

PRENTON NEWS

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



DECEMBER 2020

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WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME.

Christmas stockings
Open fires
Virgin Birth and angel choirs.
Illuminations,
Decorations,
Carols - Christ inspires.
Hope wrapped up and
Rocked
Immortal
Son of God
To us is given
Maker of the world appearing,
A gift of life - for all who hear;
Son of Man, our Saviour dear.

Heather Hughes

WE WISH YOU ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS

&

A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR

We may not see you in person, but we are thinking of you.



From

Shelby Ambrose

Jean & Les Bayley

Marian Davies

Fred & Anne Foulkes

Joyce Holland

Don Howard

Jeff & Heather Hughes

Julie & Tim Jones

Sue & Mike Jones & Laura

Barry & Pam Lawrence

Dylis Letchford

John & Sue Letchford

Anne Mackenzie

Margaret & Robert Meade

Elaine Parkin

Glyn & Philip Roper

Claire, Phil & Erin Thomas



FROM OUR MINISTER

CHRISTMAS WITH COVID IS STILL CHRISTMAS!

Christians sometimes complain about the way people celebrate Christmas; making it more about the celebration than the birth of Christ. That said I, like so many other people, have been concerned about not being able to 'do Christmas the way we usually do'. And suddenly all of the 'trappings' of Christmas seem more important when there's a possibility that you can't have them.

Of course, I'm sad that the traditions that we have created for ourselves as a family and church family may not happen this year, but that does not mean that Christmas is cancelled.

Most years, after Christmas, when I ask people whether they had a good time, they say "Yes, very quiet." So, for them this year won't be much different, will it?

Well yes, it appears it will: The build-up of school plays, carol services, nativities, nights out, meals with friends, Experience Christmas, large gatherings with family and friends, pantos, and so many other things will likely be different if they happen at all (How can you kiss under the mistletoe if you're 2 metres apart?).

It is sad but it's not the first time that this country has struggled at Christmas time. Through World Wars people had to experience the 'new normal' with so many families separated, children evacuated away from their parents, men and women away serving in the forces. I am very thankful that this is not the case for us.

In other parts of the world extreme weather, natural disasters, starvation, severe poverty and disease threaten homes, livelihoods and lives before they even consider the threat of Covid 19, which is also very real for them.

I don't want to downplay how people are feeling, but I do think we need to keep things in perspective and that is, that we can hope in the midst of all we are facing, because of the hope Christmas and Christ brings.

Let's consider what it is that we are going to miss.

We will miss getting together with those that we love. We'll miss what we 'always' do, and who we do it with, and WHEN we do these things.

The expectation is that, if all goes to plan, we will be able to get back together in the new year; so, we will see our loved ones and share time with them again. Maybe we'll have a party to celebrate.

But Christmas is not all about the children, the parties, the presents, the card, the food, the drink, the family, the time off work and school, it's not about decorations, Christmas songs and all the trimmings. I'm not saying these things are not part of the way we choose to celebrate Christmas, but they are not what it is about.

Christmas is not even all about going to church.

Christmas is about celebrating the coming of Emmanuel, God with us, about the HOPE that is available and assured because of the birth of Jesus. We worship Him because He became human to show us the way. Worship is what we do, and how we live, in response to that. It is about who we are, not where we are.

Heather and I wish you all the peace, joy, love and hope of Christmas.

Jeff.

CHURCH RE-OPENING?

The Elders of both Prenton & Wallasey will be meeting on 2nd December to discuss the practicalities of opening our church buildings for worship and how we can continue providing the broad provision of worship we have experienced during the lockdown.

Can you please pray for them, that God will give them discernment and wisdom and a clear vision for the way ahead.

Thanks.

Jeff

ADVENT BLOCKS

Throughout December, as a preparation for Christmas, I am producing a daily video based on a product called 'Advent Blocks'.

The videos are primarily for the church families with children but, as with anything produced for the children, I find the adults enjoy it too.

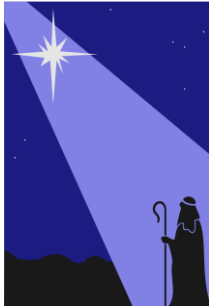
For those who can't access the videos I have produced a booklet so that everyone can join in.

Just like an Advent Calendar, there is an image and a message associated with it and each message forms together into the big picture of God's plan for salvation through Jesus and starts with Adam and Eve and finishes with you.

If you would like to buy a set to share with your grandchildren or great grandchildren you can through '10 of those', an online Christian bookshop. I did, to share with my grandchildren, as a great and imaginative way of sharing God's plan for salvation, with them.

Jeff.

Who is the Child in the swaddling bands,
Who is the Babe in the manger?
Why is he laid on a bed of hay -
Who is the little stranger?



Why is a bright star right overhead
As anthems of praise fill the skies?
Why are there Shepherds hastening now
To the place where the baby lies?

Who is the Mother looking down on her child
While her husband keeps watch at the door?
As Shepherds come in to kneel by the crib
Faces filled with great wonder and awe.

Who are the men mounting camels tonight
To journey from a land afar?
Following the wonder the light in the sky,
Their compass, a bright new star.



The reason is simple and comforting too,
It's the story of the Christ child's birth
When He came to bring the Word of God
To all who dwell on earth.

Remember that Christmas begins with Christ,
Spread His message of great worth,
Teach of the peace and joy and sacrifice,
Sending His love across the earth.

Jesus is the Reason for The Season.

Christine Ireland Price. December 2019

Supplied by Barry Lawrence



THANK YOU

Just wanted to say thank you to all those involved in the preparation and distribution of the Sunday service sheet, particularly Rev Jeff, Heather, Ron, Brian and all the Elders.

The thoughtful, reflective addresses and prayers have been a source of inspiration and comfort during difficult days. Thank you.

Also, well done to Heather for 'sorting out' 90 shoeboxes - fantastic!

Happy Christmas to you all,

With love, **Jenny Peace & Hamilton Fellowship**

Food Bank & Charles Thompson.

Thank you to all who responded with items of food and money for the Wirral Food Bank and for toys and money for Charles Thompson Mission.

I don't know yet how much has been donated but I know I'll have to make a few cars journeys to deliver it all.

Thank you, your donation has made a difference.

Jeff.

Shoeboxes

A big 'thank you' for all of your support for the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal. We had hoped to send 50 boxes this year (but secretly hoped we'd get 70). We actually sent 90 between Prenton & Wallasey. A great effort and thanks for all of your donations.

Heather xxx.

P.S. It's never too late to start knitting for next year.

CHRISTMAS

We all know Christmas will not be the same this year, but we want to make our church look a little like Christmas. There will be lights on the trees and bushes as usual.

We are going to put a simple nativity scene outside on the grass by the main door. Hopefully it will be lit up during the evening, so if you get the chance, walk past to have a look. Many thanks to those who have helped to make the characters.

It's a bit of an experiment, but hopefully it will show the real Christmas story - Christmas can't be cancelled.

Jean Bayley

Celebrate Together

Hamilton Memorial are having a "Sing Along" in their own homes on

Christmas Day, Friday 25th December at 10.30 a.m. and we are invited to join them in singing all six verses of "O come all ye faithful". If we sing loud enough, maybe our neighbours will join in.

NEWS OF FRIENDS from Philip Roper

I recently received a message from **Andrew Halliday** which mentioned that his father, **Bryce**, would have turned 100 during October if he had lived. He reminded us that Bryce dedicated much of his life to Prenton URC, especially in property and resource issues. Andrew and his wife Judy belong to Keynsham Methodist Church in Bristol and he sent me the link to their website: <https://g.co/kgs/ZqNm6m>

I have also received a message from **Bernie Collins** expressing his appreciation for the regular issues of Prenton News. He noted the reference in the November magazine to the work required in Church to the two exits and wrote that “This brought back memories of regularly riding to church on the back of his Dad’s motorbike when he was church secretary. I used to enjoy the job of opening the big doors with a garden hoe, I think it was, for pulling the big metal bolt at the top, and then I would tug the heavy door open.

We now have a grandson of that age, and he was helping his Dad last week preparing a part of their church service on video for YouTube. This prompted me to watch your service online from last Sunday, with Jeff leading and Ron preaching - helpful, thank you.”

SCRIPTURE CAKE from Glyn Roper

The following is taken from a recipe book published by the United Church of Canada entitled “Let’s Break Bread Together”. This particular recipe was submitted by Littlewood United Church, Lambeth, Ontario and, as usual in North America, the quantities are volumes rather than weights.

1½ cups 1 Kings 4:22 (flour)
½ cup Judges 5:25 (butter)
2 cups Jeremiah 6:20 (sugar) [some poetic license here]
2 cups 1 Samuel 30:12 (raisins)
2 cups Nahum 3:12 (figs or dates)
1 cup Numbers 17:8 (almond nuts)
Dash of 2 Chronicles 9:9 (season to taste)
2 tbsp. 1 Samuel 14:25 (honey)
6 Jeremiah 17:11 (eggs)
Pinch of Leviticus 2:13 (salt)
½ cup Judges 4:19 (milk)
2 tsp. Amos 4:5 (baking soda)

The only advice offered for mixing makes reference to Proverbs 23:14. Bake in a square cake pan, greased and floured, or lined with heavy waxed paper.

Bake around 1 hour at 300°F (Gas Mark 2 / 150°C). Let cool before serving.

GERM WARFARE - FLU or CORONAVIRUS

I've always been quite touchy,
When people cough and sneeze,
And as I age, the more I rage,
Just use a hanky, please!

Desist from touching door knobs,
If you have a ghastly flu,
Or have a spray and sanitise;
The prudent thing to do.

Your microbes are unwelcome,
I do not want your bugs,
You leave them on my ATM,
Or spread them with your hugs.

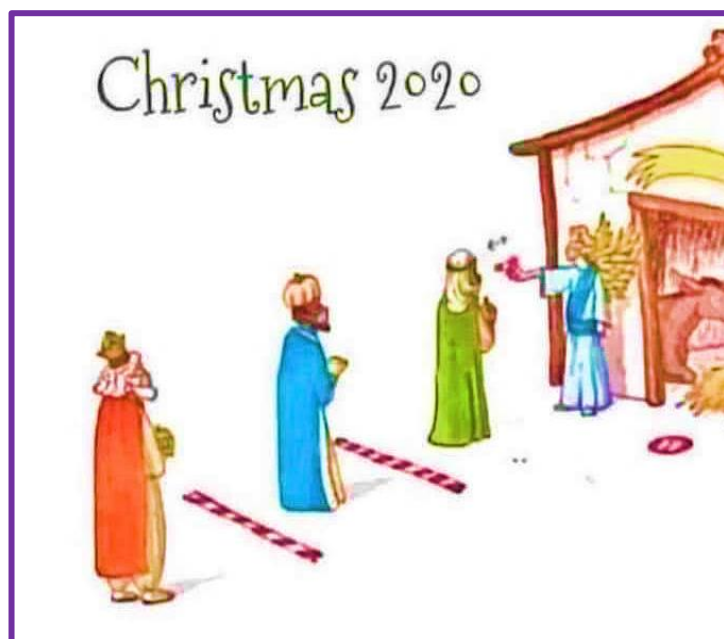


Some call me anti-social,
I'm not, I'm anti-germs.
We'll get along more famously
With strict good hygiene terms.

To those who say we need these germs,
I tell them this can't be,
Keep them strictly to yourself,
And stay away from me!

So, readers, if you're poorly,
Stay home is what to do,
For if your ills pass on to me,
I'll send them back to you!

Judy Jarvie



LOCKDOWN LOG

Hello all!

I don't know whether you are enjoying reading this little item in the magazine, (*I hope one or two of you are*), it has been good for me to sit and reflect, something I rarely do if I'm honest. Life is usually busy and there is always something to do, so reflecting is what the mirror does, not the minister's wife!

We are approaching Christmas, and I would usually be writing lists, wandering the shops, buying gifts, stressing about how many other people were out shopping too. This year has been rather different. I have done lots of shopping online (*very time consuming!*) and more people will receive vouchers than I would normally consider. I'm sure many others in our very large family are doing the same.

I buy my Christmas cards to support local charities, but this year as I have not been able to go and choose them, I have had a go at making some! Those of you who know me may well be smiling; I don't really do craft, I get covered in glue, paint, even felt tip pens are not safe in my hands! So, where some may say their cards are 'hand crafted', mine are much better described as 'homemade' perhaps a subtle difference but true!

I have made my Christmas cake wrapped and ready for an occasional feed of brandy before it's ready to eat. I have even tried making mince pies, not perfect but I have had a go and may even try again!

We are not expecting to be able to celebrate Christmas the way we would usually, but we can still celebrate the coming of our Saviour. Emmanuel, God with us, He came to a world in a turmoil, and brought us Hope. The world is looking for something to give them hope and putting their faith in science. I am hopeful that scientists will find a vaccine to combat Covid 19; but I already have a certain hope in the person of Jesus who loves me enough to be born and to die for me.

As we look forward to Christmas through Advent let's try each day to look for a new reason to put our hope in Jesus.

Much love, every blessing, **Heather x**

No Nativity this year because the 3 Wise men face a travel ban.
The shepherds have been furloughed.
The Inn Keeper has shut under Tier 3 regulations and had a slump in bookings.
Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen.
As for Rudolf, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test.

REFLECTING ON 2020

As we come towards the end of 2020 with, we hope, sighs of relief that this very unusual year is drawing to a close and that we can look forward with optimism to 2021 now that vaccines have been developed to fight off the coronavirus.

Since March and the countrywide lockdowns, many people have suffered bereavements with the loss of loved ones and have grieved for members of their family and friends too. Unfortunately, we have not been able, through the restrictions, to show our understanding of their grief by giving them a hug, or by attending a funeral service, so this is now our chance to give them an all-embracing "big hug" from our Church to show them our sympathy and love.

Celebrations for engagements, weddings, special birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and important exam results at school and university have all come and gone without our planned parties and get togethers.

In our Church life we have not been able to celebrate Holy Communion, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday as a congregation, and may not be able to celebrate Advent and birth of Christ at Christmas with our usual Carols by Candlelight. *Late news: Today's paper (27th November) says that we can go carol singing door to door and outside as a congregation as long as we stay two metres apart.*

Rev Jeff has done a marvellous job with his Sunday services, ably assisted by others (don't want to offend anyone by not including their name - you know who you are) 'on line' and for those without the internet typed service sheets, delivered to our homes by willing helpers. So, thank you on behalf of everyone.

During these nine months we have witnessed some wonderful examples of "care for others". People everywhere have been inspired to look after their family, friends and neighbours by doing acts of kindness - hot meals, shopping etc., and applauding the NHS

at 8 p.m. on a Thursday. Others, both young and old, have been raising money for charities in some spectacular ways and in many cases overcoming their own disabilities to do so. Perhaps the most obvious inspirational fundraiser is Captain Sir Tom Moore with his family's idea of sponsoring him to walk 100 times round the garden of his home before his 100th birthday in April, and perhaps raise £1,000. His actions got fabulous results assisted by the publicity and media coverage and it obviously inspired others to follow suit. His autobiography has been a joy to read. **A big Thank You and a Big Hug** to everyone who has done an act of kindness and made a difference to other peoples' lives.

We look forward with hope that we will be able to resume our 'normal' or 'new normal' lives in 2021 and we should all take heart from Sir Tom's mantra **"Tomorrow will be a good day"**.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

What memories do you have of Christmas?

Do any of them still play a part in your Christmas?

Mine are very varied and some of them I still continue to do. The first task is to write the Christmas cards and this is always the first weekend in December when I start, followed by the letters to family and friends who live in other parts of the country and I don't see very often.

I must explain that from the age of three, I lived in Taunton in Somerset and my paternal grandparents lived in Sutton-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire and my maternal grandparents lived in Lincoln together with my Uncle, Aunt and cousins, so we always came north for Christmas until I was in my early twenty's. This was a car journey of some 240 miles which took about six to seven hours on 'A' roads as there were no motorways in those days!

My first question to my parents, as we left to travel north, was "Does Father Christmas know that I will be in Lincoln and not Taunton?" Of course he did!! Sometimes he came early to Sutton-in-Ashfield and then called again in Lincoln on Christmas Day.



My Uncle had two shops, one of which was a Sweet Shop with jars of sweets on the shelves as well as boxes and tins of chocolates and sweets specially for Christmas. He also had a life size 'cut out' of the Quality Street Lady and Gentleman which played a big part in his Christmas displays together with the Dulux dog and 'flashing' fairy lights in the shop windows. *It was magical to a little girl.*

Some chocolates came in large, one layer, beautiful boxes with pictures on the lid of Christmas scenes, dogs and cats. I still have

several of these boxes, empty of chocolates but full of memories. Sharps toffees, Quality Street and Cadbury's Roses came in pretty tins for Christmas whereas these were normally sold loose from 20p upwards!

The atmosphere on the run up to and Christmas Eve was fantastic; parents with a few pennies left over were looking for stocking fillers - chocolate money, Smarties, Fruit Pastilles, Rolos and 1d bars of chocolate and the hustle and bustle and last minute shopping before we closed the doors at six o'clock, made the advent of Christmas exciting. After our evening meal we would then empty the shop windows, put the stock away and draw the blinds until after Boxing Day.

We also heard the Salvation Army band playing all the well-known carols in the street and the Lincoln Cathedral Bell Ringers would play carols in between the Cathedral clock chiming the quarters.

On Christmas Day, the first one downstairs, either Grandpa or my Mother, played "Christians Awake, Salute the Happy Morn", on the piano with the loud pedal down to the floor! If you weren't awake, that soon got you moving! I don't play the piano, so it has to be a tape or CD nowadays.

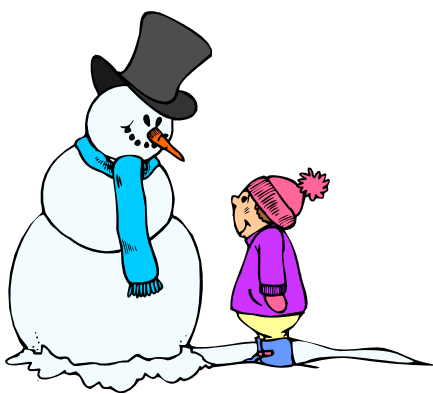
On Boxing Day, if Lincoln City F.C. were at home, I went to Sincil Bank, with Grandpa and Father, to watch the football match. It was usually a morning kick off and Grandma and Mother stayed home to get the lunch ready.



All over the Christmas holiday we had "high tea" consisting of 'hand-raised' pork pies, home cooked ham and tongue and celery. It was 'proper' celery grown by Grandpa in the garden, hoed up and the sticks wrapped in brown paper so that with a frost, they were white; the aroma of that celery lives with me to this day - gorgeous. (Not a bit like Sainsbury's) !!

The Church was a large part of our Christmas celebrations as Grandpa was a Methodist lay preacher and invariably took a service in his own Church after Christmas. We also had other celebrations in the Christmas period. Grandma and Grandpa were married on the 28th December and my paternal Grandmother's birthday was on the 29th. More cake!!

Perhaps the most memorable year for travelling was 1962/63. We went to Lincoln by car and then we had snow, snow and more snow! Father and I went back to Taunton by train as we both had to go into work and Mother stayed in Lincoln with the idea that she would come back with the car when the snow melted and the roads were safe,



particularly Red Hill in Bristol. It didn't melt!! So she returned to Taunton on the train a week later and eventually went back to Lincoln in February to bring the car home!!

Margaret Meade

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The service for 2021 is planned for Friday 5th March and has been prepared by the Christian women of Vanuatu. The Prenton service is, like all the others, an unknown at the moment. Some of us went to a Zoom planning meeting in October and we hope we can do something as it is a simple service that should not need a great deal of preparation. It may be very last minute planning, but I will let you know nearer the time.

Jean Bayley



I NEED TO PRACTISE
SOCIAL DISTANCING
FROM THE CAKE TIN

**I'm giving up eating
chocolate for a month.
Sorry, bad punctuation.
I'm giving up. Eating
chocolate for a month.**

THE DIETER'S PRAYER

Bless my bathroom scales, Lord,
Each week as I step on,
Help me to lose a stone or two,
And not put any on.

Keep me from temptation,
From chocolate and from chips,
Keep my willpower going,
Just in case it slips.

Help me count the calories,
Steer me away from sweets,
Keep my sweating palms away,
From naughty, fattening treats.
Keep me from the cake shop, Lord,



Away from buns and crumpets,
And if a cake is in my hand,
Please give me strength to dump it.
Help me enjoy my salad,
And foods to make me slim.
Keep me on the “Low Fat” track,
So one day I’ll be thin.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

The text "HAPPY NEW YEAR" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font with a black outline. The words are slightly slanted upwards from left to right. There are two yellow starburst graphics: one positioned above the word "NEW" and another positioned below the word "HAPPY".

Items for the January 2021 Church magazine by Sunday 27th
December 2020, please.