

## Guisborough URC Newsletter July/August 2021

### Looking to the Future

The first meeting of church members since March last year, was held after a short service of worship, on Sunday, 27th, June. After such a long break the main focus of the meeting was on the future direction of our church beginning with a view of where we are at present. Crucially, for the immediate future the information from the Synod Office in Newcastle, was that it was unlikely that we would get a minister. Whilst it is disappointing news it does offer the opportunity to use the recent changes to the building (pews removed) in creative ways.

During the period since our last meeting we have lost four members: two by death two others have moved on. Also, now that our church is registered to solemnise the marriages of same sex couples, Rebecca and Hayley will have their wedding here in September.

During the main focus of the meeting members put forward various ideas to answer the question: How can we revitalise our church life and worship to reflect our new sanctuary? These included: Use the Rainbow symbol to advertise our LGBT connection; consider some work on loneliness support following the experiences of the lockdown; possibility of employing youth worker in partnership with Methodist Church to lead work with young people of the town; The church to say thank you in the form of a certificate for those in the town who are supporting us through the pandemic.

This lead onto the question of who is going to do the work?

So working parties to be set up to: develop changes to worship styles, service times and days. Changes in the form of the church meeting. The use of the church building by other denominations. Equipping the church to receive streamed services and other necessary changes to our usual practices.

Some good ideas to take forward into practical action.

### General Assembly 2021

The General Assembly of the URC takes place from 9-12 July. The business sessions can be watched on the URC website, our Facebook or You Tube channel. The Moderators of the URC General Assembly are warmly inviting members of the denomination to join General Assembly's Sunday worship services on 11 July. The Revd Clare Downing will preach at the service which will be live streamed from the URC's national website and Facebook page from 11.00am.

**St Paulinus Church:** Starting an Alpha course in September. This course founded by the Anglican curate, Charles Marnham, in 1977. It has been used successfully throughout the world to bring new people to recognise the great value of the Good News of Jesus and strengthen faith of those of his present followers. Something to consider as an agent for presenting faith to the local community.

**Sunnyfield House.** After being closed throughout the pandemic it is good news that the building will be opening to the public, shortly, when current restrictions are ended. In addition, the facilities have been upgraded during the closure to provide improved conditions for users.

### The Dangers of Optimism

In early 1916 the 12th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, stationed in the front line at Ypres, Belgium, found an abandoned printing press. A sergeant, who had been a printer in civilian life, helped put it to good use in order to print a newspaper for the troops in the front line. It was given the title the 'Wipers Times' after the 'Tommy' slang for the name of their location along the Ypres salient.

The paper consisted of poems reflections and write in jokes and lampoons of the military situation of their division was in. The paper maintained a humorous ironic style as can be recognising satirical magazines of today such as 'Private Eye,' for example. There in the dangerous appalling conditions of the trenches it was looking on the 'bright side of life' and so could be said to be almost 'dangerously optimistic.' This was a glorious example of the British pride in having a 'great sense of humour' which was then put to good, practical use - helping to raise morale in a situation where a more serious view of

future prospects were likely to lead onto despair.

In a recent edition of 'Reform,' the national church's magazine, it was reported that the General Secretary, Rev'd Dr John Bradbury, had told the Mission Council (A national decision-making body of the church) that the extraordinary pace of secularisation means that the denomination has reached a time where it needs to reflect on its direction. This prompted the Council to appoint a small group to oversee this process of reflection and change. So how do you view such a significant change in the attitudes of a modern society; where do you look for positive answers and what can be done? The writers in the Wipers Times of 1916 thought an ironic, humorous view was appropriate and effective in such desperately, dangerous conditions. Could this be a way forward towards a successful outcome during increasingly secular times? And could this mean that we must be 'dangerously optimistic?'

Whilst it may not appear to be viable plan, there are precedents for such an approach. The early Christians thrived during the martyrdoms of this era. Today, this still continues in various places around the world. In China Christianity is practiced in two distinct ways: the officially registered churches and other unofficial house groups or underground churches. Many of the millions of people in these groups continue to resist pressure to comply with regulations and join registered churches - where faith in Christ must fall in line with government policy and thinking. Local authorities are now taking an increasingly aggressive approach towards

resistance to conform. In a response to this approach one Christian leader declared that the motivation for these actions was fear. They do this because they are afraid of us. In truth they fear our influence in society. Another fine example of dangerous optimism.

The dangers to optimism for faith in our society are the drive to show consumerism as way forward towards a happy fulfilling life and the feeling of apathy when this fails to completely satisfy our instinctive spiritual needs. This poses a difficult question for ourselves - how do we face this threat? How much optimism can we muster for the challenges ahead? Some sort of an answer could come from a song or a poem such as: "Always look on the bright side of life." or "Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone." Happy and optimistic - that's got to be the Christian message and we are the messengers! Enjoy the rest of the summer and be happy.  
Ray T.

### **Sunday Services in July**

4th. Dr Donna Moore & Guisfolk  
11th. Rev's Ken & Margaret Harris  
18th. Rev. Norma Johnson  
25th. Memorial Service for David Houston.  
Conducted by Dr Donna Moore.

Our Sunday services are open to anyone who wishes to worship, has an interest in learning more about Christ and the faith in him - or simply to meet some new friends.

## **GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**



**56, Westgate, Guisborough.**

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