

PRENTON NEWS

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



SEPTEMBER 2020

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Minister: Rev Jeff Hughes Tel: 201 1883
E-Mail: prentonurcminister@virginmedia.com

Secretary: Mrs Jean Bayley Tel: 677 3248

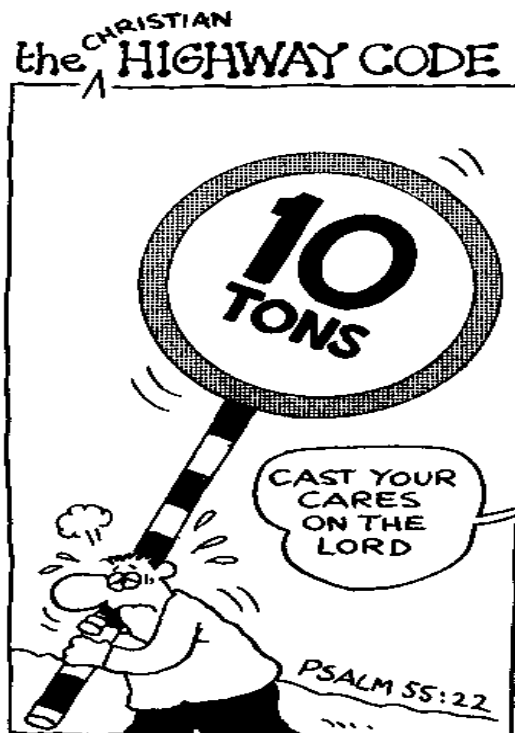
Church Website: prentonurc.org.uk

Any information, pictures or articles for the website should be sent to Philip Roper at phil.e.roper@btinternet.com

Church and Community Activities are all suspended until further notice.

Donations towards the cost of the magazine would be appreciated

*Items for the October & November church magazine by Sunday 13th
September 2020 please.*



FROM THE MANSE

WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE SON MAKES

I don't know about you but I'm a bit of a **sun worshipper**; I just love it when the sun shines, and the warmer, the better. I've often said that I was made to live in sunnier climes.

The sunshine lifts my spirits and gives me the energy and the motivation to want to get outside and do things such as going for a leisurely walk or being creative in the garden, but I also just love chilling out, taking in a few rays, and relaxing in the warmth of the sun.

I think I might be one of those SAD people; that is those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder. People who suffer from this can feel low, disinterested, irritable, lethargic and sleepy during the day, finding it hard to get up in the morning, and craving carbohydrates and gaining weight.

Heather tells me that I'm not suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder, I'm just a lazy, grumpy old grandad eating too many cakes and biscuits in lockdown. That would explain all of the above but – how rude – when I think about it though, Heather's probably right and her explanation is better than Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Whatever the reason, the truth remains that I feel better when the sun is shining and I'm able to benefit from its warmth and glow. I'm glad to say there have been some opportunities during the summer for basking in the sun and Heather and I had a few days away in Scotland recently when the sun shone.

I don't know about you but I'm a bit of a **son worshipper** too? That is that I love being in the presence of Jesus and feeling the benefit of the warmth of his relationship with me. And when I feel the closeness of that relationship it lifts my spirits and gives me the energy and the motivation to want to worship Him and serve Him.

But, I think we can all be SAD Christians at times too, when clouds of doubt obscure our vision of Jesus and the **son** seems to be a million miles away. That can lead to us feeling feel low, disinterested, irritable, and lethargic, just wanting to curl up in a ball and do nothing. And we're left wondering if our faith matters at all, if Jesus really exists and if he does, does he really care.

You know, even on the darkest of days or in the middle of the night, when the sun appears not to be there at all, we continue to have life because of its unseen effect. And our knowledge is such that we know the clouds will eventually disappear and night will once again turn into day and, even those seemingly one-off bouts of darkness such as solar eclipses will end, and the sun will shine again.

The same goes for our relationship with Jesus. Even though we might experience those clouds of doubt or the 'dark night of the soul', the effects of the **sun** still brings us spiritual and eternal life and our faith knowledge tells us that these clouds too will disappear, the 'dark night of the soul' will be replaced by 'The light that shines in the darkness'.

So, if you're a **sun worshipper** like me, and if you're a **son worshipper** like me, I'm here to tell you that no matter how gloomy it may be the **sun** and the **son** will shine again and life will be as it should.

Keep safe, keep well and God bless.

Jeff



Finance
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

August 2020

From: Ian Hardie, Treasurer of the United Reformed Church
and John Piper, Deputy Treasurer

To: The members and friends of all our 1,400 URC congregations

'THANK YOU' for your unique and vital contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church, and for the work of the kingdom which we are able to do together in God's name.

We are living through an extraordinary and challenging time – a very anxious time for everyone; a difficult time for many; and a time of suffering and loss for some. Yet, the main purpose of this letter is to say **'thank you'** to each of you for all that you have done for the Church in the past; for all that you continue to do even in these difficult times; and for what you will do in the future.

As we are treasurers, you will not be surprised that the focus of this letter is on finance. But we recognise that finance is only a means to the end which is our doing of God's work together.

'Thank you' for your giving to your local church. Financially, this giving is the lifeblood of your own church and of the whole United Reformed Church across England, Scotland and Wales. It is this personal giving that enables your local church treasurer to pay your church's bills. Typically, the largest of those 'bills' is the contribution your local church pays to the URC Ministry and Mission Fund. This Fund meets the central costs of the United Reformed Church. The total budget is around £20 million and is approved each year by Mission Council. Over 80% of this money is spent on ministers and church related community workers – their training, stipends and pensions. But the other 20% also achieves an

enormous amount on behalf of us all. General Assembly 2020 was severely constrained because of the Covid-19 lockdown, but the reports written for General Assembly are available on the URC website, and they paint pictures of all the work that has been done in our name over the last two years and much of that work is ongoing.

'Thank you' for your giving and the giving of your local church last year. In 2019, over **£19.4 million was given by local churches and synods to the Ministry and Mission Fund.** The total contributions from local churches reduced very slightly but the average giving per member has, once again and remarkably, gone up by more than inflation.

'Thank you' for your continued giving this year. We fully understand that circumstances this year are difficult. Most local churches have been unable to meet for over five months. We have not had the usual opportunities to make our offerings for the work of the Church. But most of the costs of the local church and of the denomination have not reduced and some have increased as a consequence of the pandemic. We are also aware that some have lost income or work this year and are therefore in great financial difficulty. But there are others on fixed incomes who are actually better off than they might otherwise have been. **So, please continue to give what you can in whatever way you can – or save it up until you can hand it over.**

Any giving of ours is a response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nevertheless, **it is important for us to say 'thank you' to each and all of you.**

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter then please speak to your church treasurer, who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ, Ian and John

CHURCH WEBSITE

Since the start of the lockdown, Jeff has been producing online services on YouTube, including favourite hymn selections, and sending them out by email. I have been adding links to the online services onto the Church website and they are all still there, so if you have internet access you have the opportunity to watch them again (like the TV Catch up service!). I have also added links to the Church magazines which Margaret Meade has continued to produce. Go to the bottom of the Homepage to find these links. A reminder that the website address is prentonurc.org.uk. If you need any help, please send me an email on phil.e.roper@btinternet.com.

"DAILY BREAD"

Some of the congregation regularly use "Daily Bread". This is a quarterly-issued guide to daily Bible reading. It gives a structure to your private study of the Scriptures, varying between both Old and New Testaments, and giving explanations, and historical and linguistic backgrounds. As with other Bible notes from Scripture Union, on Sundays, it looks at the Psalms.

If you would like to begin using this very helpful guide, please contact me and we can arrange for you to receive your copy. The next one, for the fourth quarter of 2020, will be available soon; or if you prefer, you could begin with 2021.

Thank you.

Marian Davies

LOCKDOWN LOG

Another magazine deadline has come around (and gone right past me), so here are some thoughts! During the gap between scribblings, little things might happen, and I think, 'I could put that in the log'; then when I sit down to write, I can remember nothing! (Perhaps I should make a note at the time eh!)

I am pleased to announce that for the first time ever I have managed to successfully grow some tomatoes. At the beginning of lockdown, I ordered some 'Tumbling Toms' on-line. The advert said that they would be sent to me in May when they had been brought on and were ready to transplant. Toward the end of May a parcel arrived; I was so excited to plant these beautiful tomato plants! Oh my! I opened the package and beheld 10 tiny pathetic seedlings that looked as though they were beyond help. I was so disappointed. Still I planted them and hoped for the best. A week or so later I was kindly given 3 very healthy tomato plants that made me even less hopeful for my original plants. Warmth, sunshine, rain, tending, watering, feeding and sometimes 'a bit of a talking to'; and I have beautiful healthy plants with a distinctive aroma and an abundance of tomatoes! I am delighted and feel quite pleased with myself. I have never been very successful before when trying to grow fruit or veg, so what has made the difference? I've spent time tending these plants, feeding and watering them when needed rather than only on the odd occasion when I remembered or had time and inclination. I have to say that I have enjoyed a lot more time in the garden over the last few months.

When I spend time on my faith and relationship with God that grows and is strengthened too; surrounding myself with the right things, reading or listening to sound teachings, listening to Christian music, talking to and listening to others about faith, taking time to pray. When tended in the right way we can grow and be fruitful, we may well have more time to do that now.

At the beginning of August many of us who had been shielding were told that we could start to visit shops, go back to work, mix with a few more people; I waited a week or so, girded my loins, donned mask and gloves and all gelled-up took a trip round Tesco. Emotionally drained, I arrived home, relieved to be back safe in my home, and to have faced the challenge of going to the shops.

What peculiar times we are living through at the moment. Nothing feels quite right much of the time. It's unusual to hesitate before going out somewhere, it's uncomfortable to go in somewhere and it's odd not to be with people we're used to being with.

We might be taking on new challenges, picking up old hobbies, learning new skills, making contact with people in new ways; we may be more apprehensive, perhaps frightened, doubting ourselves and losing confidence.

Good and bad, positive and negative, hope and despair, two sides of the same coin. This all sounds clear cut but in our 'normal lives' – new or old – very little is clear cut, we learn to deal with things as we encounter them. I have been so grateful for all of the support and help I have had from people doing shopping, banking, fetching and carrying for me; it can be hard to relinquish control, to need rather than be needed. While others have looked after and protected me, I have looked after my tomatoes and made a success of it, I have protected myself as I have taken tiny steps back into the world and been safe; sometimes we need to change our perspective and find what new or different things we can do.

I wish you well, stay safe, stay well, stay in touch,

Heather x

IDENTITY

A Swedish bishop was coming to the end of his ministry. It was decided it was time to paint his portrait for the gallery of bishops in the palace.

The diocese rather bravely decided to commission a modern artist. He painted the portrait and then the great day of unveiling arrived.

The painting was uncovered in front of the bishop and a group of dignitaries. Everyone went quiet. On the canvas were hundreds of abstract patterns, colours, shapes and the vague outline of a head right at the centre.

'Bishop, what do you think?' they asked.

He replied, 'Matthew 14:27 – "Take heart, be not afraid, it is I"'

NEWS OF MEMBERS & FRIENDS

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of **Alison Alderson**. We send our condolences, sympathy and love to her family and friends. Alison was a faithful member and a valued member of the choir.

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. There were many fish in the waters all around. Week after week, month after month, and year after year, the fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish and how they might go about fishing.



Year after year, they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen, in fact, that there should be a Decade of Fishing!

Continually they searched for new and better methods of fishing. Further they said, "The fishing industry exists by fishing as fire exists by burning". They loved slogans such as 'Fishing is the task of every fisherman', and 'Every Fisherman is a fisher'. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing issues such as the new fishing equipment, fish calls, and whether any new bait had been discovered.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. They engaged in all kinds of occupations. They built power plants to pump water for fish and tractors to plough new waterways. They made all kinds of equipment to travel here and there to look at fish hatcheries. Some also said that they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen.

Others felt that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbours and how loving and kind they were was enough. These fishermen built large beautiful buildings called 'Fishing Headquarters'. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however – they didn't fish.

After one stirring meeting on 'The necessity of fishing', one young man left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported that he had caught two fish. He was honoured for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible, to tell how he did it. So he left his fishing in order to have time to tell other fishermen about the experience. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kind of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's' clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished. They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing.

After all, were they not following the Master who said,

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men?"