was proposed that we consider establishing a "fellowship service" once a month. Here would be an opportunity for all members to take part in expressing their views on faith. There would be a leader offer some direction, but with members to decide what we discussed, how we worshipped, and the subject matter to be used. This close working together in support of each other in our faith could provide a strengthening bond within our fellowship that could be of great value in these difficult times. It was agreed that one such service will be held in the first *quarter* of next year.

Joint Pastorate Update: It was reported that the Rev Jane Rowell, the Synod Enabling minister, is leaving her post to take up ministry in a local church.

Roger Wheeler, of St Andrew's URC church in Marton and editor of the East Cleveland Group News, is to take up the role of media controller of the East Cleveland website. Our thanks go to Darren Thompson who, as a member of the Guisborough church, has diligently worked in this capacity for a number of years.

The profile of the new Pastorate has been completed and sent to all Provincial Moderators around the country so that prospective ministers may see what we have to offer on Teesside. We now look forward to the time when we will be able to call a new minister to serve us here in Guisborough.

The Organ: Work on the organ is nearing completion and so we can look forward to services where we are accompanied by an instrument in a full clear voice.

Churches Together and the Bridge Association.

The Guisborough Christian Fellowship are to present a production of Carols and Storytelling about the Nativity at the Challoner Street Christmas Market on Sunday, 4th, December. Members were encouraged to support this event.

The Bridge Association have appointed a new Project Manager and Administrator, Lorraine Nash who has extensive experience in voluntary service over many years. She takes over the role, occupied for many years, by Shona Joselin who was thanked for her past dedicated service.

The Methodist Church have a new minister the Rev Highfield, who comes from the USA.

BRIDGE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

What a full month of activity November has been! It started with a well attended annual general meeting at Saint Paulinus Church Hall and finish there on Wednesday the 30th with a Christmas themed music and memories session where one of our gentlemen attendees performed a beautiful solo!

Kempley luncheon has been extremely well attended and both volunteers and attendees are looking forward to their Christmas meal on the 21st of December.

Fridays chair exercise class at 10 am at Hampton Court has been popular this week instructor Trish demonstrated exercises using resistance bands to further improve participants bone density and strength. Slimming world have supported this project with a £300 voucher to invest wrist resistant bands and these will be used in the New Year. Christmas celebration 16th of December.

Both projects have dedicated minibuses who enable easier travel and access. We received a generous donation from Guisborough Freemasons which will be spent specifically modifying and improving access to the minibuses and thus providing an even better experience.

Monday friends have started each week with a relaxed atmosphere in Sunnyfield House and fresh produce donated by supermarkets has been offered on a donation basis to those attending. After which volunteers Steve has been a stalwart in any weather. You will often see him outside GMC patiently with a donation bucket and an eclectic mix of food. Thank you Steve!

On Wednesday Parents2Bridge has continued to meet and give mutual support in the comfort of the family room at GMC.

If you follow us on Facebook you will have realised we have received some generous donations. Kofit generously donated £500 and gifts for the forthcoming Christmas hampers.

Proprietors Melanie and Ryan are keen to continue support and have a collection point at Kofit.

There are so many people and organisations to thank.

One special mention must go to Jackie Kielty, Who did the Lions share of planning the Queens voluntary award afternoon

attended by the Lord Lieutenant. And for heard of a ministrative help with the bridge for many months and more recently smoothly passing over the reins. Don't be a stranger to us Jackie! We look forward to seeing you around!

Christmas Sermon: *Hidden in Plain Sight*

Just imagine that you are in your kitchen and looking for the tin opener. "Where is it?" You ask a family member. "It's over there." Comes the reply. You don't see it. So ask again, "Where?" "There" comes the slightly irritated reply. "I can't see it." Is your feeble response. "It's right there in front of you." Says a rather exasperated voice. "Still Can't see it." You say, some what apologetically, and then a hand comes forward to push the opener into your hand. "Didn't realise it was that close." - is your excuse.

Somehow the brain, momentarily has made some assumptions about where the opener should or likely to be - rather than a rational approach to a simple, trivial search. This can also be experienced looking at an optical illusion type picture, which is drawn in such a way that we may see a witch or alternatively a young woman. Both objects are "hidden in plain sight." depending how your mind focusses or makes assumptions at that point in time. This is often the case with Mary's song the Magnificat. Read carefully and it can be seen as great hymn of praise saturated in the Old Testament and especially akin to Hannah's song of praise in 1Samuel 2: 1 - 10. It has been said that religion is the opiate of the people but the Magnificat is one of the great revolutionary documents in history.

But more often this reality is lost in familiarity of the poetry as we listen to it being read or being sung. The message is "lost in plain sight." Just for a moment let us think of what has been said: "He's scatters the proud in the plans of their hearts." That is a moral revolution. Christianity is the death of pride. Why, because if a person sets their life besides that of Christ, that tears away the last vestiges of pride and that is the first step on the road to the true Christian life.

Then we hear the statement: "he cast down the mighty - he exults the humble. That is a social revolution. Christianity puts an end to the world's labels, status symbols, prestige and undeserved wealth. Here we see another stage in a life with Christ - putting others first before yourself.

Then, most importantly, we hear: "he has filled those who are hungrythose who are rich he has sent empty away." Now this is an economic revolution. A non-Christian society tends to put greater value on the acquisition material things. Whereas for Christians society is where no one wishes to have too much while others have too little.

In the early Christian church people attempted to work to this principle, being together, helping each other, sharing

what each other had. But then over time this changed. The church became more authoritarian, the church produced different levels of hierarchy and so all of that early promise was lost. If we strip away all of that sentimental feeling when we listen to the familiar words of that great song the Magnificat then this is what is revealed - the true message of Christmas. That we are all one with Christ, all equal in the sight of God and so, as in Jesus's later teaching: We must love the Lord our God and love one another as we love ourselves.

In the reading, about the angel Gabriel telling Mary about how she is to become the mother of Christ the son of God, we see the principles of humility fully expressed. Here we have a young, ordinary woman given this important role to bring God here on earth amongst us. She is not a princess, not a celebrity but an ordinary young woman. And this says so much about faith in our Lord Jesus. He was born in a stable, in an obscure place, with poor parents with seemingly not the best of prospects for his future. And yet from there he reached the heights of the moral purposes for which we must all aspire. He was the personification of God in earth amongst all peoples who ever they were. He associated with people of seemingly low status, those despised by respectable society - and brought to the light the merits of those same people. His message is clear: all people are of equal value.

In first Samuel chapter 7 David had the wish to build a temple out of cedarwood to replace the tabernacle where the Ark of the covenant was kept. He asked because being permanently settled he felt that that's what the Lord God required but was denied this, by God, because it was his son Solomon who did this work after him. However, he was given the promise that his dynasty would last for ever and this was of such great importance for the future of Israel and the emergence of a Messiah. In the Gospel of Matthew it is shown how this move down the generations is a direct dynastic line to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The early church would see this story and the promises made to David as a foundation for the church - the new people of God - the new Israel. But this desire to build a house of God by David - work completed by his son Solomon was in itself imperfect. It was made for the God of Israel whereas the birth of Jesus heralded a time when the church would be for all people.

The present world - a modern society, with so much improvement in the lives of ordinary people, since the time when Christ was with us on earth, is far from perfect. This is shown very clearly by the effects of the terrible war in the Ukraine - pushing up commodity prices and being a contributing factor in the cost of living crisis experience by everyone here in Britain.

Our hopes, for the short-term future, lie with a peaceful resolution to this European conflict. Failure in that area will mean that it will be the poor who will suffer the most. Here lies the need for an economic revolution - "remember he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich empty away."

In the economics book *The Spirit Level*, by Kate Prichard and Richard Williamson, they highlight the pernicious effects that inequality has on society, eroding trust increasing anxiety and illness and encouraging excessive consumption. Here we can see a clear line from this point to global warming caused by the overuse of the Earth's resources - and the known doomsday effect we will all soon

have to face it ourselves.

But there is light on the horizon from an unlikely source: the terrible pandemic of 2020 - 2021. All the suffering, all the death, all the confusion and yet now we have a vaccine to save lives, and this has been produced by the cooperation of science, medicine and pharmaceutical industry. They have worked together in cooperation knowing the desperate need.

So in a life-threatening situation, like a war, where there is a clear threat to the very existence of the human race, suddenly we can come together to help one another knowing that if we are to survive all people must survive. Here the goodness in people comes forth - but why always do we need an emergency to get such a response? And how must respond to this most powerful of Christmas message.

Why not learn the 'Magnificat', the song of Mary. Yes, why not memorise it and so we can speak or sing it and feel the power of the poetry. "Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord and numbered blessing give my spirit voice;" And then it goes on to say: "Powers and dominions lay their glory Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight, the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

In these well ordered words we can sense what we need to do: Powers and dominions lay their glory by; a new fair, social order to work towards; to be humble not proud and so put others first; and the support for all people in need. Poetry was the notebook of people in ancient times - an easy fool-proof way of remembering important things. Use this poem like that and you will carry the Christmas message with you throughout the new year of 2023. Amen.

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY at 10.00am.

Dec 4th. Dr Donna Moore - Guisborough (C)

11th, Rev John Elliston – Darlington

18th, Ian Smith - Thornaby Mission

25th, Dr Donna Moore - Guisborough.

JAN. 1st, Dr Donna Moore – Guisborough

8th, Rev Keith Martin

Lingdale.

15th, Chris Eddowes – Hartlepool

22nd, Dr Donna Moore

29th. t..b..a.

Everyone will be welcome at our services. Come for worship, or to learn about faith in Jesus, or simply to find some good friends.

COFFEE MORNING AND PRAYER MEETING

Every Thursday there is a Coffee Morning in the church hall from 9.30am to 11.30am, followed by a Prayer Meeting at 11.30am until noon.

Please pop in, when you can, on this market day and you will find a cheerful welcome.

December/January 2022/23 GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Part of the Cleveland Joint Pastorate URC



Founded 1798

56, Westgate, Guisborough.

News Letter

December/January 2022/23

Secretary 01287 637273