

# **PRENTON NEWS**

The Magazine of  
Prenton United Reformed Church  
Prenton Road West, Birkenhead



**OCTOBER 2020**

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### NEW EVERY MORNING

**N**ight falls. For some, it's very dark.  
**E**vening's stars hunker down behind cloud;  
**W**here lamps glowed, now there's barely a spark.  
**E**mpy hearts break, black-dog heads are bowed.  
**V**ery faintly on the breeze a voice chants a prayer,  
**E**choing its hope someone lights a candle –  
**R**isible weapons against a world's despair  
**Y**et still too hot for Hell's hordes to handle.  
**M**oonlight still dances behind its shroud  
**O**ceans still yield their gentle luminescence  
**R**ims of silver trim each nimbus cloud –  
**N**octurnal sentinels of a numerous presence.  
**I**n a few short hours the boundless day will dawn  
**N**ew promises will comfort those who mourn  
**G**od's mercies are, with each fresh sun, re-born.

Anon

*Items for the November church magazine by Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
please.*

## FROM OUR MINISTER

**Give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.  
1Thessalonians 5:18**

Autumn is usually a time of thanksgiving. Here in the UK lots of churches and communities would normally celebrate and give thanks for the harvest. In the USA they even have an event called 'Thanksgiving' which links back to the Pilgrim Fathers colonising North America (I'm sure there were a few Pilgrim Mothers and Pilgrim Children too).

However, this year things seem quite different. There is much for us to moan about: Disrupted education, lost medical appointments and treatment, restricted incomes, strained relationships, lost holidays and lost jobs. And for us in the church the pandemic has meant 'missing out' on Easter and Pentecost and, if things don't change quickly, the rising numbers of Covid-19 cases mean that Christmas as we know it could well be 'cancelled' too.

So, what if anything, can we be thankful for?

Well, when we take stock of our lives, there is much to be thankful for. As we navigate the restrictions this pandemic is putting on us it would be easy for us to wail, 'woe, woe, a thrice woe', especially as we can't get back into church yet, but developing and having a spirit of gratitude is something we should strive to do as Christians and, by so doing, we become beacons of light to our families and communities.

As a result of this pandemic millions of people in the west have realised just how much has been taken for granted such as our health, travel, socialising and even trips to the park. Ironically, it is when these are stripped back that we start to appreciate the things that we still have.

This experience is even more pronounced for those who have been struck down by the virus. A 38 year old fitness trainer struck down by the virus said this, "It changed me. I understand the importance of things that used to seem insignificant, things that signify living – breathing, a walk, a hug, a glass of wine – because this virus wants to take that away from you. It wants to take away your freedom."

Becoming more grateful can be a powerful tool for getting us through this current crisis. Having an 'attitude of gratitude' has proven health benefits, both physically and mentally but it also helps us to reassess what is important to us.

Of course Covid-19 is a human catastrophe, but it is also making millions assess what is important, and to count their blessings - particularly if they have not contracted the illness.

One commentator said this, "During stressful periods, we tend to focus on the stress, and so can overlook the places where God is reaching out to us. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude is essential to maintaining perspective. God is active in the midst of the coronavirus but are you allowing yourself to notice these actions of God? Noticing is the beginning of gratitude."

As we come into this period of 'Thanksgiving' let's take deliberate steps to refocus ourselves and look at what God is doing in our lives and the lives of those around us that we can thank him for.

Here's a challenge and a few simple steps we can take to help us, you and me, to become more grateful in our lives:

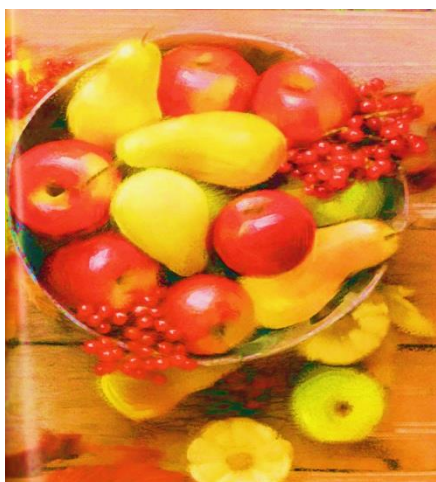
- Keep a list and write down three or four things each day that you're grateful to God for.
- Send a thank-you note to someone who has made a difference in your life.
- Say thank you to those individuals who help you throughout the day and thank God for them.

***"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus".***

Keep safe, keep well and God bless.

**Jeff**

*Creator God, be near to me. When I'm uncertain, offer me comfort. When I'm afraid, give me courage. I give you thanks for all of the good things in my life. I ask for help with the things that aren't so good. I pray for my community in the midst of this pandemic, that everyone would stay safe and healthy. Be with our leaders, and help them to make good decisions. Thank you for your love. Amen.*



## **Thanksgiving**

The year has turned its circle,  
The seasons come and go.  
The harvest all is gathered in,  
And chilly north winds blow.  
Orchards have shared their treasures,  
The fields, their yellow grain,  
So open wide the doorway ...  
Thanksgiving comes again!

**Author Unknown**

## **NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

We send our love, sympathy and condolences to **Jo Johns and her daughters Emma and Rachel and their families** on the passing of her dear husband Syd. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this sad time.

The funeral service for **Alison Alderson** was conducted by Rev Jeff Hughes at Landican on October 2nd but due to the restrictions was for her family and close friends.

**Maureen Makin** eventually had her eye operation at the beginning of September, which was original scheduled for March 23rd (lockdown day), and is making a good recovery.

**Elaine Parkin** has been "self-isolating" for the second time since this pandemic hit us and she was very relieved and pleased that her test results came back negative after three of her work colleagues tested positive.

## **REFLECTION LOOSELY BASED ON PSALM 118**

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
His love endures forever.

When I'm forced to stay at home on a beautiful spring day, I am thankful that green has just started to appear on the bushes and trees outside my window. What a wonderful reminder of seasons changing, and of new life appearing out of what looked dead.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
His love endures forever.

When I'm away from family and friends, and not able to celebrate with them in person, I am thankful for technology that allows us to connect from a distance. I am beyond thankful for the many lives I've had the privilege of connecting with. What a joy, a blessing, and an encouragement every person is. What a gift to have so many people I miss being around! We will be back to fun places around Berlin!

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
His love endures forever.

When fear and sadness and loss seem to take over, I am thankful I can be real with You. Your throne is a throne of grace and you invite me to come as I am. I am thankful you promise to be with me. I am thankful you are still God, and all this is not a surprise to you.

You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
His love endures forever.



## **THANK YOU**

We would like to thank everyone for the lovely church flowers and for all the cards with kind thoughts and prayers that meant so much to us on the sad loss of Syd. We are also grateful to Jeff for leading the funeral service and to Brian and Shelby for their readings and support.

**Jo Johns and family**

## **REMEMBERING ALISON ALDERSON**

I look upon Alison's sad passing as the end of an era. I think of her along with a group of ladies who played important roles in the life of the Church when I was a young member.

She was creative and artistic and often provided lovely floral arrangements, having learnt her skills at the Oxton Flower Club. She helped organise the weekly Lunch Club for many years along with friends Doreen Snelson and Joyce Halliday.

In latter years she joined our Church cleaning group and enjoyed its friendly banter while looking after the front of the Church.

I probably got to know Alison best when she joined the choir. She had a lovely soprano voice and we were delighted to welcome her. She remained a loyal and valued member until she could no longer get to Church. She was a founder member of the Castle Singers in which she took an active role until a couple of years ago.

Throughout her health problems, which kept her mainly housebound, she remained cheerful and positive. She came along to the Solo Group meetings whenever possible although it was a great struggle physically. She loved meeting her friends there and always contributed to the discussions.

Alison will be sadly missed and remembered for her quiet dignity and impeccable style.

**Shelby**

## **Thanksgiving Prayer**

Father we thank thee for this food  
for health, strength, and all things good.

May others all these blessings share,  
and hearts be grateful everywhere.

I thank you God for most this amazing day;  
for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a blue true dream of sky;  
and for everything which is infinite which is yet.

**E. E. Cummings**

## LOCKDOWN LOG

At this time of year, I am usually at my busiest because everything has started up again following the summer break. Preparing for church premises Harvest Services and lunches; baking and rallying contributors and donors to MacMillan Coffee Mornings; arranging, shopping, baking and organising Pudsey Pie and Pudding Night for Children in Need; shopping for, collecting for, encouraging and rallying shoppers and packers for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes!

I am not able to host MacMillan Coffee Morning this year, but I would encourage you to consider making donations to MacMillan at other events or online if you are able as their work is ongoing and I have heard that some nursing posts have been made redundant.

<https://donation.macmillan.org.uk>

Likewise, with the Pudsey Pie and Pudding Night, usually a great success and very much a squash together as opposed to a socially distanced event, so just not possible this year. Again, if this charity has continued to work throughout the Covid 19 crisis, perhaps with even more calls for help. If you feel able please consider making your donations to them either in response to their TV appeal or via their website.

[www.bbcchildreninneed@cin.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbcchildreninneed@cin.bbc.co.uk)

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

There are a number of ways that we can still support this charity and that we can still ensure that children still receive a gift this Christmas.

You can pay for and pack a box online using this link:

<https://shoebonline.samaritans-purse.org.uk>



I am able to order and supply you with the pre-printed shoeboxes and you can fill them yourselves. Jeff and I will get the empty box(es) to you and collect them from you.

I am willing to accept donations from you to buy items for boxes or to accept items for the boxes. I will pack the boxes at home and deliver them to the collection point.

If you would like to contribute this year, I will need your donations by **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020.**

If you want to fill a box yourself, I will need the box by **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020.**

Please check the list of what cannot go into boxes and of suggested items. **(No Sweets or Toothpaste this year).**

Hopefully, I will spend the next couple of weeks spending your money online as I search for suitable items at reasonable prices!

Please let me know as soon as possible if you want to contribute in anyway. If you have any queries about this, please check the website for Samaritans Purse UK; email me [heatherhughes1@virginmedia.com](mailto:heatherhughes1@virginmedia.com) or contact me on 0151 201 1883.

I know that it's difficult to feel involved during the current circumstances, but there are ways in which we can still make a difference. Please prayerfully consider whether you can help.

I look forward to being busy,

**Heather** x

### **Gift Ideas for Shoeboxes**



**Toys:** Include items that children will immediately embrace such as dolls, cuddly toys, toy trucks, harmonica, yo-yo, skipping rope, ball, small puzzles etc.



**School Supplies:** Pens, pencils & sharpeners, crayons, felt pens, stamps & ink pad sets, writing pads or notebooks & paper, solar calculators, colouring & picture books etc.



**Hygiene Items:** Toothbrush, bars of wrapped soap, comb, hairbrush, flannel.

**Due to more stringent import regulations, toothpaste can no longer be included in shoeboxes.**



**Other Items:** Hat, cap, gloves, scarves, sunglasses, hair accessories, jewellery set, wind up torch, slinky spring, matchbox cars etc.

**Due to more stringent import regulations, sweets can no longer be included in shoeboxes.**



**DO NOT INCLUDE:** Used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives or military figures; seeds; sweets, chocolate, food items; toothpaste, lotions or liquids including bubbles; medicines; playing cards of the 4-suit variety; religious or political literature; sharp or fragile items; books with mainly words.

**Items packed from this list will be removed from shoeboxes**

Men and women are able creatures; we have made over 35 million laws and haven't yet improved on the Ten Commandments.

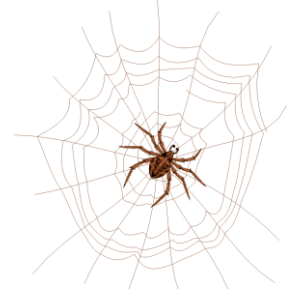


## ***From the Manse . . .***

### **The Harvest**

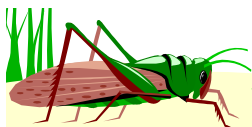
There was once a spider who lived in a cornfield. He was a big spider and he had spun a beautiful web between the corn stalks. He got fat eating all the bugs that would get caught in his web. He liked his home and planned to stay there for the rest of his life.

One day the spider caught a little bug in his web, and just as the spider was about to eat him, the bug said, "If you let me go I will tell you something important that will save your life." The spider paused for a moment and listened because he was amused. "You had better get out of this cornfield," the little bug said, "The harvest is coming!"



The spider smiled and said, "What is this harvest you are talking about? I think you are just telling me a story." But the little bug said, "Oh no, it is true. The owner of this field is coming to harvest it soon. All the stalks will be knocked down and the corn will be gathered up. You will be killed by the giant machines if you stay here."

The spider said, "I don't believe in harvests and giant machines that knock down corn stalks. How can you prove this?" The little bug continued, "Just look at the corn. See how it is planted in rows? It proves this field was created by an intelligent designer." The spider laughed and mockingly said, "This field has evolved and has nothing to do with a creator. Corn always grows that way." The



bug went on to explain, "Oh no. This field belongs to the owner who planted it, and the harvest is coming soon." The spider grinned and said to the little bug, "I don't believe you," and then the spider ate the little bug for lunch.

A few days later, the spider was laughing about the story the little bug had told him. He thought to himself, "A harvest! What a silly idea. I have lived here all of my life and nothing has ever disturbed me. I have been here since these stalks were just a foot off the ground, and I'll be here for the rest of my life, because nothing is ever going to change in this field. Life is good, and I have it made."

The next day was a beautiful sunny day in the cornfield. The sky above was clear and there was no wind at all. That afternoon as the spider was about to take a nap, he noticed some thick dusty clouds moving toward him. He could hear the roar of a great engine and he said to himself, "I wonder what that could be?"



## John Barleycorn

The story goes that three men swear that John Barleycorn must die. They decide to take a plough and bury him alive.

But the spring comes and he rises through the soil.

After a while he grows big and strong, even growing a beard, so the three men cut him down at the knee, tie him on to a cart, beat him, strip the flesh off his bones and grind him between two stones.

But at the end it is John Barleycorn who defeats his opponents, proving the stronger man, by turning into beer.



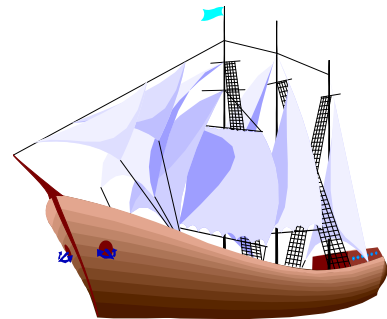
The Pilgrim Fathers, a group of Puritan separatists, set sail from Plymouth on September 16th 1620 in the Mayflower, a 180-ton wine ship, bound for the New World and religious freedom, with 87 passengers and 15 crew. They landed in Cape Cod on November 19th 1620 and settled in Massachusetts Bay.

## The Pilgrims Came

The Pilgrims came across the sea,  
And never thought of you and me;  
And yet it's very strange the way  
We think of them Thanksgiving Day.

We tell their story, old and true  
Of how they sailed across the blue,  
And found a new land to be free  
And built their homes quite near the sea.

Every child knows well the tale  
Of how they bravely turned the sail  
And journeyed many a day and night,  
To worship God as they thought right.



**Author Unknown**

A four year old girl was learning to say the Lord's Prayer. She was reciting it all by herself without help from her mother.

She said, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us some e-mail. Amen."

## CHURCH MAGAZINE

As you will have noticed, we have been producing a monthly magazine during these unprecedented circumstances and the majority of you are able to read it online through your e-mail and/or on the church website and paper copies have only been sent to those of us who do not have access to the internet.

What the future holds we do not know . . . . . Will we be back in church? Will we be in lockdown again? Will we have our usual Christmas celebrations or will we be celebrating this event in 2020 in a very different kind of way to our normal routine?

Therefore, I am suggesting that you might like to send your Christmas Greetings to your Church family and friends through the magazine. If you would like to be included on a 'special page' for the December issue (or it could be a November & December issue), will you please give me call on 608 2510 before the 25th of October (I'm not online!) so that I can include your names in the appropriate magazine.

**Margaret (Editor)**

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A woman had a beautiful black cat with white feet named Socks. Socks spent his days outside and came indoors only at night. But one cool October evening he disappeared.

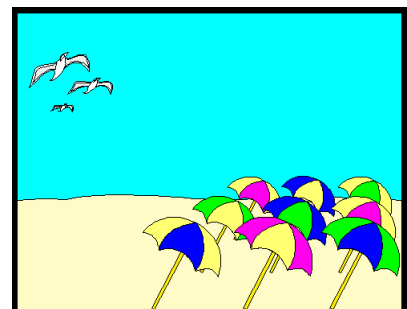
She searched high and low for several days, but all in vain. The following spring, however, Socks reappeared, looking healthy and clean. She figured he'd just been out sowing wild oats, and let it go at that.



Everything was back to normal until that autumn, when Socks once again disappeared. The next spring, just as in the previous year, he returned. When it happened for the third year in a row, the woman became perplexed and decided to investigate. She started by asking her neighbours to see what, if any, information they might have.

Finally she was down to the last house on the block, the home of an older couple. She went up and knocked on the door. The lady of the house answered, and Sock's owner asked her, "By any chance, have you ever seen a black cat with four white feet around here?"

"A black cat?" the woman said. "With four white feet? Oh my, yes! He's the sweetest thing. My husband and I kept seeing him outside every fall. We hated it that the poor thing had to be out in the cold, so we decided that when we go south for the winter, we'd take him with us. He's been going to Florida with us for every winter for the last few years." Mystery solved!!



## MY LITTLE SATNAV . . . . .



I have a little Satnav, it sits there in my car,  
A Satnav is a driver's friend it tells you where you are.  
I have a little Satnav, I've had it all my life,  
It's better than the normal ones, my Satnav is my wife.  
It gives me full instructions, especially how to drive  
"It's sixty miles an hour", it says, "You're doing sixty five."

It tells me when to stop and start, and when to use the brake  
And tells me that it's never ever, safe to overtake.  
It tells me when a light is red, and when it goes to green  
It seems to know instinctively, just when to intervene.  
It list the vehicles just in front, and all those to the rear,  
And taking this into account, it specifies my gear.

I'm sure no other driver, has so helpful a device,  
For when we leave and lock the car, it still gives its advice.  
It fills me up with counselling, each journey's pretty fraught.  
So why don't I exchange it, and get a quieter sort?  
Ah well, you see, it cleans the house, makes sure I'm properly fed.  
It washes all my shirts and things, and keeps me warm in bed!

Despite all these advantages, and my tendency to scoff,  
I only wish that now and then, I could turn the Lady off.

*Pam Ayres*

