



The ^{New} Link

News from Low Row and Keld
United Reformed Churches in Swaledale,
Part of the Tees Swale Pastorate.

February 2021 – March 2021



15th January 2021, John Lloyd and his ever-present companion Damson, pictured during daily lockdown exercise on a beautifully bright sunny early afternoon.

Smarber Hall Chapel in January's snow – not a sight the majority of us experience. Its fallen wall has been rebuilt so, Covid and weather permitting, we hope to be able to hold our annual service here on Friday 30th April. This year the preacher booked for the event is Revd Clare Downing, the current National Moderator of the United Reformed Church – further details in the April/May issue.

Following the retirement of our Ministers, we hope to have many contributions for our future editions of the link from far and wide. This Edition we thank Julie Martin who writes from afar:

In March last year our lives changed dramatically, as did those of everyone else. On Monday March 16th Pete was preparing to practise the sound effects for a play being entered in the annual drama festival at the theatre here, and I was writing a sermon for Mothering Sunday.

During the play rehearsal the producer got a phone call saying that the drama festival had been cancelled and that everyone was to leave the theatre immediately, abandoning the set and props on the stage! By the Sunday not only were theatres closed but also churches. I never got to preach my sermon in a church, and instead of doing the sound effects for a play Pete found himself recording my sermon so that it could be put on the website of Emmanuel Parish Church, Saltburn.

You may be wondering why a Mothering Sunday sermon written by a retired URC minister ended up on the website of an Anglican church. Emmanuel Church is about 200 yards away from our house and, as I believe in worshipping locally, I have been attending worship there, as well as at Redcar URC, since we moved to Saltburn in 2013. I have gradually found myself becoming more involved at Emmanuel, including helping at the TinyTots DropIn on a Wednesday afternoon (before Covid restrictions closed this). In recent years I have preached there and led other parts of the service from time to time.

In 2018 the URC General Assembly made the decision that all retired URC ministers should decide whether they wanted to be classed as “active” or not, and by May 2019 I had decided to stop being “active” within the URC. This means that the only church I can preach in is the one where my membership is i.e. Redcar. It also means that the URC cannot ask me to take on tasks such as being Interim Moderator or convening a committee etc. I took this decision as I felt that the focus of my ministry in retirement should be on leading worship and preaching, and that Emmanuel was where God now wanted me to be.

My recorded sermon was the first of many recordings which have been put on the Emmanuel website. I have been working as part of a ‘team’ with the vicar, 3 retired Anglican clergy and a retired Baptist minister. We have written and recorded talks, meditations and sermons. Much ‘live’ worship has moved on to ZOOM, including weekday Morning Prayer at 9am and Compline (Evening Prayer) at 8pm. There is a Sunday morning service on ZOOM attended by quite a lot of people, some of whom now access ZOOM via phone. When churches were allowed to be open short services resumed both on Sundays and on Tuesday mornings. During this time the ZOOM worship continued.

So the answer to the question about what I am doing in retirement is that I am currently quite busy – although not in a way I would ever have envisaged. I feel I now belong to the church of the community where I live, and that I have an active ministry there.

My links with the URC are not as strong as they were, but I do try to keep in touch with people and churches I have got to know throughout my ministry. I hope you all continue to keep safe and well and send best wishes to everyone.

Julie Martin

Please note - No Services at both Low Row and Keld at this time as we follow the Governments restrictions.

News from our churches was a team effort this edition. Firstly, John Lloyd shares his reflections from our December services

Our first advent service focused on the anticipation and excitement felt by Christians in the build up to Christmas Day; The celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, and how we are grateful for the hope, peace, love and joy he brought to lighten what can sometimes seem a dark world. Amanda Gorman the young poet, at the inauguration of President Biden in her poem: 'The Hill we Climb' recited: 'There is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.' As Christians it is surely for us to be that light.

We also welcomed John and Rachel Hall to lead our pre Christmas service, who through readings, guitar, piano and a solo singing, left us with the Christian message to be thankful to God and appreciate what we have. We were fortunate, just before lockdown, to hold our usual Christmas day worship led by the Lundberg family. Unfortunately, George was unable to join us for the first time in over 20 years. However, Emma, Rebecca, Marj and Freddie provided a wonderful musical Christmas service to start our celebration of Jesus Christ's birthday.

Now Sue Alderson also tells us of the joy Carols brought to many in Low Row

Christmas 2020 should have seen the Low Row Village Carol Service held in the URC but we knew, as it was so popular, everyone would not get into the church if we had to observe social distancing and also singing was not permitted. So, as an alternative, a flyer was sent around the village inviting residents to congregate in front of the Punch Bowl and Holy Trinity church for carol singing. George Lundberg chose the carols and his daughters provided the music. In all there were over 70 people, young and old, socially distanced, who enjoyed being able to sing once more. Several said they really felt it was the start of Christmas celebrations.

And finally, Rachel Hall shares an alternative Christmas this year in Keld

Inspired by the different ways people were managing to celebrate Christmas with drive-in services in car parks and outdoor Carols, Kevin Pellatt and myself got together with guitar and keyboard on the wet Sunday before Christmas and had a Carol and Christmas songs sing along in Keld village. Stuart Briar, very kindly opened up his garage door and put a canopy over and even decorated it with lights and tinsel! This protected our instruments and music from the elements! Even though the weather was against us somewhat, we had a lovely sing, and it was great so see so many from the village and local vicinity turn out to celebrate Christ's birth.

On Christmas Eve in the afternoon, Muker Band came to play Carols in the village as they have done so faithfully over many years. Again, this was a really special part of Christmas and everyone really appreciates that the band turn up, whatever the weather!

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