

Group News



** April * 2020 * May **

The monthly magazine for:

Guisborough URC

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Redcar URC

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Part of the URC Northern Synod – www.urc-northernsynod.org.uk

www.eastclevelandurc.org.uk

Dear Friend

I am writing to tell you that from 22nd March there will be no church services or meetings until further notice. If you have a pastoral concern, you should contact your church secretary.

In these uncertain times I'm reminded of the prophet Elijah who asked a widow for some water and a piece of bread. She had no bread and only enough flour and oil to make a meal for her and her son. Elijah asked her to make him a small cake of bread before she made something for her son and herself. She did as Elijah said and there was food for them all for a long time.

'The jar of flour did not give out, nor did the flask of oil fail.' God also provides food for our heart, our soul and our mind.

His supply never fails for 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; *great is thy faithfulness.*' While we are unable to meet together we could take time to reflect and pray the Lord's Prayer. You are welcome to ring me if you would like to pray or simply chat.

May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. Amen.

Love Norma

Revd Norma Johnson,

01642 481823

Interim moderator to the East Cleveland Group of Churches

Pastoral Letter

'He is not here; He has risen!' Luke 24. v. 5b

I remember it well! There we were sitting up late, watching Manchester United playing in the final of the European Cup. But it wasn't going well.... The German team were a goal up. 'That's it' we thought, 'No point in watching any longer!'. And it really looked as if it was all over....there were only a few seconds left, - into injury time, - or stoppage time as it's now called. The German supporters were already saluting and cheering their team, - the engravers pen was poised over the trophy that was already decked out in their team's ribbons.....And then, it happened..... A Manchester United goal from nowhere, scenes of great jubilation and the game headed for extra time. But then, amazingly, - another attack, a corner.....a goal! From the jaws of defeat Manchester United had snatched victory!

Unbelievable! Well, almost. Yet not half so extraordinary as the event over 2000 years earlier, when three women made their way solemnly to their Master's tomb. There were tears in their eyes, not just of disappointment but utter devastation; for the one who had been the centre of their lives and on whom they had pinned all their hopes, was dead, cruelly murdered on a cross. There was no hope of Him coming back, - when the Romans did a job, they did it well, - it was over, - finished. Until suddenly, the tomb was before them, - open, - empty, - and the Lord standing before them greeting them as He'd greeted them so often before. Defeat had been turned into victory, a victory not just for them, but for us too. One in which we can share forever. For it means new life for all, new beginnings, new hope, - the assurance that whatever we might face, nothing can stand between us and the love of God in Christ. And more than that, - because He rose again, - so will we, - He has promised. Unbelievable|? No, - true!

May you and those you love be truly blessed this Easter.

Blessings

Jan

From Ken and Margaret

Dear friends

I wanted to take this opportunity of offering our deepest thanks for the cards, messages, phone calls and especially your prayers, while Ken was in hospital in December and January. Considering how ill he was, his recovery is remarkable. In this time of convalescence I know how much he has enjoyed spending time in prayers at Redcar and Guisborough on a Thursday morning, and leading worship in all the churches.

Your love and support made such a difference, because I know that care was extended to us both. We were both looking forward to leading worship on many more occasions in the next quarter.

However, this last few days and the weeks to come will show us that we are all going to be affected in some way by the journey of the Coronavirus throughout the world.

Some churches will be closing altogether and others will have a much reduced worship and social life. It is such a great pity, and as we worry about our members of whatever age, we must be aware of the safeguards that have been set in place.

The United Reformed Church along with other churches have put into action many ways we can still maintain contact with each other and with other Christians of whatever denomination, and there are many times of prayer we can share in, even on our own.

This situation is deeply sad because spring and Lent are a time of looking forward to warmer days and lighter nights, gardens filled with beauty, a time of hope, which we try to sustain.

Prayer and care for each other, compassion and wisdom for the wonder of life have not been needed on this level for many years. May each of us come through this time ahead safely, and know the joy of the Easter message shining through.

Ken and Margaret Harris

From the General Secretary

Extracts from a letter written by the General Secretary to Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs in the URC Church

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are writing to you during this outbreak of coronavirus (Covid 19) to assure you of our prayers as you minister to those in our churches and communities who will be feeling anxious about the future and concerned for the health of friends and neighbours, as well as themselves. We too would value your prayers as we consider the effects of this virus on the work of the Assembly office.

As you know the Government has now strongly discouraged public gatherings and will shortly issue advice for over 70 year-olds and those who may be particularly vulnerable. Many of our churches have already suspended all acts of worship, physical meetings, and other church activities, probably for some weeks, or even months. While this is profoundly sad, we think it is a proper response to the Government's guidance, and it is a policy that we strongly encourage every church to consider. We shall of course update you as guidance changes.

Some of our people may be involved in community support and care, in formal and informal ways. Naturally we shall want to be careful, for others' well-being and also our own. If you undertake home visits for any purpose, you are advised to take precautions, or to consider using alternative ways of contact. If your church buildings continue to be used for any activities e.g. a food bank, you will be especially careful about hygiene.

However, as we cease meeting physically for worship, this may prove most difficult for the group such measures are designed to protect, the elderly. Some steps can be taken to ensure that congregants do not feel isolated and they have access to helpful information and support.

1. Consider some kind of telephone cascade system to enable prayer requests, pastoral news and the need for practical help to be passed on. This should be the most inclusive way of communicating as it accommodates those who are not able and confident in using a computer.

2. Pay attention to vulnerable groups, particularly people over 70, pregnant women, families affected by domestic abuse, those with long-term health conditions, mental disorders or disabilities and people who rely on others' assistance for daily support.

3. Take advice about coronavirus from NHS Guidelines and share them with your Church. ...

4. Andy Braunston is working to extend Daily Devotions from the URC to include a short Sunday service framework, starting this Sunday 22 March.

.....

7. FaceTime/Skype may enable some to gather in small Bible study or fellowship groups.

8. You may have other ideas that will help to sustain our people and their church life through difficult weeks ahead. If so, we shall be glad to hear from you.

9. Let us not forget the wider community in our concern for congregants. Neighbours can offer shopping or a friendly chat on the phone, without putting their own health at risk from those who are self-isolating.

10. Following the cancellation of this week's Mission Council and all of the Spring Synod meetings, we will find ways of letting you know how work can be carried forward. A decision about General Assembly will be made over the course of the next few weeks.

Finally, a prayer:

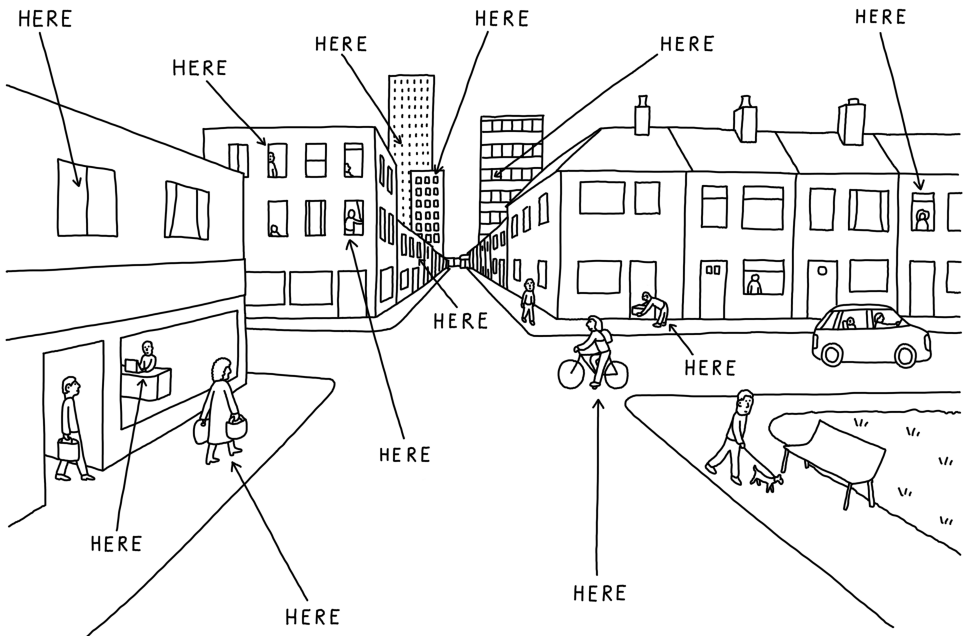
Lord Jesus,
In the midst of a storm,
You said, 'Peace be still.'
Bid our anxious fears subside,
Sustain your church in faith, hope and love,
Bring our nation through this tumult,
Grant wisdom to those with heavy responsibilities,
And healing and hope to those who are infected.
Amen.

Yours sincerely,

John Proctor (General Secretary)

with Jane Baird, Francis Brienen, Richard Church (Deputy General Secretaries)

WHERE THE CHURCH IS



CartoonChurch.com

From the Editor

This magazine has been prepared amongst great uncertainty as the country closes down in response to the threat presented by Corona virus. At the time of writing all church services and meetings had been cancelled with no clear indication as to when there will be a resumption.

The elders meeting agreed that there would be no magazine produced for May. Decisions about when the next magazine will be published will be made by the group elders in due course.

I have omitted much of the submitted material which is no longer relevant. Whilst I hope that normality will return sooner than later, I expect it will be some months before our church life can resume in anything like its usual form.

Roger Wheeler

Hilary wrote

Following her resignation as our pastoral friend, Hilary sent a card that included the following:

'I have enjoyed my time with you all and seeing you come through a rough time and coping well with the Vacancy. I pray that the right Minister will come sooner rather than later and be able to help you all to be the people of God in your respective communities'

We valued her wisdom and thoughtful words and it has been very good to knowing her

Jane Tomlin

For Our Prayers

In these uncertain times remember the power of prayer, Take the time to join with other Christians and spend time in the presence of God.

One URC minister has promised to take time out to pray at midday everyday and invites us to do likewise in the knowledge that we be uniting with others in prayer and sharing in the presence of our Lord.

The usual Synod Prayers remain available on the Northern Synod website for those who may wish to use them as a basis for prayer. In this time of global need it seemed inappropriate to ask you to focus prayer on only part of our Synod. Please put time aside to pray and remember needs in family, in church, in your locality, nationally and globally.

Guisborough

Human Spirit - It's been quite tough to think of what to write when at present it seems that the corona virus has taken up all media spaces and caused panic and confusion at every level.

Throughout my nursing career I have had the pleasure and pain of looking after some very strange diseases and infections, but never have they filled me

with trepidation, because all precautions are followed in a controlled environment. The best advice is always to have a good hand-washing technique.

We don't live in a controlled environment and naturally people are becoming anxious with possible information overload. There is panic buying of toilet rolls, hand gel, paracetamol, even flour and pasta. This occurrence has intrigued me greatly, why flour? My reckoning is that the whole population is going to have a bake off and pasta party under a papier-mâché dome made from toilet tissue.

The solemnity of the progression of this virus has been disturbing when events have been postponed and people have been asked to self-isolate if they have any flu like symptoms. I know of the father of a two-year-old daughter and a wife who is recovering from a serious illness who is now living in their spare bedroom. He cannot encounter his wife or his daughter as he has flu like symptoms. What chance has the comfort of a hug or the holding of a hand when fear and anxiety has claimed our most basic of human instinct of touch.

But there is always a glimmer of hope and it comes in the strangest of guises. Only last Friday I witnessed the compassion for an injured stranger by a group of people in Guisborough only a few metres from my house. It showed that when all is said and done compassion and love will always shine through. Working together the strangers performed CPR. There was no hand gel, no tissues, no deviating from the task. There was the holding of a hand by a young boy. The stroking of a forehead, the whispering of prayer and encouragement before the ambulances arrived.

The poignancy of these moments showed the depth of our subconscious commitment to one another.

A. Etwell

St Andrew's

Coffee for Charity

16th February	Foodbank	£15.50
23rd February	Rosemary Fund	£5.05
15th March	Foodbank	£21.00

Soup Lunch

The Soup Lunch held on Saturday 29th February raised £141.00 for church funds. Many thanks to all those who helped and came along to enjoy a pleasant couple of hours.

Coffee Morning

We have cancelled our next planned social event, a Coffee Morning with Tombola which was to be held on 25th April at St Andrew's.

Redcar

Coffee Morning

Despite the awful weather and a very slow start (no one before 10.20 am); we had a good coffee morning, which was well supported by other churches in the Redcar area. We made £244 with some very generous donations.

About James Robertson's article in March Group News

I thank James for his article. As usual he goes straight to his point, which is global warming.

Some years ago the question arose as to what would happen if a great change arrived. It was called "The Drake Equation". If warming continues, problems of a more tropical world are here. Gradually different plants and animals will be seen moving north. Already in North Africa locust swarms have re-emerged. Long ago they were one of the twelve biblical plagues. Sir David Attenborough in the manner of a biblical prophet warns us of the danger of not doing anything.

Already in autumn we have polar bears on the Hudson Bay shore area of Canada not having the usual return of the ice, so they cannot go seal hunting as soon. Instead they look for food locally and are a problem in small towns.

Long ago the poet T. S. Eliot warned that the world may not end with a big bang, as our universe started, but with a whimper. An old prayer for evening was "Be sober, be vigilant for our enemy the devil is out seeking whom he may devour". So we pray and are patient, trusting God.

J. Crowther

Preachers

All services are cancelled for the duration of the Corona Virus emergency in line with government advice. Public worship will resume when current restrictions end.

The URC Church is hosting daily devotions and a weekly service on the national website.

Material for future magazines may be submitted to Church editors or directly to myself at anytime.

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