

PRENTON NEWS

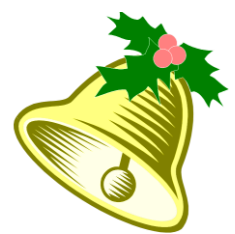
The Magazine of
Prenton United Reformed Church
Prenton Road West, Birkenhead



DECEMBER 2022

&

JANUARY 2023



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Church & Community Activities during school term time

Monday	1 st Tranmere Rainbows, Brownies & Guides	5.00 p.m.
Tuesday		
Wednesday	Warm Space. Coffee & Lunch	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.
	Dance Class	5.30 p.m.
2nd in month	Mid-Week Communion	11.45 a.m.
Thursday	Dance Class	4.30 p.m.
Friday	Dance Class	5.15 p.m.
Saturday	Dance Class	9.00 a.m.

Donations towards the cost of the magazine would be appreciated.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
from
PRENTON UNITED REFORMED
CHURCH



*We wish you all the blessings
of
this festive season
and
a happy and peaceful 2023.*

From the Manse

WAITING, WAITING, WAITING!

Waiting for Christmas to arrive can be a bit frustrating, especially if you're a child. One of my grandsons just can't wait for the new Smith's toy catalogue to come out every September when he starts writing his Christmas list - he has such a long wait for Christmas.

One of the stories told after Christmas is that of Jesus being presented at the temple when he was just a few days old. During that event we're introduced to Simeon and Anna and the strange messages they give to Mary and Joseph. But their story, Simeon and Anna, is really an Advent story because both of them had been waiting so long for the Messiah to come, and both had been praying constantly for it to happen.

You get the idea from the story in Luke's Gospel that all of Simeon and Anna's Christmas's had come at once, "Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as you said. I have seen your Salvation", was Simeon's response to meeting Jesus. What a statement to make.

As a church, we use the period of Advent through December to prepare for Christmas but, this year, I don't just want us to use it to prepare for the usual round of Christmas services and activities, I want us to use it, as individuals, as a preparation to encounter Jesus in a deeper way and, as a church, to introduce Jesus to those who have yet to know him.

Going into the New Year, we are going to be more intentional about growing our church and putting what we've learned about being fruitful on our frontlines into good use. In preparation for that I'd like us to start praying now for church growth and the following prayer is one which we're going to use every time we meet together as church, and I encourage you to use it too during your own personal prayers.

There are many people, maybe you included, who are waiting for Christmas, waiting, as Simeon was, to see God's salvation with their own eyes. We pray this Christmas, that will become a reality.

Happy Christmas. Jeff

Prayer for Growth: God of Mission
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY & FRIENDS

We remember in our prayers all the members and friends who are at the present time, unable to join us regularly on a Sunday morning and in particular: **Jeanette Adams, Donna Birks, Peter & Joan Carroll, Carys Evans, Iris Hatton, Jo Johns, Dylis & John Letchford, Margaret Lloyd, Nora McGrath, Glennie Mortimer and Mary Segar.**

It was delightful to see **Jeanette Adams, Carys Evans and Peter Carroll** in Church on Remembrance Sunday and we hope and pray that they will be able to join us during this festive season.

Jo Johns has moved into her new home in Oxton and we hope that she has settled in and is enjoying her new abode and that we will see her in Church in the near future.

Maureen Makin will also be moving, in the very near future, to her new home. We pray that the move to Upton goes smoothly and that she will enjoy her new home. We know that she has already made arrangements to get to Church on a Sunday, and we look forward to hearing about the move!

Marian Davies wants to thank everyone who gave her Ukrainian guests, **Oleksandra** and her daughter, **Kristina**, such a warm welcome when they came to Church with Marian, on Sunday 13th November. They enjoyed the service even though they could not always understand what was being said.

THANK YOU

Another year has come and gone and it is time to thank everyone who has contributed to our fellowship.

There are many people who work “behind the scenes” to ensure that we maintain our buildings, fabric and gardens to a high standard and don’t put their heads “above the parapet”. Thank you - your contributions are really appreciated.

This year Carys Evans has stepped back from being responsible for arranging the Flower Rota and distributing the flowers following our Sunday services and organising the special Sundays such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas when we fill our Church with beautiful displays. We also thank the people who come along to help on these occasions.

The second person who is stepping down is Peter Carroll who has been our FWO Secretary for over 25 years. He has been responsible for distributing the FWO envelopes and recording our contributions, week in and week out, and this enables us to make the Gift Aid tax rebate claim from HM Revenue & Customs.

We are very grateful Peter for the time you have given to this task. Thank you so much.

FABRIC REPORT

Most of our work at the moment is getting the Hall cleaner, fresher and brighter. Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped me to paint the lower main areas in grey and this is nearly finished now. Jeff has purchased a load of new Notice Boards for our Church use and the people who hire our premises.

My boss, Peter Burrows, of Bogan’s Carpets has donated (free!) a new carpet and I persuaded my son Jonathan and his wife to help me to fit the new grey carpet to the front and side of the stage - another job done! And Mark has fixed the curtain rail in the Hall.

Mark has also helped clear the gutters on the side of the Hall as well as fixing some of the roof slates. Thank you, Mark.
Fred.

*Mulled Wine, Mince Pies
&
Mingle at the Manse*



Jeff & Heather
invite you all to an evening of
Festive Fun, Food & Fellowship
(Oh, and some festive drink too!)

Please come and join us at the Manse,
109 Shrewsbury Road, Cloughton, CH43 8SS,
on
Thursday 8th December 2022 from 6.00 p.m.

Everyone is welcome - including you!



OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

SUNDAY 11th DECEMBER

11.00 a.m. TOY SERVICE led by
Mr Ray Craig

New toys unwrapped which will go to Charles
Thompson's Mission



SUNDAY 18th DECEMBER

6.30 p.m. CAROL SERVICE.
Rev Jeff Hughes



This is a traditional Carol Service



CHRISTMAS EVE

SATURDAY 24th DECEMBER

**4.00 p.m. CAROLS ROUND
THE TREE**

An informal Carol Service. If you would
like to come dressed as a person who
was part of the nativity, please do. We
also have costumes you can use.



CHRISTMAS DAY

SUNDAY 25th DECEMBER

10.30 a.m. FAMILY SERVICE led by
Mr Ron Taylor



Everyone is welcome to all our services.
This year they will be held in the Church Hall.

THE COMING OF THE KING

For most of us, Advent is synonymous with the time when we get ready for Christmas. Even our Advent calendars countdown to December 25th!

We use Advent as a time to think about the birth of the baby in the manger, the angels and the shepherds - we even throw the Wise Men in there even though they were probably a couple of years after the main event. After all Advent means 'the coming' and in Christian terms, the coming of a special baby who was laid in a manger in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

But, as J.C. Ryle also reminds us, Advent is a time when the Church gets ready for the 'Second Advent' when Jesus will come again. On that day, Jesus will return to our world, not as a baby but as the unmistakable King of kings and Lord of lords.

As part of our preparation, I have a copy of 'The Coming of the King' for every household in the church. There are 25 daily devotions to help us prepare for Christmas and are based on readings from Ryle's '*Expository Thoughts from the Gospels*' which contrasts Jesus' first coming with his second and lead us to consider both "Advents" of the Lord Jesus. If you don't get a copy given to you, please let me know.

Hope you enjoy it.

Jeff

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



A big 'Thank you!'

Thank you for all of your support for Operation Christmas Child. We sent 107 Shoe Boxes full of Love and Gifts to children who might otherwise receive nothing for Christmas and who already have very little. The friends and fellowships of Prenton and Wallasey Village URCs have made a difference to 107 children and their families. We also covered the full cost of sending the boxes £535.



So, Thank You very much for 2022. (Let's start collecting for 2023!)
Heather x

FREEWILL OFFERING ENVELOPES (FWO)

If anyone would like a set of envelopes for 2023, please speak to Margaret Meade who has taken on the role of FWO Secretary from Peter Carroll.

Perhaps there are some members who pay their contribution straight into the Church bank account every month but feel they would like to give a bit more but don't want to alter their Standing Order or Direct Debit. You could use an envelope as well, to put in, say £1.00 a week and the Church would benefit from an additional £52.00 a year.

Something we should point out here, as an example, is that if someone contributes £40.00 a month this equates to £480.00 for the year.

If you were using an envelope instead of paying directly into the bank, that would be £10.00 a week multiplied by 52 weeks, equating to £520.00 for the year, a difference of £40.00. This anomaly arises because not all months are 4 weeks, some are 5. If you divide 52 weeks by 4 you get 13 months in a year!!

We appreciate that we are in a time of recession with increasing costs of gas and electricity, and food and the latest Budget changes are not helping our personal finances and money is tight.

So please give this some prayerful thought and a FWO envelope could be the answer.

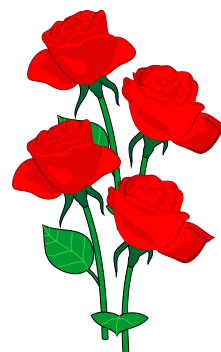
The most successful businessman the world has ever known was Noah. He floated a successful company while the rest of the world was going into liquidation.

FLOWER ROTA FOR 2023

There are still dates available if any of the members of the congregation would like to join the Rota and contribute towards our visual enjoyment of the Sunday services.

If you are hopeless at arranging flowers, like some of us are, or unable to get to the shops to buy the flowers, other members are willing to do this on your behalf - you only have to ask and Pam will be only too happy to make the necessary arrangements.

After the Sunday services, the flowers are distributed to those of our congregation who are unwell; in need of a bit of colour to cheer them up; to say 'thank you' for an act of kindness or just to say how lovely it was to see them in Church, so your participation in providing flowers can benefit other people.



DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2022

DECEMBER		ALL SERVICES WILL BE HELD IN THE CHURCH HALL	
Sunday	4th	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes
Tuesday	6th	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God at Pauline's Home
Wednesday	7th	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch
Thursday	8th	6.00 p.m.	Mingle at the Manse
Sunday	11th	11.00 a.m.	Toy Service. Mr Ray Craig
Wednesday	14th	10.00 a.m. 11.45 a.m. 12.30 p.m. 7.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Mid-Week Communion Lunch Elders' Meeting
Sunday	18th	11.00 a.m. 6.30 p.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes Carol Service
Wednesday	21st	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch
CHRISTMAS EVE			
Saturday	24th	4.00 p.m.	Carols Round the Tree
CHRISTMAS DAY			
Sunday	25th	10.30 a.m.	Mr Ron Taylor
Wednesday	28th	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch



A little boy and girl were singing their favourite Christmas Carol, "Silent Night". The boy concluded the rendition with the words, "Sleeping in heavenly beans". His sister quickly corrected him, "It's not beans, it's peas".



DIARY FOR JANUARY 2023

JANUARY		ALL SERVICES WILL BE HELD IN THE CHURCH HALL	
Sunday	1st	11.00 a.m.	Mrs Marian Davies
Wednesday	4th	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch
Sunday	8th	11.00 a.m.	Dr Philip Roper
Wednesday	11th	10.00 a.m. 11.45 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Mid-Week Communion Lunch
Sunday	15th	11.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	Holy Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes Church Meeting. This may be changed to February 5th. Confirmation at later date Items for the February & March Magazine required today.
Wednesday	18th	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch
Sunday	22nd	11.00 a.m.	Mr Ron Taylor
Wednesday	25th	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch
Sunday	29th	11.00 a.m.	Dr Geff Meyer
FEBRUARY			
Wednesday	1st	10.00 a.m. 12.30 p.m.	Warm Space. Coffee Morning followed by Lunch

The next 'Conversations with God' will be on 7th February at Pauline's home.

The one comment that has remained with a certain Vicar over many years, was the reaction of a Churchwarden when the PCC were asked to make the Church Hall available for the use of non-Church activities in the parish. "Anyone would think we were a Charitable Organisation!"

ROTAS FOR DECEMBER 2022

Duty Elder

December	4th	Fred Foulkes
	11th	Sue Jones
	18th	Jean Bayley
	25th	Christmas Day



Communion Elders

December	4th	Jean Bayley & Sue Jones
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Door Duty

December	4th	Joan Bradley, Pauline Green, Margaret Higson
	11th	Jean & Les Bayley, Maureen Makin
	18th	Elaine Parkin, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
	25th	Christmas Day



Readers

December	4th	Philip Roper & Pam Lawrence
	11th	Barry Lawrence & Marian Davies
	18th	Fred Foulkes & Joan Bradley
	25th	Christmas Day

Prayers of Intercession

December	4th	Barry Lawrence
	11th	Pauline Green
	18th	Claire Thomas
	25th	Jean Bayley

Church Flowers

December	4th	Christmas Plants
	11th	Christmas Plants
	18th	Christmas Plants
	25th	Christmas Plants



ROTAS FOR JANUARY 2023

Happy New Year



Duty Elder

January	1st	Fred Foulkes
	8th	Elaine Parkin
	15th	Jean Bayley
	22nd	Shelby Ambrose
	29th	Pauline Green

Communion Elders

January	15th	Fred Foulkes & Pauline Green
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Door Duty

January	1st	Joan Bradley, Barbara Jones, Joan Lawrence
	8th	Pauline Green, Joyce Holland, Maureen Makin
	15th	Margaret Higson, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
	22nd	Jean & Les Bayley, Barbara Jones
	29th	Shelby Ambrose, Joyce Holland, Barry Lawrence

Readers

January	1st	Pam Lawrence & Barry Lawrence
	8th	Shelby Ambrose & Glyn Roper
	15th	Joyce Holland & Marian Davies
	22nd	Philip Roper & Fred Foulkes
	29th	Jean Bayley & Joan Bradley

Prayers of Intercession

January	1st	Jean Bayley
	8th	Barry Lawrence
	15th	Heather Hughes
	22nd	Pauline Green
	29th	Philip Roper

Church Flowers

January	1st	Christmas Plants
	8th	Carys Evans
	15th	Maureen Makin
	22nd	Don Howard
	29th	Anne Foulkes

WARM SPACE

Our first 'Warm Space' was held on Wednesday 23rd November when 21 people came for coffee and lunch. Although these were members of the Church fellowship rather than "newcomers" it was a good start.

Pauline has put in a lot of time spreading the word around the houses by church with leaflets and is intending to put some larger posters in shops. She has also sourced the ingredients for the lunch. We do hope that as winter bites, we will get the "footfall" of "newcomers" and if you can encourage your family, friends and neighbours to join us, that would be marvellous and rewarding. Thanks Pauline, carry on the good work!!

FROM THE PEWS

CHRISTMAS FUNNIES

- What did the wise men say after they offered up their gifts of gold and frankincense? Wait, there's myrrh.
- What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? Frostbite.
- What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? Claus-trophobia!
- How do you help someone who has lost their Christmas spirit? Nurse them back to elf.
- What do you call a reindeer ghost? Cari-boo!
- What happened when the snowman had a temper tantrum? He had a meltdown.
- Why are elves such great motivational speakers? They have plenty of elf-confidence.
- What is Santa's dog's name? Santa Paws!
- What's every elf's favourite type of music? Wrap!
- What's the absolute best Christmas present? A broken drum – you can't beat it!
- What happens if you eat Christmas decorations? You get tinsel-it is.
- What do Santa's elves learn in school? The elf-abet.
- What do you call an obnoxious reindeer? Rude-olph.
- What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet? The Christmas alphabet has Noel.



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AT 50

Following the contributions in the October & November issue of the Church magazine on memories of Prenton and the URC, a former member, Anne MacKenzie has sent us her own reflections.

I have been so delighted to read all the reminiscences of folk regarding the URC and of 'Prenton Cong', in particular. For me there are so many familiar names from the 'old days' and I love the memories.

I moved to Birkenhead with my parents, Vera and Fred Capey, and older sister, Jean, in 1951. I was 13 then and had grown up in the Sunday School in Garston Congregational Church. We were now living in Noctorum and we 'tried' Upton Presbyterian Church. But we looked a bit further afield, as I think that there were no young people at the Upton Church, and we found Prenton Cong. That was a good move! And it had a bike shed! I joined the church as a member in 1953 or 4, as did Murdoch MacKenzie, who would later become my husband - after 11 years of being an 'item'!

My sister Jean started the Brownies, Murdoch and I taught in the Sunday School, and learnt a lot in the Livingstone Fellowship, where our missionary instincts were nourished, I helped Margaret Bryan Jones run the Guides, along with Margaret White.

Some of you will remember my mother who was active at Prenton until well into her 80's. and my father used to participate in the Men's Weekends, along with Frank Kettlewell, Mr Sidebotham, Stanley Jones and others!

We were married at Prenton Cong in 1964 by Rev Walter Young and have visited on many occasions since. Now I am a member at Augustine United Church in Edinburgh, and my minister, Fiona Bennett is this year's Assembly Moderator, so she may even come your way! One weekend in October she was in Newcastle helping the Northern Synod celebrate the 50 years.

Greetings to all my Prenton friends, and congratulations on the 50 years!

Love and peace!

Anne

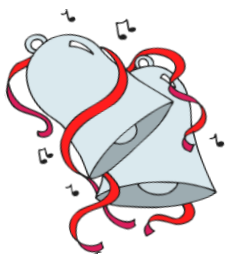
Sitting down to the meal at one of those big “Family” occasions, a minister found himself across the table from his brother’s most recent foster child. It was the first time they had met each other and he could see that the little girl was mesmerised by his dog-collar.

Her curiosity exploded just at the same as there was one of those awkward lulls in conversation around the table, and a shrill little voice rang out clearly, “Has he broken ’is neck then?”

“What would you like for a Christmas present?” for any young girl, such a question would evoke delighted visions of long-wished-for possessions, but for Dolly the answer to her father, John Byron, was, “Please write me a poem”. So, on Christmas morning in 1749, Dolly found on her plate at breakfast a piece of paper on which was written a hymn entitled “Christmas Day, for Dolly”.

Soon after, John Wainwright, the organist of Manchester Parish Church, wrote a tune for it. On the following Christmas morning, Byron and Dolly were awakened by the sound of singing below their windows. It was Wainwright with his choir, singing Dolly’s hymn, “Christians, Awake”.

I now know where my grandfather got the idea from, because he always played “Christians, Awake” on the piano, as soon as he got downstairs on Christmas Day. After he died my mother continued the family tradition. I don’t play the piano so I have to put on a tape!!
Editor.



RING IN THE NEW YEAR



So far, this magazine has been about December and the events to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, so now we must look forward to a new year, 2023, and what it holds for us.

Celebrations start on December 31st with people “Seeing in the New Year” by congregating outside at midnight to watch firework displays and to toast the New Year’s arrival, all around the world.

Scotland are renowned for their “Hogmanay” celebrations and the First Footing is particular to Celtic regions of the UK with variations of the custom in Worcestershire, Wales and Yorkshire, though it remains strongest in Scotland.

The ‘first foot’ is the first person to come through a household’s front door after midnight on New Year’s Eve. The first foot also affects the luck and prosperity of the household for the coming year. Tall, dark, handsome male strangers, are generally considered perfect ‘first foots’. In previous times, women first footers were viewed with a dread, second only to red or fair-haired males which is probably a hangover from the early Viking raids!

A good first foot should also come bearing gifts, traditionally, coal for warmth, salt for wealth, a black bun for food and a bottle - usually whisky!!

No Hogmanay celebration would be complete without the most famous song in the world to which no-one knows the words, *Auld Lang Syne*, (which means ‘times gone by’) by Robert Burns and first published in 1796. The tune did not become a bona fide New Year’s tradition until after 1929 when it was popularised by Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians, at a party in the Roosevelt Grill in New York. This performance, featuring *Auld Lang Syne* at the stroke of midnight, was broadcast live across North America. It then became an annual tradition after Lombardo moved his band to the Waldorf Hotel in the 1930’s.

First Verse Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And never brought to mind?
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And auld lang syne?

Chorus:

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.
We’ll tak a cup o’ kindness yet,
For auld lang syne

Fifth Verse And there’s a hand, my trusty fiere,
 And gie’s a hand o’ thine!
 And we’ll tak a right guid-willie waught
 For auld lang syne.



*As we look back at the year just passed,
Maybe we're glad that it's over at last.
Maybe we've good reason to feel hurt and sad,
But be thankful and hopeful - your heart will be glad.
No-one knows what the future will be,
There'll be good times and bad times aplenty -
you'll see !*

*Come welcome the new year with anthems of joy,
In hymns of thanksgiving our voices employ;
And mingle our tribute of gratitude here,
To Him who has blessed us with a*

HAPPY NEW YEAR

*A whole new year awaits us, Lord,
The path we all must tread,
And only you can see the way,
And just what lies ahead.
Will there be days of happiness,
With laughter, joy and fun?
Or times when sadness comes along,
And darkness hides the sun?*

*The new year is a challenge, Lord,
A chance to start anew,
But we need courage, strength and hope,
And love which comes from you.
Please walk beside us through the year,
And all our fears dispel,
Then, in our hearts, we'll hear your voice:
"Go forward, all is well."*

Iris Hesselden

A MEDITATION

*Give us through the coming year
Quietness of mind,
Teach us to be patient
And always to be kind . . .*

*Give us reassurance
When everything goes wrong
So our faith remains unfaltering
And our hope and courage strong . . .*

*And show us that in quietness
We can feel your presence near,
Filling us with joy and peace
Throughout the coming year.*