

West Park United Reformed Church

Harrogate

The Messenger



February/March 2023

MINISTER — Rev Alison Micklem

SERVING ELDERS

*

Alys Allardyce

Joan Johnston

Barbara Jones

Peter Kershaw

Avril Macdonald

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Dear Friends,

Let me start by sending you all my best wishes for health and happiness in 2023

As some know, I am the youngest of five children. My siblings and I are very fortunate, because we all get on pretty well:- better now, in fact, than during our earlier years, though we do still have our moments – over time we have realised that the bond we have is important enough to us to be worth making an effort, so we work at it. We don't agree on politics – in fact it would be fair to say our views are widely divergent, so we know that's a topic to avoid when we're all together. We don't all have faith – though we're all involved in good causes one way or another. We do all make music, with differing levels of commitment and ability; other than that, our creativity takes varying forms: drawing and painting, knitting, baking – I'm not good at any of those, I stick to making soup – and writing. Some of us like animals, some of us are water-babies, happy when in or on the water, others aren't so keen... some more introvert, some contemplative, some very pragmatic and practical, others less so... and so it goes on. I think we are as close as most families, and closer than many, because we have learned that we need to allow one another space, and we have also learned that accepting one another as we are brings us joy and enables us to learn from and support one another. If we were all the same, our shared experience would be much more limited.

Why do I tell you all this? Because it occurred to me that it is quite a good illustration for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which churches all over the country observe each January. Unity is not the same as uniformity, and living with difference is a choice which requires determination, hard work, compassion and humility. It is also hugely rewarding and enriching. While my roots are firmly in the URC, I am glad that there is a wide range of denominations and that we are able to experience one another's traditions. I enjoy going to choral evensong from time to time; I am happy to participate in the various liturgies we share at the ecumenical chaplaincy at York University; I have felt the Spirit move in lively evangelical Celebration Services. Those and many other experiences have enriched and broadened my faith. Different approaches and styles suit different people: what matters is not whether we have come to faith via Rome, Westminster, Luther, Wesley or Knox: what matters is that we are united in Christ.



Yours in Christ,

Alison

Services February & March

Date	Preacher
5th February	Rev Pauline Calderwood
12th February	Rev Alison Micklem Holy Communion
19 February	Mrs Ruth Grenfell
26th February	Mr Bruce Hale Joint Service at St Paul's
5 March	Mr David Wilberforce
12 March	Rev Alison Micklem Holy Communion
19 March	Rev David Hoskins
26 March	Rev John Colston Joint Service at West Park

Ron Evans

Ron was 95 when he died on 28 November 2022.

His main driving force was his Christian faith and his life was guided by that faith which he got from his parents who were devout non-conformist Christians.

Born in Coventry, he lived his early life in Cheshire His health wasn't good in those early schooldays, and he left education when he was 15 or 16.

He continued his agricultural work going to work in a garden nursery where he met Elsa who worked there as well. They married in 1948 and around this time he started to work for ICI in Cheshire.

In 1954 Ron moved to ICI in Harrogate working there for 18 years.

Ron had always regretted not managing to finish his education and in the early 1970's an opportunity arose for him to take redundancy from ICI. He went back to studying, first getting A Levels, and then taking a degree as a mature student at Leeds University.

Ron graduated successfully; then, for the remainder of his working life he lectured at various colleges in Bradford and Huddersfield. This was a much more rewarding time for him than his earlier years with ICI and he continued his walking and climbing hobbies with the students and lecturers. His relationship with Elsa broke down and he met Peggy.

Peggy and Ron enjoyed life and he started to be able to travel abroad for the first time visiting places as far afield as China where he delighted in being able to see sights like the Terracotta Army. Ron decided to join the United Reformed Church and started worshipping at West Park where he married Peggy in 1992.

He still enjoyed walking, even into his eighties but decided at 84 that he needed to limit his walking to no more than 9 miles a day!

Ron and Peggy were together many years but sadly, Peggy became ill and died in 2018 but Ron supported her to the end despite his advancing years.



Mike Garnett

When Mike died on 19th October he was well into his 88th year. His was a life filled to capacity with so much energy and drive. A full church at his service was testament to the wide circle of people he knew from so many different backgrounds.

Mike grew up in Calverley with his sisters Anne and Christine. Their father owned a large mill at Greengates and Mike went into the business, eventually succeeding his father. During his time running G. Garnett & Sons Mike travelled the world and met a wide number of people who became friends and remained so. It was on one of several trips to New Zealand buying wool that Mike met and fell in love with Joan. They were married in St Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin in 1962. Not long afterwards Mike and Joan came to live in Harrogate where they were blessed with three children: Nikki, Kate and Helen.

When business patterns began to change in the 1980's and Britain moved away from being a manufacturing nation, it became apparent that the mill would have to close. Having opportunities to use his time in other ways, Mike became a magistrate and eventually served as Chair of Harrogate Magistrate's Court for a number of years. He also devoted a lot of time to the Leeds Industrial Tribunal, Leeds Building Society Charitable Foundation and The Charles and Elsie Sykes Trust.

Growing up in a Congregationalist family, Mike was a man of great faith. He had become a Deacon in the church at Idle until moving to Harrogate where he was invited to become a Deacon at West Park Church.

When the United Reformed Church was created from former Congregational and Presbyterian Churches fifty years ago Mike became an Elder and served the Church for five decades. His sound advice was always welcome.



Sunday by Sunday Mike attended church. Worship was very important to him because he felt that was the right way to begin a week. His knowledge of the Bible was extensive and he enjoyed participating in Bible Studies. Mike also had a great fondness for hymns and, as an accomplished flautist, used to play in the Music Group at services.

Some years prior to the formation of the United Reformed Church Mike shared in discussions with St Paul's Presbyterian Church and even suggested that a new church be constructed on the vacant site where our Court House now stands in Victoria Avenue. Sadly the opportunity was lost but even recently Mike was still convinced that union of the two fellowships was both possible and sensible.

There are so many ways in which Mike helped others through his charitable work, through his sense of fairness and justice but most of all through his deep-seated faith confessing Jesus as his Redeemer and Lord. It was an example we would do well to treasure and draw inspiration for our lives.

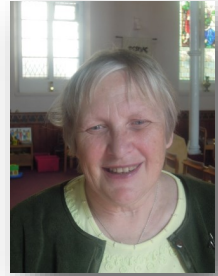
Remember Joan in your prayers. She and Mike had celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary earlier in the Autumn when they had been surrounded by their daughters and four grandchildren. Mike will be amidst angels and, as ever, serving his Heavenly Father with great joy!



From Joan Garnett

I, and the family, would like to thank everyone at West Park who so kindly sent letters and cards after Mike died. It meant so much to us to know we were in your thoughts and prayers. Mike had been an elder in the church for nearly sixty years and his many friends there meant so much to him during that time. We would also like to thank all those who came to the funeral service, he would have been so pleased to see so many there.

From The Secretary



Christmas and New year have come and gone but it is good to remember our celebrations from then. We started off the season with a service of Advent hymns and readings, led by David Wilberforce and also the lunch at the Cairn, with friends from all the other local URC churches. Both were memorable in their own way - and I am sure the snowman pictures will be enjoyed for a while. Christmas Day was a joint effort with St Paul's, several folk managed to get to church despite the early start. Then, on New Year's Day, a large combined congregation from all three Avenue churches was led in worship by Rev Ann Chesworth.

With the cold weather biting and West Park heating letting us down, we again crossed the road for our communion service at the start of January. Worshipping with the other fellowships has been highly enjoyable and we have much to continue learning from each other.

I was recently told this sorry tale whilst eating lunch at Resurrected Bites about a car parked in Victoria Avenue blocking our entrance and this prevented cars getting in but also stopped those already parked from going home. The car did have a Blue Badge displayed but it was across our driveway.

Eventually the driver returned and was very apologetic especially as by then there were parking spaces all up the Avenue. When asked why he had parked across the entrance he said, "Well I saw it was a church and I assumed you would only need access on a Sunday!" What a sad comment that he thought that was the only time a church building is used - and who knows whose cars he thought were already parked in there.

Only on a Sunday? Thankfully we did not have a funeral that day, or a wedding, or a midweek service but in reality people are in and out of our building on most days of the week. The Resurrected Bites volunteers are often in preparing on Tuesdays and were there that Wednesday plus all their customers, our coffee shop is open on Thursday and we have other users coming and going at various intervals. Recently we have accommodated Alcoholics Anonymous, the WI, Harrogate in Bloom, The Civic Society, the Civil Service Pensioners and the marvellous evening concert by the Harrogate Male Voice Choir and Nottingham Songbirds.

The Elders currently meet roughly once a month and sometimes with the St Paul's Elders. Then there are those who call in to arrange our flowers, stock the coffee shop change the banners, or practise the music for worship and our cleaners visiting each week. And of course, there is also work to be done on the building - we have had exciting (?) things done such as gutters cleaned, fire extinguishers serviced, and lighting sorted out bringing workmen and women in as well as our own members.

We have also had meetings with future potential users and hope to be hosting a series of events as part of Harrogate Festivals in June, a Welsh celebration in May, and an exhibition in the Autumn to mark 100 years of the Harrogate war memorial. Details of all these are still being finalised so more visits and meetings.

So, we are NOT only using the building on a Sunday and I hope our gentleman car-parker will come to understand that.

Babs

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Yorkshire Congregational Union

Special Assembly 18th September 1971

RESOLUTION

“That this Yorkshire Congregational Union and Home missionary Society, Inc., approves the Resolution of Acceptance passed by the Assembly on 11th May 1971 in acceptance of the proposal to form The United Reformed Church.”

The above main resolution was proposed by Rev. Norman Beard (Moderator) and seconded by Mr Will Knowles.

Total number of votes cast - 251

For - 221

Against - 30

Editorial



It's hard to believe that once again the Christmas trees are down, the decorations away and we are well on our way into 2023. Last year was certainly not a vintage one in many ways at West Park, with the passing of three much loved members, namely June, Mike and Ron. They were all very much at the heart of the fellowship and they are sadly missed.

We were very fortunate to have our grandchildren with us over Christmas and as two of them are 3 and one 7 they are very much into Santa and it was a joy to once again be part of that. In addition to services in Harrogate, we went to The Bridge at Otley for their Christmas Eve crib service which was a wonderful start to Christmas. Things took somewhat of a downturn when I tuned into *Songs of Praise for New Year's Day* which now seems to be yet another outlet for celebrities whose career is on the wane. The congregation was really an audience, who applauded at the end of every hymn/song and also were encouraged to give a round of applause for the organist and conductor. I am all for change, but one hopes it's for the better. Sadly, it must be my advancing

years which means in my book it's

nearly always for the worse—especially where TV is concerned and *Songs of Praise* leads the way.

Do you remember Roger Royle with his *Sunday Half Hour* on Sunday evenings? Is it too much to ask that the BBC provide a couple of programmes that appeal to those who for whatever reason cannot attend church?

Many churches, including the URC are promoting online services which in my book are no substitute for a professional broadcast and on the TV or radio, not on a PC or phone with its poor sound quality, although it is good to be part of your congregation.

I was saddened, as I am sure will you be, to learn of the passing of **Dr Ron Sweeney** a member for many years at The Bridge Church, Otley. Ron has led worship at West Park on a number of occasions and was always very thought provoking and enjoyable. We remember in our prayers his family and his friends at The Bridge.

Finally, what a joy to see the discernible difference as the days start to lengthen.

A Brief Encounter with Angus Sharp

What is the first news/historical event you can recall from your early life?

The declaration of war, my father being in the RAF and the issuing of gas masks at school.

What is your favourite saying or quotation?

An honest man's the noblest work of God (Robert Burns).

Do you have a favourite film?

Singing In The Rain/ Dr Zhivago

What was your favourite job?

Working in agriculture/horticulture for my entire working life.

If you could spend a day in one city or place at one moment in history, where and when would that be?

At the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215

Have you always lived in Harrogate?

No, but for 35 years

Which person (or type of person) would you most like to spend a day in the shoes of?

Francis Crick—unravelling DNA.

What has been the biggest challenge in your life?

Catching up with education having left school at 15.

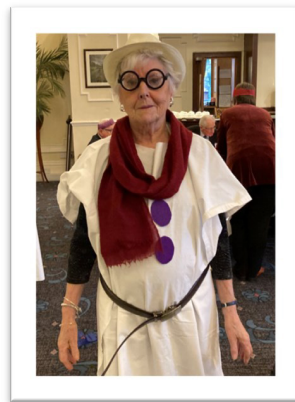
Where do you feel closest to God?

In the wide-open countryside.



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

As usual, another highly enjoyable and entertaining Christmas Lunch took place at The Cairn Hotel where we were again joined by friends from other URCs from across the district. Thanks are due to Alys who, assisted by Babs put in so much time and effort to ensure that we have some different post-lunch entertainment each year and this occasion was no exception. Everyone was provided with a gift which again proved to be very useful and was gratefully received. A hard act to follow for 2023, so when the time comes do get your name down.



Important Diary Dates

Saturday 11th February The Bridge Church Otley, Mission & Care Group day led by Rev Samantha Sheehan. Commences at 10am and includes lunch.

At the recent joint elders meeting with St Paul's it was agreed to join forces for our Lent Reflections this year. The most suitable day for both churches is Friday and so the following calendar has been drawn up.

Each week there will be a reflection and short act of worship followed by a simple lunch. On Friday March 3rd West Park is hosting the Women's World Day of Prayer Service for many churches in Harrogate and so there will be no devotions that week. The series will conclude on Good Friday with us joining all churches at the war memorial in town.

Friday 24th February	12.30 - 1.30 Lent Devotions at St Paul's
Friday March 3rd	2pm Women's World Day of Prayer Service at West Park
Friday 10th March	12.30 - 1.30 Lent Devotions at St Paul's
Friday 24th March	12.30 - 1.30 Lent Devotions at St Paul's
Friday 31 March	12.30 - 1.30 Lent Devotions at West Park
Friday 7th April	Good Friday Worship at the war memorial at 11am

ST PAUL'S CHARITY COFFEE MORNINGS

St Paul's charity coffee morning which in January was to support Yorkshire Cancer Research, raised the admirable sum of almost £300. A couple of our members attended and St Paul's would welcome more. It is on a Saturday morning with the next one being Saturday February 18 in aid of Vision Support, please try and go.

Our Faith

Christians now account for less than half of the UK population for the first time in census history, government figures reveal.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) results show that 46.2 per cent of the population (27.5 million people) described themselves as 'Christian' in 2021. This marks a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3 per cent (33.3 million people) in 2011.

The census data also shows that every major religion increased over the ten-year period, except for Christianity.

Despite this decrease, 'Christian' remained the most common response to the question about religion. 'No religion' was the second most common response, increasing to 37.2 per cent (22.2 million) from 25.2 per cent (14.1 million) across the ten-year period.

The Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, said it was "not a great surprise that there is a declining number of Christians in the UK, but it was important to remember that Christianity is the largest movement on Earth."

The census is carried out every 10 years by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). People were asked the broad question what their religion was rather than being asked more specifically about their beliefs or religious practices, in the voluntary question included in the census since 2001.

Following the announcement, the Archbishop of York said the country had "left behind the era when many people almost automatically identified as Christian."

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell said: "fewer people in this country are identifying as Christian than in the past, but it still throws down a challenge to us not only to trust that God will build his kingdom on Earth but also to play our part in making Christ known."

He said that, facing a cost-of-living crisis and war in Europe, people still needed spiritual guidance, adding: "We will be there for them, in many cases, providing food and warmth."

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**Will you come and follow me if I
but call your name?....**

**Will you let my life be grown in you
and you in me?**



The
**United
Reformed
Church**