

Editor.

No. 40

In 2024 our church has suffered sad times with the passing away of three of our members in April: Mary Sollett, Dorothy Collins and Maureen Houston to which we must now add Don Beattie. In addition, we have had the sad passing of the Rev Norma Johnson, our former minister. Sad times indeed but also following the natural course of life in that they all enjoyed long and happy lives. In that sense it can be said that it is time for celebration and fond remembrance of friends.

We are now asked to look to the future in the reported discussions of the Cleveland Pastorate Vacancy Committee. As yet, there's been no interest from ministers to consider a call to the Pastorate. Members of the committee considered various issues affecting member churches - and it was considered important that the conversations continued within each fellowship so that the views of the local churches can be passed on to Synod for the October pastoral meeting.

The East Cleveland Group elders have produced a proposal aimed at resolving these matters, which will be presented to the church meeting. However, it is crucial that we as members put forward our own views on the future direction of our church.

Ray Tunnicliffe.

CLEVELAND PASTORATE

The Cleveland Pastorate Vacancy Committee met on the 29th of July at St Columba's church Billingham. The Reverend Kim Plumpton, Moderator and the Reverend Kate Hackett, chair of the Synod Pastoral Committee, were present. The meeting was called so we could have a guided discussion and reflection on why no interest had been shown in the call for a new minister to join the Pastorate. Do we need to think differently or does our Pastorate need a new shape? How can we work together more effectively as a group?

And it was pointed out that the three churches of the East Cleveland Group part of the Pastorate Guisborough, Marton and Redcar, have been without a minister for over eight years - which is a great concern. One radical idea was that the Group should leave the Pastorate as it could manage quite well as a present. There was a feeling that the Pastorate was too big at seven churches spread out over the wide geographical area of Teesside - although it's creation, by the Synod, was designed to attract a minister.

Asked by Kim how the churches of the Pastorate worked together: the answer was no - for within the East Cleveland Group elders continuing to meet as a separate entity.

It was considered helpful if we looked again at the Pastorate profile. Members felt that we had produced a good presentation of the situation in the various churches but that it may need updating and refocused in a way that would produce an attractive, but challenging project for enquiring ministers.

Although there has been no interest shown, recently, we have had two ministers who made enquiries. The first accepted the call but later withdrew because of health issues. The second was a minister from South Africa. Whilst he appeared to have some good credentials there were some unanswered questions that concerned the vacancy committee, so a call was declined.

A number of ideas were put forward that could help us make some progress towards giving the churches in the Pastorate a 'greater sense of direction.'

• As there are a considerable number of retired ministers residing in the area, perhaps one could be employed in a specific role on a part time basis?

• Now the Redcar Church have joined with the Baptists it is crucial that they receive support during this new period of cooperative mission.

• Hartlepool Church have a close relationship with the Methodist Church - which could be developed further.

• The question was asked what impact does your church have on the local community? This is an important issue as positive, effective, relationships with local people is crucial for the future of each fellowship in the Pastorate.

• The effective use of church buildings was also raised. With the passage of time some buildings are now in the wrong place in terms of local populations. We also need to use our buildings in a 'non threatening' way so they become popular hubs within the community.

• Lay leadership was also considered as the way to go in the future.

In conclusion it was considered that it was considered important that these conversations continue in the individual churches. Ideas from congregations, arising from these discussions, need to be sent to Synod in time to be considered by the Pastoral Committee, chaired by the Rev Kate Hackett, in October.

REV NORMA JOHNSON 1944 - 2024

The news of Norma's death was received with great sadness by the members of Guisborough United Reformed Church, as she was our former minister - serving us from 1994 until 2005, when she accepted a call from Clitheroe URC.

Norma was born on the 26th of January 1944 one year before the ending of World War II. Norma was the youngest of five children. Do you know that Norma's mother had two girls with her first husband, Enid and Avis, who would have a great influence on Norma. After their father died, and it was working out of the cinema Box Office where Frank was a frequent attender. Little did he know he was only going so he could see her. They married and had a further three children Billy, Ann and Norma.

Norma's half-sisters had a great influence her Christian faith - receiving her first Bible from Enid and first hymn book from Avis. Scioscia describes her mother as the most, lovely person and this was important as sadly Frank died when Norma was only 14 years old.

Anna and Norma were close in age and so very close as sisters. They would go to seeing classes Together and later to St Margaret's Youth Church. Allowed to live she listed all the people who had influenced her faith and then amongst them was Harold Purvis of the Sowing Club and Ian McIntosh leader of the Youth Church. Norma remembered enjoying church camping trips and outings.

Norma and the sister Ann both attended South Shields Grammar School. Whilst you enjoy her a happy childhood there was one complaint that was being the youngest and her clothes were always on me downs including her school uniform. Norma made friends easily that became a lifelong friendships. She was a people person - an attribute that was ideal for success as a minister in later life.

In 1965 she met George at the Oxford Dance Hall in Newcastle. George was not a great dancer so perhaps he was going to meet girls as people did in those days. It was there that George met Norma's friend Sylvia and her beau, Jim. George was invited to South Shields to meet Ann's family - then together they became friends. When Norma and George were married in 1967, they had a joint wedding with her sister, Ann. How good it was for them to share a wedding day.

When she left school, her ambition was to be a nurse. She flourished and won the South Shields general surgical prize at the end of her course. She continued in nursing until her children needed her more. In 1978 should become disillusioned with the way the profession was going more professional but less caring. So, for a time she took up working in a supermarket.

In 1991 she felt it was time to follow the call to be a minister that had been experiencing gradually over the years. Her children are grown-up and she was free to attend Westminster College Cambridge to train as a URC minister. She spent a year at Grindon, Sunderland for her practical training. Although the church is now closed it has for some years been running as the Grendon project for the local community - Something that would have pleased Norma.

She was ordained as a minister for the East Cleveland group of churches at St Andrews Marton on 11th, June, 1994. She was a huge influence on the churches of the East Cleveland Group. She brought a different style of worship helping us to prepare for the 21st-century. She also brought a new style of sermon drawing on her life experience and her own spirituality. When she felt you could do as much as she could for us she transferred to Clitheroe in 2005. I was so sad to see ago but she did return to the locality to retire in Marske.

George and Norma started my life in Washington which was a new town full of young life and others starting out. They went on to have two children, Andrea and Neil. Norma would hold ladies Coffee Nights when the man would have to make themselves scarce and the children would listen in to the gossip. At first, they went to a church in Washington. within walking distance, and then back to St Margaret's South Shields where Sylvia also attended.

Norma and George would frequently holiday with friends and their children would all mingle together. When Sylvia and Jim had a six child in hospital it was Norma who would visit them at night, when as a nurse, she was the only one able to go and comfort them.

The family remember wonderful holidays with family and friends and their children, Ann and Norma Sylvia and Jim, Ann and Ronnie. There was a caravan at Boulder, then one at Powburn so the family had the best beach and countryside. On one trip the weather was freezing so that the water pump on the site was frozen solid. They couldn't even have a hot drink until there was a thaw.

In 1984 George and Norma had their first holiday on the Costa del Sol - booking a villa at £20 for two weeks. It was Neil's birthday, and they all went out for their first 'All you can eat' meal. Enjoyed it trips to the Bowes Incline for Sunday dinner. also add coach holidays to Austria and France. They even managed to get to Kranjska in the old Yugoslavia where there are fabulous walking opportunities.

Later in life she learnt to drive. She enjoyed driving and the independence and gave her. The normally law-abiding Norma would say, "You have got to drive over 70 mph to overtake people." She bought a red car which gives you a clue to her driving.

Norma, being minister, was able to marry her daughter, Andrea, to Martin in 1996 and they went on to have two children, Daniel in March 2005 and Abbie in 2007. So, there

were lots of joint birthday parties and Norma was a wonderful grandmother. They spent many holidays with Norma and George and had their first McDonald's meal with them as well as trips to the beach cinema and other places. Hassan Neal McDonough 10 years ago and she too was welcomed into this loving family.

Norma love travelling and took members of the East Cleveland Group of Churches on a trip to the island of Iona. She also enjoyed a pilgrimage to the holy Island Lindisfarne where she walked across the sands at low tide.

She learnt to swim at night classes when her children were young and earned her 10 metre certificate. Norma enjoyed working at pottery and playing badminton and also learning German. She loves Theatre and especially musicals. Who can forget the musical she put on with the East Cleveland Group of churches. Only Norma could persuade enough members and friends to take part in the various presentations such as Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat, with Donna Moore playing the part of the pharaoh.

She took up cycling in her retirement, riding tandem behind George on many trips. They cycled to Clitheroe to raise money for the church there, and was the minister for this fellowship for a number of years. They also cycled abroad to France and Spain.

She was very much involved with Redcar URC as they set up a new project for Mission in their flat and arrange for the Redcar Baptist Church to make better use of the URC buildings.

Norma was an excellent listener and being very thoughtful gave good advice. She joined in with whatever was going on and selfless and giving up her own time to encourage others to get on board. Some of the thoughts expressed in her writing clearly demonstrate her character: "Not equal giving but equal sacrifice." and "If we do what we can, God will do what we cannot." and also, "The most important thing about prayer is it changes me. It helps me look for ways in which I can help people and situations that I pray for." Such observations and thoughts are a most fitting memorial.

Towards the end of her life, she was not able to do all she wanted to do, which must have frustrated her. In May she fell, sustaining a head injury which increased her fragility and sadly changed her personality. She was not the Norma we knew. She passed away peacefully at Roseberry Court care home where George visited frequently, and she was lovingly cared for. This was fitting after all shut down for others.

A parting thought from Norma about advent based on the passage Isaiah 2: 1-5. It's all about ploughshares and pruning hooks. "Advent is a time for thinking about the future not with fear hundred and certainty, but with optimism and confidence."

As our sorrow heals, we hope that we can follow her advice and to live to see her values emerge with optimism and confidence. Rest in peace Norma, you are a good and faithful servant of God, hope your flock and of your community.

Information on eulogy Dr Donna Moore

DON BEATTIE

Don Beattie, a long serving member of Guisborough United Reformed Church, sadly died on Wednesday, the 7th of August. This is a great loss not only for his family - Vera, his wife and daughter Gail, but also for our fellowship, for he is our fourth member to pass away in recent months.

Don was a proud Scot who, in his early career, travelled the world as a ship's engineer in the Merchant Navy. Later in life he continued working in engineering in local industry on Teesside. It was then that he joined Guisborough Church in 1970. During his 54 years as a member he served

as an elder and as member of the Property Committee - being also active in other areas of church life.

Don's Christian faith was a strong, simple lifetime commitment - which was clearly demonstrated - for he was a friendly outgoing person - always at the forefront in welcoming newcomers into our fellowship or offering an optimistic outlook and encouragement to fellow members and friends.

You will be remembered with affection - so rest in peace, Don.
Ray Tunnicliffe.

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE - IOPT MOVING STORIES

Commitment for Life is a Charity that helps and supports people in Palestine and several other countries of the Middle and Far East. Here is their recent report from Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory.

In the wake of the ongoing violence in the land record for me the 2024 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church has asked local congregations actively to reach out in solidarity to poor Jewish and Muslim neighbours.

The International Court of Justice has indicated that Palestinians are possibly at risk of a genocide. The world court has offered an advisory opinion indicating that the Israeli occupation of the West Bank East Jerusalem and Gaza is illegal. Israeli civilian hostages are still being held illegally by Hamas. Avenues and show media feeds are filled with horrifying images of death and brutality in Gaza. It is tempting to despair.

Nevertheless, General Assembly has made it clear that it is wrong and dangerous to blame Jews or Muslims in the UK responsible for the violence in as well as then the occupied territory. Rather, we must ensure that every community here is loved, respected, and protected.

Whatever your views, are you able to reach out? Write a note of support? Invite people to a meal shared activity or upcoming event? We must consciously choose the precious path of peace rather than the snaking highway of hate.

SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER AT 10.00am

1st. Dr Donna Moore Guisborough
8th. Guisfolk & Church Meeting
15th. Bill Reynolds Guis' Christian Fellowship
22nd. Maranny Jones Darlington
29th. Dr Donna Moore Guisborough

Everyone will be welcome at our services. Come to worship, or to learn more 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 11:30 am, Followed by a prayer meeting at 11:30 am until noon.

September 2024

GUISBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



Founded 1798

56, Westgate, Guisborough.

News Letter

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Secretary 01287 637273