

PRENTON NEWS

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



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

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

The Sunday School teacher asked her class, “What does the story of David and Goliath teach us?”
Tommy replied, “Please Miss, TO DUCK!”

HETERONYMS (vagaries of the English language)

The bandage was wound round the wound.

The farm was used to produce produce.

The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.

There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.

Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.

I did not object to the object.

The insurance was invalid for the invalid.

They were too close to the door to close it.

Upon seeing a tear in the painting I shed a tear.

FROM OUR MINISTER

LENTEN TRIALS and EASTER HOPE

Ash Wednesday this year falls on 17th February and marks the beginning of the 40 day period of Lent. Those mathematicians amongst you will realise that from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday is actually 46 days; that's because the 6 Sundays within Lent are excluded from the fast as they are Holy days (holidays) and feast days.

The Lenten period is designed to be a period of intense and focussed self-reflection marked by fasting and penance as the Church, and individuals reflects upon and prepares itself for the death of Jesus and all that led Him to the cross. This is usually marked by the giving up of things mirroring Jesus' 40 days of temptation in the wilderness.

It feels to me that the last year has been like a prolonged period of 'Lent'. We have given up much and have endured many trials and temptations that this pandemic of Covid-19 has forced upon us.

But we know that the Lent doesn't end with the agony of the garden or the darkness of the cross but at an empty tomb where we meet a risen Saviour, and so are filled with hope once more.

At Easter we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and with that, new life, a fresh start and freedom. And, my prayer is that, this coming Easter we'll be able to celebrate in our churches once more as the vaccines give us a fresh start and the freedom to be with one another and some much needed security and reassurance.

We hope to give more detail next month but for now; keep safe, stay well and God bless.

Jeff

NEWS OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY

We pray for **Jean Bayley** recovering from an attack of shingles; **Michael Tudor** who has had a stroke and was admitted to Arrowe Park Hospital but is now back at home; **Ron Taylor** had another short stay in Arrowe Park Hospital and then both him and **Mavis** caught the coronavirus and they are now both on the road to recovery.

Barry & Pam Lawrence have moved house and we hope that they will be happy and contented in their new home.

We hold everyone in our prayers during this terrible pandemic and at this time of our third "lockdown", especially people who live on their own, and the necessity to stay at home and stay safe. We thank the Lord for our scientists who have produced vaccines which will help to prevent the spread of the virus.

SHROVE TUESDAY/PANCAKE DAY

According to Google *'Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of shricing that Christians used to undergo in the past. In shricing, a person confesses their sins and receives absolution for them. ... In the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him.'*

We don't go in for much shricing in our house, but we do like to enjoy a good and plentiful supply of pancakes; little else will be eaten by some at teatime on 16th February with copious amounts of lemon and sugar the favoured and traditional filling. Far from using up perishable goods left in the house, I make sure I have extra milk in order to ensure a good supply.



We don't pay much attention to the traditions of Ash Wednesday, except that we recognise that it is the first day of Lent.

In the same way as, in our house, we pay nodding attention to Shrove Tuesday, many of us pick and choose which bits of 'religious tradition' we observe. We can all find reasons to justify which practices we observe and which we ignore particularly when it is left to our own discretion!

People may ask 'What are you giving up for Lent?' I tend not to 'give anything up' for Lent and think for me it's a better idea to 'take something up' for Lent.

Lent is the period leading up to Easter. The reason for recognising the Lent period is to prepare for Easter, to consider the debt we owe, and the price paid on Good Friday, so that we can also celebrate Easter Sunday.

In our house we choose to enjoy eating pancakes on Pancake Tuesday not with any 'religious' purpose, we choose not to follow the 'religious' tradition of wearing ashes.

At Easter there is no option for a Christian to pick and choose, we cannot observe Easter Sunday without Good Friday. There can be no empty tomb resurrection joy without the bloodshed of the Cross.

We have an opportunity to consider what Easter means during Lent, it's not about giving up chocolate, it's about recognising what was given up for me/for us.

You can do this on your own or you can join us as we consider this together in one of our study groups meeting through Lent. You'll find details of the groups in this month's magazine.

Enjoy your pancakes (we will!); give up chocolate or other indulgent things, that's great, but don't kid yourself that that is what Lent is about!

Jeff

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS - LENT GROUPS

Karen Jones, who is training for ministry and on placement with us, is leading some Lenten groups meeting via zoom looking at the 'Prayers of Jesus'.

As we lead up to the central events of our faith we have an opportunity to encounter the Saviour in a new way and reach new depths of intimacy with God in prayer as we focus on six of the prayers of Jesus.

The hope is that, as we journey together through the six sessions, we will experience more of God's presence as we pray and reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross.

We will be meeting, via zoom on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 p.m. starting on 23rd February and Thursday afternoons at 2.00 p.m. starting on 25th February.

The link below will give access to both meetings: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71429280042?pwd=Sk9WNU50RGxpdytzRnJDRGF0ZIRNUT09> or you can e-mail me and I'll send you the link.

If you don't have zoom you can still join us on the telephone by calling one of the following numbers 0203 481 5237, 0203 481 5240 or 0203 901 7895 and use the Meeting ID: 714 2928 0042 and Passcode: 0HLMpA

There is a booklet accompanying the series entitled 'The Prayers of Jesus' and is priced at £5.97. These are available to church members free of charge but if you would like to you can make a donation. You will need one for the groups or you might want one to work through on your own.

These groups will be shared by both fellowships of Prenton and Wallasey Village and an invitation has been extended to others in the Wallasey Village Churches Together.

Hope to see you there.

Thanks

Jeff



The Vicar was visiting a new parishioner when he noticed her parrot. It had a red ribbon tied around one leg and a blue ribbon round the other. "I like your parrot," said the Vicar "but what are the ribbons for?" "They are to do with my faith, Vicar," replied Miss Avery.

"How do you mean?" asked the cleric.

"Well, when my faith feels strong, I pull the red ribbon, and the parrot sings 'Onward Christian Soldiers', and when my faith is weak I pull the blue ribbon and the parrot sings 'Abide with me'.

“Interesting,” said the Vicar. “What happens when you pull both ribbons?” This time the parrot replied: “I fall off my perch, you idiot.”

LENTEN RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES



The URC has produced a pack with some Lent resources for families entitled ‘Walking towards Easter together’.

There is something for everyone and with a sticker map following the 40 days of Lent, a journal for the older children to use, and a diary with stories of people walking the way of Jesus and a story

about Jesus each Sunday. There are activities to help us reflect and consider the stories, and plenty of challenges, activities, prayers and crafts for all ages, all on pull-out pages.

Each pack also includes a recipe booklet with some Easter themed recipes for all abilities.

I have ordered 10 packs, which are free of charge, so if you know a family who would like one please let me know, but book early to avoid disappointment.

Jeff



Daughter: Daddy why do you close your eyes and bow your head before you give the sermon?

Daddy: Because, my dear, I’m asking for God’s help.

Daughter: Then why doesn’t he?

LOCKDOWN LOG

Month eleven of lockdown. At the beginning I rather enjoyed the time at home and in the garden, and I had time to tidy the drawers and cupboards and grow tomatoes. The shine has worn off now though, the garage is a mess again and it’s too cold to go out and sort it again! (Roll on warm weather)

I’m looking forward to getting my vaccine because then I hope the promise of the end of the very strict restrictions will be in sight. I think we are going to have to get used to masks, sanitisers and spacing for some time yet and hugging may still be off limits for even longer. I know I will just be glad to be with people, (other than Jeff), again!

I'm looking out at the garden, the snow that made it look very lovely has gone and the truth is now evident ... there is a lot of work to do out there! The bulbs, (those not dug up by squirrels), that I planted in November are poking through the soil with promise of beautiful flowers in the warmth of spring.

I've been experimenting with new recipes and baking more than I ever used to, (the bathroom scales can attest), Jeff comes downstairs from the study sniffing the air, the promise of something tasty to eat (He hopes)!

We have regular contact with our children and grandchildren and when we speak to them, we plan what we will do when we can get together. The promise of time spent together, days out with picnics, exploring and playing games.

Many of us have learned new ways of communicating with each other, joining in meetings, working, shopping, finding entertainment. When we hear the phone, the letterbox, the doorknocker, or the doorbell there's the promise of a chat with a friend, letter, a parcel or home delivery, maybe even a socially distanced visit!

Sometimes, if I'm having a bad day it's the promise of better things to come that keeps me going, spurs me on to get up and get going. Call somebody, find a task, go for a safe walk, sometimes I just need to find my get-up-and-go.

God offers us the promise of better things to come, and a better way now; we need to put in some effort find our get-up-and-go to follow Jesus and learn more about living our lives with Him and the hope that He promises.

I know that I can rely on the promise of the ages, even in lockdown!

I remember you in my prayers and thank you for your prayers too.

Stay safe, stay well and stay in touch,

Heather x

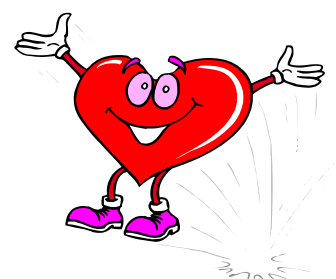
REQUEST FOR WOOL

If you have any knitting wool (Double knitting weight) that you don't have a use for, can I have it please? I have a willing volunteer knitting for the shoe boxes and she would be very grateful for more wool.

If you have any please let me know and I will arrange for it to be collected.

Thank you, Heather.

A preacher made a statement in Hyde Park. 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart.' A heckler replied, 'That's rubbish. Science has proved that the human heart is just a pump.'



The preacher asked, 'Are you married?' The man said, 'Yes'. Then go home and tell your wife you love her with all your pump!'

A HINT OF SPRING



To A Snowdrop

*Sweet little trembling thing,
Each year you come to herald spring,
You brave the last of winter's chill,
Ahead of nodding daffodil
Down the lane and in the wood,
Your pure white stately flowers flood.
Our hearts, I'm sure, would poorer be,
Without your magic
tracery.*

Brian Gent

*I heard the blackbird sing today
His anthem to the sky
And off my thoughts were
travelling,
My spirits lifted high.*



*The winter left behind me now
The earth once more awakes,
The trees will soon be dressed in green,
So little time it takes.*

*The wind will lose its winter chill
The breezes will be light,
And we'll go walking, woods and field,
As days grow long and bright.*

*So thank you blackbird, once again
As one more time I learned
Your songs have magic in their sound,
I'm glad that you returned!*

