



# The <sup>New</sup> Link

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

April and May 2020

## Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

Well Lent and Easter this year are going to be different! We started Lent activities more or less as normal but as world events have caught up with us in the form of coronavirus we have all had to rethink life and Church life.

I do not know, as I write, how this will progress and at what stage our elderly and vulnerable people will be asked to forego their normal routines and the Church will be in unprecedented territory.

That brings me to thinking about the travelling and contacts Jesus had in his earthly life. He touched the leper, asked a Samaritan woman for water, and there is in Luke 17 v 11 these words 'Now on his way to Jerusalem Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee'.

I have often reflected on this passage when working in the prison context but now I feel it applies to this period of time too. We are in some sort of boundary period between life as we have lived it and a new state of affairs which is yet unclear as I write. Will we ever return to 'normal' or will there be a permanent shift to the elbow greeting rather than the handshake – as a trivial example.

What I find is a real comfort is that Jesus metaphorically walks along this border with us and we are called to respond in ways we have not thought about before. Using technology far more to keep in contact with people – or at least a phone call on a landline. We are in fortunate times that we have these means of communication available to us and our need for contact does not disappear because we are physically separated in our public spaces.

Jesus was not only travelling the border but he was travelling it as he made his way to Jerusalem. He was acutely aware of the opposition that was mounting against him and he sensed that this journey may not end well for him as the potential of the cross became very real. Our Lenten journey – however interrupted that may have been – is also about facing a future that is uncertain. However, there is a sense that again Jesus is walking with us in it as he anguished along the way.

We may have our night in the garden, just as Jesus had in Gethsemane but we also have the early morning empty tomb experience to hold onto too. Easter may take on a new relevance for us.

As we travel on together along this road please be assured of Stephen's and my prayers for you and do not hesitate to contact us for anything you feel we can help with – be it practical or more nebulous reasons. We can be contacted by phone, email or text or, depending on the situation, in person. Church life may be different, but it will still be there for everyone to access in one way or another. This journey through the borders will be a transient thing but we can still discover the love and compassion of God as we journey it together – if at a distance.

Yours in Christ's service  
Hilary

## UPDATE –Services during APRIL and MAY

As you know we can no longer hold group worship in our chapels due to the Government restrictions and for the safety and wellbeing of all. However, we hope with the support of our ministers to stay connected with each other and with Christ. Stephen and Hilary have provided the following update for us all:

- 1) Church services and activities are cancelled at least for the next 12 weeks
- 2) We will produce a 'mini service sheet' containing hymns prayers readings and a short thought/reflection each week. These will be available via email and on the website [www.tsurc.org/](http://www.tsurc.org/)
- 3) If you or anyone you know are not on the internet and would like it in leaflet form please let us know. We will respond in the best logistical way.
- 4) The URC Daily Devotions is planning to produce a Sunday service along with the continuing Daily Devotions the link is [www.devotions.urch.org.uk](http://www.devotions.urch.org.uk) or click on the link on the URC website.
- 5) We are thinking of offering Bible Study by Skype. If you would be interested in a Skype Bible Study let us know and we will look into it.
- 6) The ministers will still be available on the phone and by email. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can help.

In this unprecedented time, we are seeking to help you through this period and would encourage you to remain in contact with your normal network of church friends and with us and hold each other in and across the churches of the pastorate in prayer.

We also should remember others beyond our church life – our neighbours and the wider community and those in our national and international world. A special prayer too for all those working on the frontline in our emergency and social care services.

Until we physically meet again:-

May the Lord bless you and keep you

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you:

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Amen

Yours Stephen Collinson [revscollinson@outlook.com](mailto:revscollinson@outlook.com) and Hilary Collinson  
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## **News from Low Row with Keld United Reformed Church**

We had disruption in early March with our service cancelled due to the flooding and then of course all was cancelled from mid-May. However, we did enjoy the Service in Low Row by Revd Alan Coustick, who joined us and shared three bible readings all relating to water and its importance to us and our faith. In Keld we celebrated baptism of Ruby Faye Ruskin, daughter of Chris and Carla Ruskin, on 23rd February.

### **View from the Pew – reflections from Daphne Clarke:**

Having Sue Alderson take such a lovely service this morning, and at only a week's notice, made me realise, not for the first time, what a special fellowship we are. On most Sunday mornings, we have all our members there which I doubt is true of many of our churches. In addition, from a membership of twelve, half of us are willing to lead worship which must be an unusually high percentage and there is never a problem finding people to read a lesson. And the various responsibilities are shared around the congregation. The other thing that has been an ongoing joy since we first worshipped at Low Row in 1988, has been that there has never been a split, a 'them and us' division between those who, as I always put it, came over with the Vikings, and the 'offcumdens', those of us who, for whatever reason, have chosen this uniquely beautiful part of the world for our retirement. I have known churches in my past where newcomers had to work their way in over a number of years. Not so in Low Row: look at the way that Lockerbie George is fully integrated into our fellowship despite his not living locally.

We may only be a small fellowship numerically, but we are big in heart and generous in sharing our talents, particularly, our welcoming.

### **Snowdrops**

White spears pierce frost-bound ground  
along the path beside the church:  
delicate bells wave bravely in snow-flecked breeze.  
The Candlemas Flower celebrates Christ's  
presentation in the Temple,  
but the passer-by sees the start of Spring.  
Small clumps struggle through verge and hedgerow,  
churchyard or suburban lawn.  
Drifts in country parks  
turn landscape into snowscape,  
gladdening our hearts with the eternal mystery  
of the season's cycle.  
Spring is only round the corner!  
But now our hearts are gladdened

by this early gift from our creator God  
the harbinger of Spring.  
These sturdy, fragile blossoms hold,  
within their green-white bells,  
the promise of another glorious year.  
**Daphne Clarke     February 2020**

## CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE SWALEDALE CHURCHES

We have two ministers in the Pastorate serving four churches – Darlington (Northgate), Northallerton (Zion), Low Row and Keld.

Ministers:            Revd Stephen Collinson    (email [revscollinson@outlook.com](mailto:revscollinson@outlook.com))  
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### **KELD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

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Tees & Swale Pastorate