

Dear Friends

We are 'History in the making'. It was a long-standing northern truth, as I was growing up, that this week's headlines are next weeks fish and chip papers. This is now historical as the health and safety people prevented chips being wrapped in newsprint years ago, but the sentiment remains. Much of history fades with the memories. This is also why remembering is so very important.

Our faith is a historical faith, built on historical facts. The Old Testament serves as historical preparation for all that we find then in the New Testament. Secular Roman historians have provided evidence that a man called Jesus of Nazareth *was* crucified, and that his body *was indeed* reported as missing.

The story of the Christian Church grew from that point onwards, to today as you are sitting reading this magazine. You are part of this amazing story of the disciples of Jesus. The Christian Church has gone through many turns and tumbles in its life over the last 2 millennia. It is fair to say that those early followers of Jesus did not expect the story to grow as it has. There are now followers of Jesus around the globe, every nation has heard the Easter story of His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. Here in Menston we are playing our part in the continuing story, and more significantly *you* are part of this on-going story.

On Saturday 30 July 1870 at 4pm there was a choir procession from Derry Hill to the site of the soon to be built Parish Church, singing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'. This was the historic day when the foundation stone was laid to the Glory of God here in our village. Nine months later the local press published this exciting news:

'The Lord Bishop of the Diocese has arranged to consecrate this church and churchyard on Friday April 28th (1871), at 10.30am. The Holy Communion will be administered; the Bishop preaching and celebrating. The Bishop will be the guest of R.J. Hudson, Esq. Moorville, who has invited a large number of Subscribers and Parishioners of Menstone to meet the Bishop at Luncheon, at Moorville after the consecration'.

That morning there were 170 people crowded into the newly opened church, and 110 returned later for an Evening service.

This year the on-going historical story has encountered some unfamiliar challenges, just as previous generations have faced difficult times. For the first time since the Puritans were in power, the front doors of our church were temporarily locked for worship, as we were asked to follow government guidelines in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier last year we launched our *New Roof Appeal* hoping and praying that in the same generous way that members of the local community gave money to build this church in 1871, something similar would happen to replace the roof, which after 150 years of faithful service is in serious need of replacement. We have yet still to reach our target of £102,000.

During this lock-down we have lost a significant number of faithful friends, family, and

supporters, hardly any to Covid-19, but because of the situation we have been unable to give them the kind of thanksgiving and farewell that we would have liked. Now, at last, with the roll out of a vaccine we can see life slowly re-emerging, but no doubt transformed from how it was before.

Further on in this magazine, you will find a special section setting out how we are hoping to celebrate our 150th Anniversary year. We are trusting that these different activities will be able to take place and that you will feel able to join in and celebrate being a significant part of St Johns family. As followers of Jesus, we are people who believe in Resurrection. We will celebrate it this Easter and we will live it as we continue in the on-going witness of this Church Community. So, let us wish one another a Happy Easter and a very happy 150th Birthday.

God Bless

Andrew

Associate Priest.