

## Ukraine

Following the military invasion of Ukraine United Reformed Church's response has been to make resources available to help churches and individuals pray for peace for the for the people of Ukraine and Russia and reflect on the Christian call to be peacemakers

Through the communion of Protestant churches in Europe United Reformed Church has relationship with churches in both your crown and Russia and a few days ago this Communion issued a liturgy for peace with contributions from various church leaders in the region. Prayers from the Lutheran church in Russia and the Orthodox Church in Ukraine were included.

In our service, held on the 20<sup>th</sup>, February, worship leader Dr Donna Moore preached a sermon entitled: Love Your Enemies based on the command of Jesus to do just that as found in the reading for the day: Gospel reading from Luke chapter 4 verses 27-38.

The crucial question was who is my enemy? The invasion of Ukraine is the latest in a long list of other hostile actions by the Russian state like the Salisbury at poisonings. Whilst this may encourage the belief that Russia is our enemy, there is the question of the ordinary Russian people. Are they our enemy?

In the Old Testament reading Joseph, the man with a coat of many different colours, showed an arrogance towards his brothers which caused such a resentment that they sold him into slavery. Many years later when he had the good fortune to become chief minister to pharaoh of Egypt he was able to supply grain to his brothers, who came for help from a land blighted by famine, and then forgave them for sending him off to such a terrible fate. The message here is clear .... Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you.....

Two anecdotes, in the sermon. Illustrated clearly the different attitudes we can have towards people. In the first example we have the case of where in some areas of Albania a code of honour prevails. This supports a feud between families that has continued down the generations. No attempt has been made to

resolve and reconcile the original dispute so that young men often have to lose their lives for the code of 'honour.'

The other example was of a young girl who was badly bullied at school. As an answer to her bullies, she wrote a letter to each one of them saying how great she thought they were. And then the bullying stopped. In this latter incident we see how Jesus' call to love our enemies can be so effective.

In a closing observation the crucial importance of 'loving yourself' was made. Loving yourself provide you with self-confidence self-worth and in general you'll feel more positive. Positive enough to love your enemies.

Does President Putin love himself? Perhaps if he did, he wouldn't see so many enemies surrounding him – and, therefore, no need for war.

## Margaret Taylor

Sad news to learn that Margaret Taylor, former minister of our sister church St Andrew's Nunthorpe, has recently died in a motor accident. The Rev Taylor served as minister at Nunthorpe from 1964 until 1981 when she took on the role of the URC's Christian Education Secretary then served as the Church's Faith and Life Secretary. In 1986 she was called to Doddridge Memorial Church in Northampton, where she combined the role of Training Officer for Midlands Province until her retirement in 1999.

She also had a strong interest in hymnody and church music and was on the editorial committee that produced the URC hymn book Rejoice and Sing in 1991. Another role was that of promoting the importance of place of children within the church, including sharing in communion.

Aged 88 she is survived by her twin sister, the Rev Ella Taylor Walsh, a retired minister in the United Church of Canada, as well as her brother Bruce, her sister-in-law Valerie and their daughter Alison.

## Commitment for Life - Moving Stories

Commitment for Life is the United Reformed Church global justice programme. Our goal is to enable you the local congregation to make global justice a core foundation of your mission. We offer resources to facilitate prayer advocacy and effective action for the most vulnerable people in the world. We work in partnership with Christian aid and Global Justice now!

It involves Commitment for Life linking churches to a choice of three regions globally: •Bangladesh • Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory • Zimbabwe.

Congregations can opt to receive resources based on the region and receive a bi-monthly Moving Stories etc. 75% of any money raised, by churches, goes to support Christian Aid partners in the three regions 5% goes to Global Justice Now! and 20% retained for education resource in grants Administration.

The most recent edition of Moving Stories is: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

In 2021 the United Reformed Church General assembly agreed to 10 resolutions on Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. One of those resolutions deals with how we organise our pilgrimages why a choice of two operator is critical.

Local estimates suggest that less than 5% of tours to the holy land consciously and actively engage with the concerns of the Palestinian questions, or what Amnesty International now calls is really apartheid. Most tours are organised on the lines of what some suggest is a glorified holy land Disney experience. Pilgrims get to walk in Jesus steps but seldom engage with the political economic and religious issues that Jesus faced. There are parallels in things poor people faced in Jesus times and today. These include things like

occupation exploitation hunger the loss of income and the explanation of the land.

Unauthentic pilgrimage would not shy away from these issues. There are two companies that actively seek to engage with these issues. We at Commitment for Life think that choosing a Palestinian to accompany and booking Palestinian hotels for some other time at least would be both kind and helpful benefiting both programs and struggling Palestinian businesses.

### **Reflection on the URC's 50th, Anniversary by the Rev Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary**

Over 50 years ago a vision of God was caught. A vision that called two very different sorts of Church to unite. A direct response to the call of Jesus and his disciples. To 50 years later and we are in all ways a very different sort of church in a radically different sort of context, but it really is something to celebrate this year, that in 1972 the faithful people of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Union caught that vision and set out on a journey. The hope was vivid and vital, but the journey would become much more richer if others would join us on the way towards a greater united church on these shores. The churches of Christ and the Scottish Congregational Church caught that vision. However, the ecumenical context shifted around us - an organic visible union that had been so important to folk in 1972 no longer feels like the primary ecumenical concern. Which leaves us as the United Reformed Church at a seminal moment in our life. We responded faithfully to the call of God. But the journey, as so often with God, did not take us to quite the place that we expected. So at this milestone of 50 years we will celebrate the faithfulness of those who went before us but also must ask profound questions about who we are called to be - what we are called to do here and now a place where God has put us. We are a much smaller church in a much more secularised context than in 1972. What does the faithful response

to God's call look like for us here today? if I have a dream for our Jubilee year it would be that it is a moment of deep profound concern about who God is calling us to be today? Such that in 50 years time, others may look back and give thanks for our magical free promise.

### **MARCH SUNDAY SERVICES**

6th. Maranny Jones. Darlington URC

13th Guisfolk and AGM

20th Donna Moore. Guisborough

27th Rev Jane Rowell. Synod

Our services are open to anyone who wishes to worship the Lord God, or to learn more about the Christian faith - or simply to meet new friends.

**COFFEE MORNING** Every Thursday 9.30am to 11.30am.

**PRAYER MEETING** Thursdays 11.30am until noon.

## **GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**



*Founded 1798*

56, Westgate, Guisborough.

**News Letter**

**March 2022**

**Secretary 01287 637273**