

## THE URC JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

On Sunday, 2nd, October, the Guisborough Church held a 'Service of Celebration' for the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the United Reformed Church. In 1972 the Presbyterian Church of England, along with most of the churches of the Congregational Union joined together to create one Church. This was a noteworthy event as it was the first coming together of Christian denominations since the Reformation in the 16th century. Since that time, we have been joined by two other churches: The churches of Christ in 1981 followed by the Scottish Congregational Church in the year 2000. Although our name states that we are the United "Reformed" Church our aim and *raison d'être* is to be a constantly "reforming" Church by adapting to changing conditions and to encourage other churches to join us so we may have greater unity in Christ.

The theme of the service was of 'optimism.' This may be difficult in present circumstances given that we have a war in the Ukraine, a cost of living crisis and now, more recently, the increase in interest rates, adding a further burden on households and public services and which could be a real threat to our general well-being.

In the worship a dramatic sketch: "The Reformers", was performed, which took us back to our roots in the past and of two churches coming together as a new church - a playlet first presented at the 40th, anniversary service held in St Andrew's URC in Marton. The sermon entitled: "The Dangers of Optimism" asked the question: how we can be really optimistic given the times, in which we now live, presents serious difficulties of us all? A good example of how the human spirit can rise to such occasions was in World War I when British troops organised a newspaper entitled "The Wipers Times" named after the 'Tommy' slang for Ypres, a point on the front line where a battle was being fought.

The whole of this publication was devoted to looking at the funny side of the desperate conditions the soldiers had to endure. And this approach was successful in raising the men's morale and creating a feeling of optimism. We can all take a lesson from this.

We had a birthday cake, clearly marked as 50, with five candles to represent the 50 years of United Reformed Church. Happy birthday was cheerfully sung before retiring to the hall to enjoy a delicious piece of the fruit cake.

## ORGAN REPAIR

After being out of action, whilst undergoing repairs by C & N Holford Pipe Organ Builders of Ossett, West Yorkshire, the Property Committee have been informed that work on the sound boxes and refurbishment of some of the pipes has been completed. The company are now able to come to the church to re-install these parts on Thursday, 10th, November. The Fellowship can now look forward to being accompanied by a 'full voiced' instrument as we sing the hymns of praise on Sunday, 13th, November. A happy day when this happens.

## THE BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Roland Nash chairman of the trustees of the Bridge (Association) has announced that Lorraine Nash has been appointed as manager for the Bridge as from Monday, 31st of October.

Lorraine was recommended to the Association by Jenny Tyree. She lives in Guisborough and was previously a successful, committed, enthusiast a teacher at Highcliffe school. She has experience in organising, liaising with external agencies, risk

management, safeguarding and all the things we need to keep on top of at the Bridge. She has a passion to serve the community and comes with a wealth of experience in a range of voluntary work over many years, with different age groups. She has supported the bridge on and off over the years by organising collections for donations both at school and for the scouts.

I hope you will join me in welcoming her to the Bridge and praying for God's blessing upon her as she seeks to serve our community.

This year's AGM will be held in St Paulinus Church Hall on Monday, 7th, November, at 7.00pm.

## URC NEWS UPDATE

### Churches oppose review to move embassy to Jerusalem Published 12th of October 2022

The United Reformed Church has supported ecumenical efforts to convey concerns about Liz Truss's plans to weigh up the possible relocation of the British Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In a private letter to the Prime Minister sent on the 11th of October. The URC, Methodist Church in Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, Quakers in Britain, and other churches and the Christian humanitarian organisations with a long history of serving with Palestinians and Israelis striving for peace urges, Liz Truss to drop plans to review the location of the British embassy.

The letter's signatories asked the PM to instead maintain the obligation of all nations to respect the 'status quo' of the Holy City.

Reverent Philip Brooke URC deputy general secretary said, "WE take very seriously the possibility that the British government might move its embassy to Jerusalem and see this as a retrograde step particularly in terms of working towards a peaceful settlement in the Holy Land."

In the letter the signatories reminded Liz Truss that the Holy Land coordination mandated by the 'Holy See' and made up of Christian leaders from around the world, after its May 2020 view visit stated : " Jerusalem is a Jewish city, a Christian city, Muslim city. It must remain in a common patrimony and never become the exclusive monopoly of any one religion. It is our right and duty as Christians to uphold the city's openness and universality."

The signatories added that "The occupied Palestinian territory remains precariously fragile" and that Palestinians were feeling particularly vulnerable, at the moment, and seek the protection, dignity and reassurance that their neighbours enjoyed."

The letter concluded with a warning that "A review of the location of the embassy would only send a negative message that would not serve the interests of a sustainable and just peace for all, Palestinians and Israelis alike."

Organisations writing to the Prime Minister are: Christian aid church of England captured the car forget agency for overseas development, Sebeel-Kairos, Quakers in Britain, Amos Trust, Embrace the Middle East, Church of Scotland, The Methodist Church in Great Britain, The United Reformed Church.

## JUBILEE SERMON: *The Dangers of Optimism*

This is the truth we hold, source of the joy we share hope that can make us bold trusting the name we bear that 'Christ has died' and 'Christ is risen, in Christ shall all be made alive.'

Our introductory introt with strong words and bold claims. Is this what we believe? Does it give us joy? Do we trust the name we bear? Does it make us bold? And in Christ are we all made alive?

We sing many different hymns with stirring words, which give us that moment of joy as they are sung. For some people the hymns of the church are central to their faith - but it is good for us if we can read, rather than sing what has been written - to reflect on and contemplate the full meaning that is being proclaimed. In this context we may recall a stanza from the hymn 'All thing bright and beautiful'

The rich man in his castle

The poor man at his gate

God made them high or lowly

and ordered their estate.

We question, now the truth of this statement: is it God - or the views of the Victorian author?

The introt gives a clear, confident proclamation of trust in God through the power of Christ's resurrection - confidence and trust that is reflected in the Jubilee reading from Leviticus.

In verse 10 it says: Consecrate the 50th year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you each of you to return to your family property and your own clan. Later in verse 15 it says: you are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. Finally, in verse 17 it says: Do not take advantage of each other but fear your God. I am the Lord your God.

By these actions the people show that they're being faithful to their God. in the sense that we have fairness in the treatment of each other at the coming together at this most important time. After such a long period of time any wrongs may be put right. Any disputes settled and any differences reconciled. People could be happy with their present situation and ready to start again looking to the future. For any wrongs done they could forgive each other so be better able to move forward in confidence.

Today we can also think like that. But it can be difficult when we consider the present and the recent past. Since the long closure of Church, because of Covid, we opened again with fewer members. We now have a serious cost of living crisis with people worried about how they can manage. There is a terrible war in the Ukraine which has had a large impact on the economies of nations throughout the world. We seem to be looking forward to a period of some considerable difficulty and suffering. How can we look forward with confidence - do we have that

strength of will - that great confidence in our faith - faith in God and Jesus?

In the past people have found that confidence in very difficult circumstances. For example. In early 1916 the 12th battalion of the Sherwood Foresters stationed in the front line at dips Belgium found an abandoned printing press. A sergeant, who was a printer in civilian life, 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 Ypres salient.

The paper consisted of poems, reflections and 'writing in jokes' with lampoons of the military situation experienced by their army division. There in the dangerous, appalling conditions of the trenches it was looking on the 'bright side of life' in a glorious example of the British pride in having a great sense of humour - and so helping to maintain morale.

Examples of these conditions were related to me by my aunt Betsy's husband, George Thewlis. He was in the Battle of the Somme and went over the top to attack the German line on the 1st of July 1916. The week long bombardment was expected to have destroyed the German trenches but this failed. He reached a barbed wire barrier and turned round for help to get through - but there was nobody about because all the other men in his unit had been killed. He then decided that discretion was the better part of valour and jumped into a shell hole where he lay smoking his 20 packet of Woodbine cigarettes until it was dark and he was able to crawl back to the British lines.

Eluding to such dreadful experiences, the author of one article, in the 'Wipers Times,' describes a mysterious, psychological condition, contagiously infecting the minds of of the troops. It was thought to be a dangerous, insidious, an all pervading cloud of hysteria, reducing the men' effectiveness as fighters. It must be eradicated at once if we are to win this war. And the name of this mental aberration is - optimism!

The troops are optimistic. The lads are becoming increasingly optimistic. From officers to sergeants and to the ordinary private soldier this feeling is spreading - and it must be stopped!

Optimism in the face of these appalling conditions - the human spirit can rise to these levels in times of greater crisis - but can we be optimistic now - at this time of our church's Jubilee?

Proclaim Liberty throughout the land says the author of Leviticus recording what was said at that time. In the reading from Saint John Jesus offers freedom from slavery. This talk of freedom annoyed the Jews. They claimed that they had never been slaves to anyone. Obviously, this was not strictly true for at this time they were in control of the Roman Empire - and earlier by the Greeks - and before that they were taken into exile in Babylon. But the Jews set a tremendous value on freedom which they held to be the birth-right of every Jew. In law it was laid down that every Jew, however poor, must be allowed to descend to the the level of being a slave. They must be helped to stay free.

But it was another slavery of which Jesus was speaking. Everyone who said: "Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin" As the Greek philosophers had said time and time again: " only the wise man is free, the foolish man is a slave." Socrates had claimed, "How can you call a person free when their pleasures rule over them?"

Paul's letter was to thank God that the Christian was freed from slavery to sin (Romans 6)

When someone is rebuked for doing something wrong - or warned against such a course of action the answer could be: " Surely, I can do what I like with my own life." The problem with this idea is that the person does not do what they like - they do what 'sin likes.'

Today sin is a rather unfashionable and old-fashioned word but it's meaning it's clear. In one of his most celebrated epigrams Oscar Wilde well illustrated the dangers of doing what you like when he said, "There are only two tragedies in life. The first is not getting what one wants and the second is getting it."

Jesus knew that what we want should be what we actually need - and with that we will help to build up God's kingdom here among people. "Thy kingdom thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

At our late Queens lying in state a quarter of a million people passed by the coffin. There were a variety of reasons, that people gave, for wishing to pay their respects: It is a moment in history and I want to be part of it. I just had to be there for the experience. She has been a unifying part of our nation and I wish to acknowledge that - and so on. It would seem this sad event had brought out some latent spirituality in the nation, seeing as we here today represent only 6% of the British people. Could we tap into this in some way?

Another incident in George Thewlis's war experiences was, while in no man's land, he was suddenly faced with a German soldier face to face. Instinctively he lunged forward with the bayonet of his rifle and the soldier dodged to avoid it. He lunged the other way and again the German soldier dodged away. This happened several times until "humanity" intervened. They looked at each other, thought no, and then went back to their trenches.

Hope and that "Dangerous Optimism" written about in the "Wipers Times" had suddenly appeared. Can we find the liberty, the true freedom as announced in the jubilees of ancient times and by our Lord Jesus and enter a new fifty years of the URC with that dangerous optimism. Amen.

#### **SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER at 10.00am.**

06th John Elliston

13th Rev Ray Anglesey - Northern Synod.

20th Dr Donna Moore - Guisborough Church.

27th Guisfolk service followed by a Church Meeting.

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 9:30 am to 11:30 am, followed by a prayer meeting at 11:30 am until noon.

Please pop in, when you can, on this market day and you'll find a cheerful welcome.

## November 2022

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



*Founded 1798*

56, Westgate, Guisborough.

**News Letter**

**November 2022**

**Secretary 01287 637273**