

PRENTON NEWS

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

Happy New Year



JANUARY

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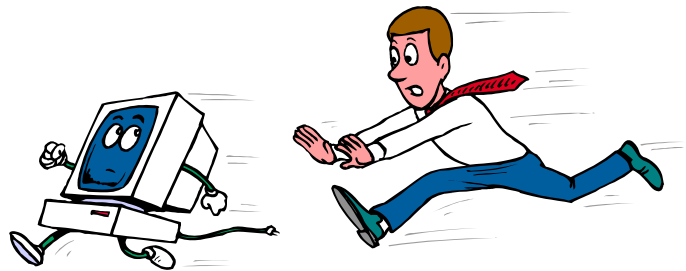
Minister: Rev Jeff Hughes Tel: 201 1883
E-Mail prentonurcminister@virginmedia.com



Church
Website

Website: prentonurc.org.uk

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



PURSUING YOUR GOALS

Whatever the goal you're pursuing,
No matter how rugged the climb,
You're certain to get there by trying your best
And taking one day at a time.

'Forever' is hard to imagine,
'The Future' may seem far away,
But every new dawn brings a wonderful chance
To do what you can on that day.

As you reach for the goals you would like to achieve,
May you find all the strength you will need,
To meet every challenge, one step at a time
Till the day when you proudly **SUCCEED.**

Emily Matthew

FROM OUR

HAPPY NEW YEAR! and WELCOME TO 2021!

I wonder what this New Year has in store for us.

I've been having a lot of problems with my computer recently and have come to the conclusion that my 'expertise' isn't enough to sort it, so I'm going to have to get someone in to look at it.

The problem I'm having is that a couple of my programmes keep getting stuck and I'm unable to go forwards or backwards or to make any changes to the work in progress. It's so frustrating if I've been working on a sermon or trying to send out emails. When this happens, I have to use Ctrl+Alt+Delete.

Computer users will know about this three-magic button combination because when pressed at the same time you are given the option to stop the programme, close it down and then start all over again. True, you'll probably lose what you were working on but at least it allows a fresh start and the prospect of progression.

With the advent of a vaccine for Covid-19, many might be looking at the New Year as that magic restart button when we can just get back to normal. However, unlike Ctrl+Alt+Delete, the New Year won't take us back to the start we all desire; to the time before Covid. The reality is we all have to carry on from where we are; we can't erase the last year as much as we'd like to.

But that's the hope Christmas brings, that despite our circumstances we can have a fresh start - The Wise Men visited Jesus and were given a fresh start as they recognised him as the Messiah, God's chosen one. To put it very crudely, He is the vaccine against the virus of sin which effects all of us. And, as any vaccine is designed to protect and preserve life so does Jesus.

As we leave 2020 behind us there is no magic restart button so we enter 2021 with all the challenges, hopes and fears that we'd wished to leave behind but we do so hoping in the God who knows us and loves us so much he gave everything for us.

Knowing that must make 2021 a 'Happy New Year'

God bless.

Jeff.

Have courage for the great sorrows of life, and patience for the small ones. And when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.

Victor Hugo 1802-85

NEWS OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY

We wish **Ron Taylor** a speedy recovery following his stay in Arrowe Park Hospital. We also send our love and condolences to **Ron and Mavis** on the death of Mavis' brother Jim. Our thoughts and prayers are with you both and your family at this sad time.

A little bird told me that a member of our congregation has been celebrating a birthday in late November or early December, with an '0' at the end of it. Maybe you don't want everyone to know your age so I won't embarrass or annoy you by putting any name but we wish you a belated "Happy Birthday" !!

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Some of you will have picked up on the fact that Prenton and Wallasey Village have a student, Karen Jones, on placement with us. In usual times you would have Karen at church events, services and meetings but as these are mostly curtailed Karen joins us virtually or in written form. So I have asked Karen to give us a short introduction about herself which is below and ask that you pray for her in her studies and placements.

Thank You.

Jeff

Hi. I'm Karen Jones, and I am training for the ministry of sacrament and word in the URC. I am in my second year now and have been placed with Wallasey Village and Prenton URC as part of my training. I hope to be with you until the end of May. Alongside this I am also doing a chaplaincy placement in a shopping centre in Runcorn.

I am a widow with three grown up children all still living on Wirral, and I have two lovely granddaughters. I have been a member of the URC since I met my husband at Grange URC in Bebington. We got married in 1985, and joined St David's URC in Eastham, where we live.

I have served for many years as a youth leader, musician, elder and lay preacher. I am grateful for the Lord's presence with me, and guidance through all the ups and downs of life.

I would never have thought God would lead me into ministry but now looking back I can see many ways in which he has been preparing me for this. I am constantly amazed by his plans and how he makes them happen.

I hope in the coming months I will get to know some of you at least a little. It's a very strange time to be training, but I am sure we will find opportunities to worship together soon.

If any of you want to connect with me, my phone number is 07517 907229 and my email address is kazzakk@hotmail.com, you can use that address to look me up on Facebook too.

God bless and keep safe

Karen

LOCKDOWN LOG

Happy New Year!

I'm sure that for many of us one of the words we'd use to describe our Christmas 2020 would be 'disappointing'.

I, like many others, was looking forward to seeing all of my grandchildren, but with just a few days to go, the opportunity to get together, our plans were dashed!

The house is decorated, the shopping is bought, the plans for a socially distanced gathering made but all of my family could not change their plans. (My freezer now bears the weight of my over catering!)

I say my freezer bears the weight, but the truth is that Jeff and I bear some of it too, the baking has to be eaten – it would be rude not to! (Perhaps a New Year diet will be necessary!)

This Christmas has broken the mould. Many of us have been unable to wander the shops to browse; to visit friends and family; to dress up and enjoy social events and festive functions. Indeed, the mould has certainly been broken, not being able to be together in our church building, sharing fellowship, singing carols, and watching or being part of the 're-enactment' of the first Christmas.

I have a collection of nativity scenes in various forms and styles, and our daughter Jenni thinks I may need treatment for my 'Nativity addiction'; I can't help myself as I love to see the expression of the true Christmas story through the eyes of other people and traditions. (It could be worse I'm sure and I really don't want to be cured.)

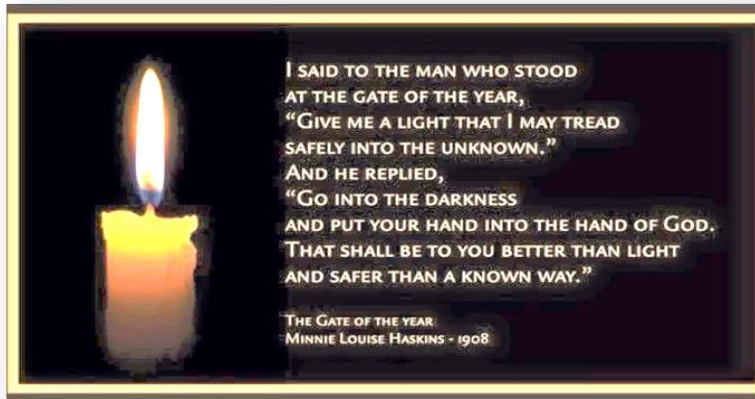
As I look forward to 2021, I wonder what the year will hold. Perhaps we should not make big plans; experience has shown us that our plans can be dashed and lead to disappointment. I think our plan should be to follow Jesus more closely, put our trust in His plan more firmly and put our hope in Him.

As I put away the decorations until next year and pack up all of the nativities, I don't want to pack up Jesus from my life. The baby that came into the world to make dark things light and wrong things right was 'Emmanuel, God with us' not just for Christmas but for life whatever that brings in 2021.

I look forward to being in fellowship again, when it is safe, I look forward with a hope that is secure, – that God is with me and holds my future whatever that is.

Let's not wish 2021 over too quickly, but I do hope that at Christmas 2021 we will be together to celebrate 'God with us.'

Happy New Year, much love Heather x



GOD'S PRESENCE BY REV SUSAN SARAPUK

Wasn't it an incredible season for primroses this year? I've never seen so many, nor have I seen primroses last into May. My friend and I were debating what colour they are. They're not cream, but neither can you say they're yellow, because that description conjures up a brighter hue.

One thing is for certain – the colour is delicate, and the flowers look delicate, which belies their tenacity, as they first appear in cold weather at the end of winter.

In April my friend and I spent a weekend at Lee Abbey, the Christian retreat and conference centre in north Devon. One morning I took a walk down to the private beach. As I watched the waves crash on to the shore, I glanced up, and there, clinging to the cliff face, was a clump of primroses, all alone in the scrub and rock, a delicacy in a harsh environment. How did they get there? They were able to survive the shallow soil, harsh winds and salt spray. In the drab surroundings they provided light.

Two thoughts came to mind. Firstly, those primroses were a sign from God that light and beauty will survive even the harshest climates.

The supreme example is the Crucifixion – in the darkest place, in the midst of the worst humanity could do, there was light breaking through. We often find that in the crucibles of sin and suffering in war and natural disasters, God will be found, because human sin cannot overcome the grace of God.

People will still love and serve and give their lives because we were made in the image of God and that's what God does. We need to remember that even though darkness can seem overwhelming, the victory has been won and light will break through.

How many references are there to God promising to bring light into the darkness, to bring deliverance, to walk with us and not let us be overwhelmed? Those primroses were a reminder of these truths.

Look for the signs that God is giving you, that he is still there, even though things may be difficult for you. They are all around. Secondly Christians need to be in places of darkness to bring the light. Jesus calls us to be disciples, to do what he did, and that means getting involved in our society. You might feel that what you do is just a drop in the ocean of need. It doesn't matter; we're called to do it anyway.

Even though the clump of primroses was so small in relation to the rest of that cliff face, their colour shone out against the prevailing backdrop. And all Christians will stand out, and good will stand out against evil, but we need to be in these places to bring God's presence.



Be a primrose for God, delighting and surprising.

From The People's Friend on Reflection Volume 2
supplied by Marian Davies

Just a few light hearted resolutions for coming out of lockdown.



I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I took my doctor's advice to join a fitness class and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But by the time I had got my leotard on, the class was over!

I don't let ageing get me down, it's too hard to get back up.

I know how I can prevent my skin from sagging – I just eat until the wrinkles fill out.

And remember, you don't stop laughing because you grow old ... you grow old because you stop laughing!

