

## THE EDITOR

no 33

This first editorial of the Guisborough URC Newsletter comes at the time of Advent and for the 33rd public edition. We can look back with joy and pride at the 225th anniversary of the foundation of this fellowship in Guisborough, celebrated in the month of October, and then look forward to enjoy a greater celebration: the anniversary of our Lord Jesus' birth more than two millennium ago.

The Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Advent is Mark 13: 24-37. The essential message of this reading is that Jesus is coming again - personally and visibly. He is coming back in power and glory to complete his earthly mission to establish God's eternal kingdom here on Earth.

In making this claim Mark has great authority as it has been long established, from ancient sources, that his words are those of Peter, the 'rock' upon which our Lord said he would establish his church. When this will happen, we don't know and in Mark's Gospel, we have two competing themes: one suggesting an early appearance together with the idea we may be in for the long haul. Since it is a long time since Jesus was present among us, here on earth, it would seem that the latter idea is the reality - but then it depends on what we are looking and waiting for?

We are surrounded by images and pictures of Jesus, all of which are from the imagination of the artist, for we don't actually know what he looked like - as no contemporary portraits have survived - if indeed they ever existed. Apart from the metaphorical vision of Jesus, in Revelations, chapter 1, most references indicate that he was ordinary in physical appearance - an 'Everyman or Woman.' So is this what we should be looking for - here in our life on earth at this Advent time? An 'every person' who we may meet from time to time, to show us the essential goodness that can naturally emerge from human nature, and give us that hope for the future when Jesus returns.

Have a Happy Christmas and a 'Hopeful' New Year.  
Please sent any news for the February edition and to the Editor at: - [raytunncliffe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:raytunncliffe@yahoo.co.uk) or text (07902) 802910 by Sunday, 21st January, 2024.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHURCH MEETING

Dr Donna Moore led the fellowship in a short service of prayer, praise and reflection prior to our Church Meeting on Sunday, 19th, November. The theme of the worship was set around the idea of thinking about people who we have admired and whose strength of character, positive qualities and attributes have provided a sure, guiding light for ourselves to following our own lives. In a simple exercise, members of the congregation were then asked to share their thoughts, with others, on how this person influenced them in such a way that was beneficial, good and worth remembering for the future. Such reflections gave a good start for the meeting that followed.

Members of the New Joint Pastorate of all seven churches in the Cleveland area met together in a service of worship at Saint Andrew's Church, Marton, to meet the new moderator of the northern province of United Reformed Church, Reverend Kim, Plumpton. The event was well attended with the churches each presenting an object symbolising how they saw themselves as a fellowship. For Guisborough church it was of the rainbow indicating that we were an inclusive fellowship - example of which was that we are now registered for same-sex marriages.

In the absence of a minister, for the new pastorate, it was announced that Synod have appointed Rev Ray Anglese as a 'friend.' He will provide spiritual and other support to the various churches in the Cleveland area.

In the previous meeting, an important discussion has taken place about worship. It was agreed that installing a microphone needs to be a priority and possibly a screen for the showing hymns, prayers and other announcements, which may installed at a later time. The recent Guisfolk service, where all people present are invited to take part in the worship, has its merits of inclusivity, but could be a discouragement to those people who find this difficult - or wish to reflect in silence on the worship. We are encouraged to speak as a spirit moves us - no more than that.

Under the heading of Churches Together and The Guisborough Bridge Association, it was highlighted that forthcoming meetings on the subject of Justice were to be held in the town - with people being encouraged to attend these discussions about this most important aspect of the Christian life.

It was agreed to have a Christmas tree in the church for the festive season. It was also announced that an article about recent church anniversary celebrations had been accepted for publication by the newly re-formed *Guisborough Di-rectory* - an advertising magazine that is circulated around the town and wider area. A good advertisement for the church.

### DON BEATTIE

Don Beattie is receiving medical treatment in James Cook University Hospital. Don is a member of our fellowship who was in regular attendance at services until Covid times. Sandra Verrill, an elder, is in regular contact with his wife Vera and knows how difficult the last few years have been for them both.

Vera has asked for our prayers for Don and we would include both Vera and their daughter Gail too.

### CAROL SINGING WITH THE BRIDGE

Join with us to sing the message of Christmas to members of the public. at the following venues:-

Monday fourth of December in Sainsbury's entrance 10-11am.

Thursday seventh December in Morrison's foyer 1030 - 11.30am.

Saturday ninth December in front of M&S 1030 - 11:30 am.

Come and join us to make a joyful noise and raise some funds for Guisborough Bridge.

### URC NATIONAL NEWS UPDATE - NOV'

Newport Pagnell URC Become Record Breakers  
Newport Pagnell United Reformed Church and its community project, The Mead Centre, have become official Guinness World Record breakers. Collectively known as MK Can, The church alongside 250 organisations joined Milton Keynes food banks efforts in creating the longest line of food cans that they could. Surpassing their target. a 10 km line of food cans was created which and then a Guinness World Records title.

This feat more than doubled the previous record set in Canada nine years ago. Eve Bangle, an Elder of Newport Pagnell, added. " it was a great day and a privilege to be part of such an amazing event."

This achievement by the Newport Pagnell URC church members reminders in a symbolic aware of the importance played by the various food banks and supplying the needs are people suffering from food poverty. We are in Guisborough United from Church support the Guisborough Bridge Association and his good work supplying food to the needy in the town.

### Leaders Call for an Immediate Ceasefire

The Reverend Dr Tessa Henry Robinson moderator of the United Reformed Church General assembly and the Reverend Lindsay Sanderson moderate elect of the National Centre of Scotland have joined Christian Aid and more than 20 church leaders and Christian organisations in calling for a ceasefire - and for all governments with influence to bring an immediate end to the violence in Israel at the occupied Palestinian territory.

In a statement released on 27th October 1 leaders and Christian organisations on a critically condemned the violence carried out by Hamas in Israel on seventh of October and expressed grave concern at the mounting death toll across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. A demand for the release of all kidnapped victims has also been made.

There has been a ceasefire recently to allow for the release of some of the hostages Let us hope and pray that this may be extended to include the Christmas period.

### Sermon: *Born of the Holy Spirit*

By The early 19 century Christmas, as a religious festival, was hardly celebrated at all and there was a concern that it may disappear almost completely. A group of antiquarians banded together to save many of the old traditions of Christmas: the songs, the prayers, the blessings in the hope that they could create greater enthusiasm for this important festival and so bring it to the forefront of the cycle of events in the Christian year.

However, it wasn't until Charles Dickens wrote his famous novel A Christmas Carol, in 1843, that the situation really began to improve. The inspiration for this work came from his experience of the appalling conditions under which women and children were forced to work in the factories of London.

In October of that year Charles began the writing this most popular and best-loved his books. It was written in six weeks and finished by the end of November, being fitted in the intervals of writing the monthly parts of Martin Chuzzlewit. *A Christmas Carol* would, he hoped, bring a good financial return – and it did so much more than that.

The story, once conceived, gripped Dickens. 'He wept over it, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself to an extraordinary degree'. 'He walked thinking of it fifteen and twenty miles about the black streets of London', often at very late hours of the night. He kept Christmas that year with an extraordinary zest; 'such

dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blind-man's buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissing-out of old years and kissing-in of new ones, never took place in these parts before'. Savouring the atmosphere of Christmas in London became part of Dickens' annual routine. Every Christmas Eve he went to visit the Christmas markets in the East End between Aldgate and Bow, and he liked to wander in poor neighbourhoods on Christmas Day, 'past the areas of shabby genteel houses in Somers or Kentish Towns, watching the diners preparing or coming in'. *A Christmas Carol* captures in many places what Dickens so acutely observed. How exciting to feel like that about Christmas!

Like his other novels it addressed the dire social problems and injustice of the day – but there was more to it than that for in the story we get the clear unmistakable feeling and vision of joyful hope for the future. The miserly Ebenezer Scrooge finds redemption by joining in the spirit of Christmas and accepts the benefits of generosity, not only to those who will receive his gifts, but most importantly for himself – he becomes a changed man. If Scrooge can be converted surely there can be no limit to what is possible?

Of course, Scrooge is a fictional character - but in the story and the whole mood of the book Dickens created is a joyful image of how Christmas should be celebrated, The story was a great success and continues to be so to the present day. Some commentators suggested that Dickens invented Christmas, or the form in which it is celebrated today - a sort of midwinter festival and now heavily commercialised. The biblical stories of the Nativity are also described in a joyful way but somehow, before Dickens wrote a Christmas Carol, this was lost in the formal liturgy of the day. One of the best quotes from the book, expressed various ways, was "The Spirit of Christmas." What is the Spirit of Christmas? In the reading for Matthew chapter 1. Joseph in a dream is told by an Angel of the Lord, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife for what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." The holy spirit is in fact, as Dickens writes, the spirit of Christmas. Not just for the 'season of goodwill' but to all men and women for all time. The redemption of Scrooge at the end of the book is a clear message to all of us that this little baby is a clear sign that God is with us here on earth and in our specific world.

As a well as being loved fictional tale there is the danger that we may allow it to become a focus of sentimentality. It is a story we can ourselves to be soaked in - two hours traffic on the stage on TV and in the cinema. And we can emerge into the fresh air having enjoyed the experience but life goes back to normal, in the reading from Isaiah the prophet says: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and you're calling Emmanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose of the right. The meaning of the word Emanuel is straightforward: God with us. But what of the "he will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right?" I think this may be a reference to our Lord's time in the wilderness. Surviving on what could found to sustain himself during this dark period in his life. At the end of this experience Jesus became aware that being filled with the Holy Spirit did not mean being outside the normal

experiences of life. He was divine and yet as the son of God also fully human. Using the Holy Spirit to express his message of salvation and help people in need was always going to be hard work. And so it is with us.

William Barkley in his famous daily Bible studies makes the observation: according to the Jewish idea the Holy Spirit was the person who brought gods truth to people. It was the Holy Spirit who taught the prophet what to say; it was the Holy Spirit who taught mad at women of God what to do; it was the holy spirit throughout the ages and generations, brought God's truth to everyone. So that Jesus is the one person who brings God's truth to us. Barclay then goes on to say that before Jesus came people had only a shadowy mate and often quite wrong idea of God. they could only at best guess only grope at, but Jesus could say. "He was seeing me has seen the father - God. So this Christmas we can enjoy the festivities but we are faced with a dilemma of how we go into the New Year as agents of Jesus. So by our actions in everyday life. the people we are, as we appear to others and by having the confidence and courage to speak of our faith when the situation arises - answer and

pass on the Holy Spirit to others. *Amen.*

### **SERVICES FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY at 10.00am.**

Dec 3rd Dr Donna Moore Guisborough  
10<sup>th</sup> Dr Donna Moore  
17<sup>th</sup>, Brian Stephenson Redcar  
24<sup>th</sup>, Dr Donna Moore  
25<sup>th</sup>, Dr Donna Moor  
31<sup>st</sup>, Service at Marton URC Church  
Jan 7<sup>th</sup>, Dr Donna Moore

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 2023/24 GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Part of the Cleveland Joint Pastorate URC**



*Founded 1798*

56, Westgate, Guisborough.

**Newsletter**

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