Roker United Reformed Church

Letter to members & friends September 2021

On behalf of the elders we hope and pray that you and those you love are well and safe. The church is open for worship when you are ready to attend if you aren’t already doing so. It has been some time since our last letter so an overview of our news is appropriate.

Firstly, our minister Rev Dr David Whiting retires on September 28th after many years service to the Sunderland & Boldon churches. His last service will be a joint service at Stockton Road URC on September 26th at 10.45am followed by refreshments. Please advise an elder if you are planning to take part. A collective gift from the 3 churches has been agreed. We all wish David & Lesley a very happy and healthy retirement with our thanks for his service to us.

3 of the elders have begun planning for worship during the vacancy. We expect to be linked in a pastorate with St Margaret’s in South Shields but this must be ratified at Synod in October. Worship will feel different after September, with 1 joint service monthly with Stockton Road led by the CRCW, Alison Dalton. We anticipate that there will be one other regular style service monthly with the others expected to be devoted to music, bible study, reflections on prayer etc as we seek to express and deepen our faith as disciples of Jesus. More will follow once the ideas put forward take greater shape.

Roker Life project continues to serve the community with a very successful 6-week summer family fun programme, including many refugee and asylum seeker families, a strong book club open to all, dance and exercise classes and craft club. This is a very strong URC witness to many who are isolated, lonely or in need.

Damp proof work is outstanding on the porch and will finish next month. We gratefully received a legacy from Mary Archer’s estate of £5000 but the damp proof work costing £27500 in total (covered 75% by Synod) and reduced income from hall hire means our reserves have fallen. Members’ contributions are needed to support the costs which accrue every month. As soon in the Autumn as possible we will arrange a church meeting to bring everyone up to date with finance, worship and other matters of importance.

So, we have weathered the storm of the pandemic and remain open for worship, bruised but still moving forward. The retirement of our minister will bring about many changes but we must have faith that a new minister will join us when God plans this to happen. Meantime we are not great in numbers but our core fellowship is strong, we are serving our community as best we can; as the bible urges us to do. Our buildings need more work but they offer a safe welcoming place to the many who cross our thresholds each month.

We pray for everyone in our church family, for our community and city, for the refugees who will come to Sunderland seeking safety and a welcome, and for David & Lesley as they embark on this next chapter of their lives.

God bless

David D (for the elders)