



December 2020 and January 2021

Minister's Letter

'I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.' Psalm 130:5.

Dear friends,

Advent is a time when we look forward in hope. A time of expectation. A time when nature falls asleep around us, but in the silence and stillness of short wintry days we know that new life and movement is being nurtured, though not yet evident, ready to be birthed into a brighter and vibrant Spring.

And we too as Christians during Advent have our still, silent season of introspection, a lot like Lent, a time of quiet, insistent preparation, as we make ready for the birth of the messiah and all that flows from God's ultimate divine action with all that flows from the incarnation. I am also mindful that as I write you are as congregations moving into a season of change. A time of preparation and waiting. Of careful and prayerful discernment as you reconsider your respective, varied mission contexts and opportunities, and as you reflect together on the kind of minister whose gifting and experience might resonate with your missional opportunities, someone who could also facilitate your spiritual growth as congregations. In many ways a so-called 'vacancy' is a deceptively busy time: a time to reflect on your collective travel to date, a taking stock of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and naming where the challenges may lie.

The word 'vacancy' always appears in my own thinking in inverted commas because we are not vacant without stipendiary ministry: across the congregations we have an amazing variety of gifts, vocations, vision, and appetite for the adventure of faith. A stipendiary minister is one of a team, serving the wider church and community alongside Elders and wider membership. So when you hear the word 'vacancy', take a momentary pause, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the sisters and brothers in Christ around you who accompany you every step of the way along your journey of faith. Follow your prayer of thanksgiving for them through with the prayer that God might help you see the unique contribution you too can bring to the life of your local congregation.

Moving into vacancy, waiting to see what, or more accurately *who*, God has in store, looking ahead in hope, all seems to fit in with this season of Advent, 2021, please God, will be a better year in so many respects than 2020. And let's remember how the Christian hope we share is far more than blind optimism. Let's look to the season to come, resting assured in

the faith that the future is filled with God's presence and glory, whose presence is love, abundant love, sufficient for all and for all time, fully revealed through the birth, life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus among us.

***'Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.'* Hebrews 10:23.**

You are in my prayers this Advent, and as you begin to plan for future ministry in Tees and Swale. You have my support and that of the wider Synod, and the help of not one, but two, Interim Moderators: Fred Robinson and Sandy Ogilvie, from Waddington Street URC Durham, to help you plan for future ordained ministry.

Advent blessings, and when it comes, Happy Christmas!

In Christ,

David.

Moderator, Northern Synod.

Christmas Greetings to Everyone

I received a call from Susan Hird to say she like many of us will not be sending cards for Christmas this year instead she will be donating to charity. She asked that I pass on her heart felt good wishes for the festive season to everyone through the Link. Wishing everyone a happy Christmas, continued good health and a safe and peaceful start to 2021.

Update on Services at Low Row and Keld Worship in Keld.

Since the initial lock-down in March, Keld chapel has not reopened and will stay closed until 2021. Repair work is needed on some of the windows and then it will have a spring clean before any services are held. Congratulations must go to Christine Clarkson who organised a raffle on what would have been Harvest weekend. She had donations of 9 hampers and raised over £600 for church funds.

Worship in Low Row

Low Row reopened for services in July with the necessary restrictions in place and managed to hold a service every other week until lock-down again at the beginning of November. All the people who had already been booked to take services were still quite keen to take them, including one of our former ministers Revd Peter Poulter. If restrictions are lifted in December, then it is hoped to hold an Advent service on 6th December with John Lloyd; a service with carols and Christmas readings led by John and Rachael Hall on 13th December and a short service on Christmas day. Services usually start at 10.30 am but on Christmas day it is 9.30 am. The Low Row Village carol service due for Christmas eve will not be able to be held in the church building but at present the suggestion is to hold carol singing

in front of the Punch Bowl and Holy Trinity church starting at 3.00 pm. Details will be circulated round the village nearer the time.

January services will start on the 5th with Maranny Jones, and afterwards, hopefully, held every two weeks. As space is limited, when having to socially distance in church, anyone who is not part of the regular congregation is asked to check with Edward Brown or Sue Alderson to make sure space is available.

Thank you to Sue Alderson for sharing this:

As I was sorting through a pile of books I came across 'Fill my Stocking' *A Christmas Anthology*, by Alan Titchmarsh. When looking for new readings I came across the following and thought it very appropriate for our situation today:

WHAT DO I WISH YOU? Charlotte Gray

The family reunited
All squabbles set aside,
Food in the larder,
Knocks at the door,
Friendly faces,
Parcels piling up,
Cards from everyone you love,
Nothing forgotten,
Nothing singed,
Laughter, a little silliness'
Hugs, kisses,
Happy memories.
I wish with all my heart that
your Christmas will be all that it
was meant to be -
a little warmth in the depth of
Winter, a light in the dark.

Thank you, this time, to Anne Brown for sharing these updates:

CHURCH BELL - Over twenty years ago Gladys Honey visited Hawes Ropeworks and was convinced that Low Row church bell needed a fine new sally. After about fifteen years of regular use the bell rope frayed and not only did Brian step in to repair it but also modified the rope to simplify any repairs needed in the future. That time has now come but hopefully, once regular services have resumed, the bell will again ring out on Sunday mornings. We might even afford to replace the well-worn sally!

SMARBER HALL - On a recent visit to Smarber Hall it was noted that Ashley is making good progress rebuilding the wall to the enclosure. It is hoped that the work will be completed soon. When it was discovered last Spring that a considerable length of wall had fallen we were anxious to see it rebuilt as this place is part of our church history, it is the site of the first independent church in Swaledale founded by Philip, the IV Lord Wharton in 1690

CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE SWALEDALE CHURCHES

LOW ROW WITH KELD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Secretary - Dr Peter Clarke, 1A Reeth Road, Richmond, N. Yorks., DL10 4EH

Tel: 01748 822651 email clarkerichmond@btinternet.com

Treasurer - Mrs Anne Brown, The Old Mill, Low Row, Richmond, N. Yorks., DL11 6NH

Tel: 01748 886181 email anneedward@f2s.com

Treasurer - Mrs Christine Clarkson, c/o Kisdon, Muker, Richmond, DL11 8DN

Tel: 01748 886354

LINK MAGAZINE CONTACTS

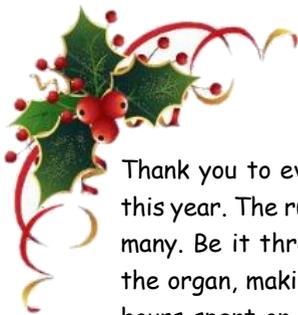
Editor and contact for Low Row and Keld newsletter contributions:

Mrs Jo Lloyd, Brass Nappa House, Low Row, Richmond, N. Yorks., DL11 6NA

Tel: 01748 886009 email Brassnappahouses@gmail.com

Northern Synod Website: www.urch-northernsynod.org.uk

Tees & Swale Pastorate



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our services throughout this year. The running of our Churches takes lots of time and effort from many. Be it through; finding visiting preachers, taking readings, playing the organ, making tea, cleaning and flower arranging. Not to forget; the hours spent on maintenance of the buildings and grounds, the accounts, minutes and meetings and I am sure the many things I have missed!

Thank you to everyone because without you we would not have our Church and without you there would be no fellowship.

Merry Christmas to you one and all. God Bless.