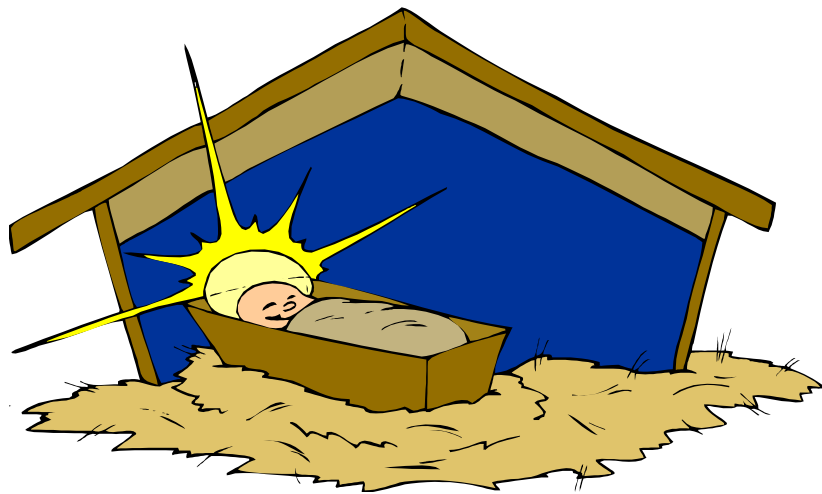


# PRENTON NEWS

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

## Peace on Earth



*Love came down at Christmas  
Love all lovely, love divine  
Love was born at Christmas  
Stars and angels gave the sign.*

**DECEMBER 2023**

**&**

**JANUARY 2024**

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Any information, pictures or articles for the website should be sent to Philip Roper at [phil.e.roper@btinternet.com](mailto:phil.e.roper@btinternet.com)

Church & Community Activities during school term time

Monday	1 <sup>st</sup> Tranmere Rainbows, Brownies & Guides	5.00 p.m.
Tuesday	Phoenix Dance Group	6.30 p.m.
	Guitar Group	6.30 p.m.
Wednesday	Warm, Welcome Space	
	Coffee	10.00 a.m.
	Lunch	12.15 p.m.

**Donations towards the cost of the magazine would be appreciated.**

## **THE JOYS OF CHRISTMAS AND THE HOPES FOR THE NEW YEAR.**

Dear Friends,

As I write this Editorial, the Christmas adverts are everywhere, in the newspapers, on the television and in the shops where they are flooding their shelves, trying to persuade us that their gifts will bring happiness and joy, but will they? Probably many people do believe that feelings of happiness, peace and joy can be bought over the counter in a shop or on the internet and given in the form of a gift.

People think that happiness comes from receiving the latest “must have” item; joy on receiving a hamper full of delicious goodies; peace from the toiletries which will wash away all your troubles, but will these feelings last?

We are now approaching the most joyous day of the year for Christians. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. A baby sent by God to be our Saviour and to show us the way that we should live our lives as followers of his teachings.

This **Gift** from God cannot be bought over the counter in a shop. It is a priceless **gift** that we do have to accept, to know lasting peace, joy and happiness, and it is the most costly of all **God’s Gifts** to us.

We know the Christmas story but if you look at it in depth, it is powerful. It is about a baby born in poverty in a stable and as Jesus grew into an adult he was subjected to extreme cruelty. As Christians it teaches us to show compassion for the hungry, the homeless, and the persecuted; the refugees, asylum seekers and the needy, knowing that God is close to them as He is to us and that there is nothing we have to face alone because “God is with us”.

When the Christmas celebrations are over, we will return to our normal routine as the Shepherds did in Luke 2:20 “The shepherds went back to work, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen, which had happened just as they had been told”.

Their circumstances were still the same but they were different. We too, if we have truly celebrated Christmas, should be full of praise and we should take the joy of Christmas into our everyday lives.

The Christmas story is also reflected by Charles Dickens in his book, ‘A Christmas Carol’ where Ebenezer Scrooge changes from a selfish, hard-hearted and tight-fisted man who had a very bad dream, a nightmare, and he changed overnight into someone who treated

others with kindness, and made every effort to spread joy and happiness wherever he went.

Christmas can change every one of us too, making us into more compassionate, loving, generous, kind, joyful and happy people glad to be alive in God's world

We have quite a busy programme for December, starting by welcoming Jeff and Heather back, on Sunday December 3rd, following Jeff's three-month sabbatical. We hope that his sabbatical has been beneficial both mentally and physically but also inspirational, enabling him to lead us forward with new ideas and enthusiasm for the future of our Church here in Prenton.

Ray Craig will, as usual, conduct our Toy Service in aid of the Charles Thompson Mission and Shelby is arranging our Carol Service. Philip Roper is taking our service on Christmas Eve, Sunday 24th December followed at 4 o'clock by our own nativity play with Carols Around the Tree.

On Christmas Day, Pauline & Fred will open the Church for half an hour from 10.00 a.m. for people to come for quiet reflection and prayer.

Then we will be in "overdrive" and geared up ready for the excitement of Christmas Day when we will be able we enjoy time with family and friends, presents and too much Christmas pud! Time for a nap after the King's Christmas message!

But our Church celebrations don't stop there because our Moderator, Rev Geoff Felton will be taking our service on New Year's Eve so I hope and pray that you will all be able to be in Church to welcome him before you burn the midnight oil to ring in the new year.

By comparison, January is a quiet month allowing us to relax and re-charge our batteries and look forward to an exciting and challenging 2024.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the congregation, to thank **everyone** for all their hard work in 2023, making our Church a warm and welcoming place to be. The little jobs are just as important as the bigger ones and all your efforts, in whatever capacity, are much appreciated.

I wish you all a joyous and contented Christmas and a promising, happy and healthy New Year.

**Editor**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You came to our world and it did not know you. You came to your own people and they would not accept you. You came to the inn and there was no room for you there as there has been no room so often among so many people.

Help us to make room for you this Christmas-time, to welcome you gladly at the heart of our celebrations, and to receive you as our Lord and Saviour with body, soul and mind. Lord Jesus Christ, come now, and make your home within us.      Amen

## NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY & FRIENDS

We continue to 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, Harry & Joan Bradley, Peter & Joan Carroll, Iris Hatton, Don Howard, Jo Johns, Julie & Tim Jones, Dylis & John Letchford, Margaret Lloyd, Nora McGrath, Glennie Mortimer and Mary Segar.

We send our love and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to our former members, Ministers and friends who now reside the length and breadth of England, Scotland and Wales and who keep in touch with our news through our magazine.

## DAILY PRAYER

Dear Lord —  
I'm proud to say, so far today  
I've got along alright;  
I have not gossiped, whined or bragged,  
Or had a single fight.

I haven't lost my temper once,  
Or criticised my mate,  
I have not lied, I have not cried,  
Or loudly cursed my fate.

So far today I've not one time  
Been grumpy or morose,  
I've not been spiteful, cold or vain,  
Self-centred or verbose.

But, Lord, I'm going to need Your help  
Throughout the hours ahead,  
So, give strength, Dear Lord, for now  
I'm getting out of bed.

John T Baker

Supplied by Pauline Green from  
Chicken Soup for the Golden Soul

**MACMILLAN**  
**CANCER SUPPORT**  
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU

## MACMILLAN BIG COFFEE MORNING

This year, we held our Coffee Morning on Wednesday 27th September. Unfortunately, Heather wasn't available to run it, so I volunteered. I started looking at all the information that MacMillan sent us, and discussing it with Pauline and Sue. Somehow, they managed to volunteer for everything! And to do it so much better than I would have done – especially as Pauline made some beautiful material banners.



People made cakes, bought cakes, there were sandwiches, and pies, and all sorts of wonderful things. The tables were absolutely full of plates of delicious food! The tables were laid out individually in the Hall, with tablecloths on, and with up to four chairs around each.

We did not expect many people, but more and more kept coming in, until the Hall was really full. Everybody seemed to be having a wonderful time. Some people volunteered to clear away, and others washed up.



Pam was kept busy selling raffle tickets, and then Fred ran the draw for the donated items. Those who won seemed very happy with the items they received.

After about four hours, everything was cleared away and tidied up, and the last bits of food were taken home. It was a most enjoyable time, but we wished Heather and Jeff had been there too. Still, there's always 2024!

Pauline informed us that we raised £231.50 for this worthwhile cause. So, thank you

all very much, whether you helped with the planning, the providing, the serving, the clearing up, or just enjoying the food. Many people with cancer will be helped by what you did that day.

**Marian**

## WHEN JESUS WENT MISSING

After the Christmas morning service, the baby Jesus was missing from the crib. The Vicar was searching for him when a little girl arrived with a brand-new doll's pram and started lifting the baby Jesus out from it. Putting him back in the crib she said, "I told you that if I got a pram for Christmas you would be the first to get a ride in it!"



Three young children were playing the parts of the wise men in a school nativity play. At one point they came to Mary and Joseph at the manger and said the following:

Magi 1: Here, this is gold.

Magi 2: This is myrrh.

Magi 3: And Frank sent this.



## **FROM OUR CHURCH SECRETARY**

### **CHRISTMAS**

We don't yet know if we will be in the Church or in the Hall for our Christmas services. The West Room roof is almost finished and the builder putting in the suspended ceiling is hoping to start work on 20th November.

Once that is done Agape will worship in there for the winter and we will move into the Hall. The work will take at least a week, possibly a bit longer. We will try to keep you up to date.

### **FOOD BANK ADVENT APPEAL**

Another big thank you for your generosity. Pam and Barry have found more than usual in the box at the back of the Church - it's been full to overflowing. Let's keep it up.



### **SHOE BOXES**

Once again thank you so much to all who have contributed gifts and money so that Heather, Pam and Joyce could go shopping.

I am not sure of the exact number of boxes filled between the two churches but it was about 123. That is really great. Again, many thanks to all who helped.

I think special thanks should go to Pam and Joyce who sorted all the gifts into categories so it was easier for us to find what we needed.

### **31st DECEMBER**

I hope I can appeal to you all to make a special effort to come to Church at 11.00 a.m. on New Year's Eve. The Rev Geoff Felton, our Synod Moderator, will be leading worship. I know a good number of our regular congregation are away and we don't want him to get the wrong impression. So, please, do more than your best!

### **NEW YEAR**

Are you into making resolutions, especially those you don't keep? How about making a resolution to join the "Meeters and Greeters" team, or volunteering to do a reading regularly, or even join those who lead prayers of intercession?

Honestly when you've done it once it isn't too daunting and there are always people to help. Think about it and let your Elder know if you'd be willing to try it.

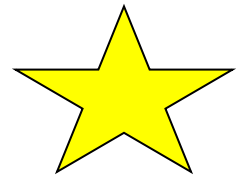
Thank You, Jean



# HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL



**Sunday 10th December**



**11.00 a.m. Toy Service led by Mr Ray**

**Craig**

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



**Sunday 17th December**

**6.30 p.m. Carol Service led by Rev Jeff Hughes**  
Traditional Carol Service



**Sunday 24th December**

**11.00 a.m. Dr Philip Roper**

**4.00 p.m. Carols Round the Tree**

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.



**Monday 25th December**

**Christmas Day**

**10.00 a.m. Christmas Worship**



**Everyone is welcome to all our services**



# MERRY CHRISTMAS



## DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2023

DECEMBER			
Friday	1st	1.00 p.m.	Masonic Ladies
Sunday	3rd	11.00 a.m.	Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes
Tuesday	5th	9.30 a.m. 1.30 p.m.	Elders' Meeting Conversations with God
Wednesday	6th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch
Sunday	10th	11.00 a.m.	Toy Service. Mr Ray Craig
Wednesday	13th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch
Sunday	17th	11.00 a.m. 6.30 p.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes Candlelight Carol Service
Wednesday	20th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch
<b>Christmas Eve</b>			
Sunday	24th	11.00 a.m. 4.00 p.m.	Dr Philip Roper Carols Around the Tree
<b>Christmas Day</b>			
Monday	25th	10.00 a.m.	Christmas Day Worship
Wednesday	27th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch
Sunday	31st	11.00 a.m.	Rev Geoff Felton. Moderator



# HAPPY NEW YEAR

## DIARY FOR JANUARY 2024



JANUARY			
Monday	1st		<b>NEW YEAR'S DAY</b>
Tuesday	2nd	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God
Wednesday	3rd		<b>Warm Welcome Space</b>
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
Sunday	7th	11.00 a.m.	Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes
Wednesday	10th		<b>Warm Welcome Space</b>
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
Sunday	14th	11.00 a.m.	Rev Des Drury
			Items required for the February & March 2024 Magazine
Wednesday	17th		<b>Warm Welcome Space</b>
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
Sunday	21st	11.00 a.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes
Wednesday	24th		<b>Warm Welcome Space</b>
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
Sunday	28th	11.00 a.m.	Mr Ron Taylor
Wednesday	31st		<b>Warm Welcome Space</b>
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch

After a long day of putting on a wonderful Christmas meal, Mum was standing over the kitchen sink wearily washing the mountain of dirty dishes. In the middle of this monumental task, her teenage daughter strolled into the kitchen and saw what her mother was doing. The thoughtful girl said, “Mum, today’s a holiday, you shouldn’t be doing that.”

The mother was taken aback by the seeming kindness of her daughter. She began to put down the dish cloth and take off her marigold gloves. A sense of pride overtook her as she thought her little girl was now starting to show signs of maturity by helping out with dishes. Her bubble was burst, though, when the teenager said, “Just do them tomorrow”.

## **CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD**

Our November meeting and prayers focused on War and Peace.

We started our session by listening to a piece of music by Karl Jenkins called “The Armed Man”. A piece of music dedicated to the victims of the Kosovo crisis.

The Bible has much to say on the subject of war and peace and we read and reflected on some of these passages.

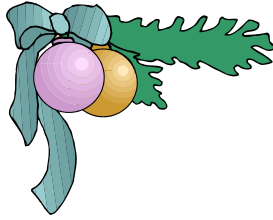
We shared memories of our family members who had been involved in the conflicts of WW1 and WW2 acknowledging the sacrifices and contributions they had made in battle or on the Home Front.

We turned our attentions to the conflicts in Ukraine and in Gaza. We prayed about the Problems, the People and the Peacemakers. If you wish to read these prayers they are displayed on the notice board in the Church Hall along with some images of War.

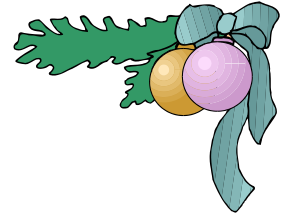
We ended our session by listening to a very challenging piece of satirical writing by the American author, Mark Twain. This was very thought provoking and needed quiet prayers afterwards. If you are interested to know what he said, the short story is called “The War Prayer”. It is a scathing indictment of war, and particularly of blind patriotic fever and religious fervour as motivations for war.

We do not shy away from challenging subject matter in this group. If you are interested and wish to join in with your thoughts and prayers, we meet every 1st Tuesday in the month at Pauline’s house, 1 Prospect Road from 1.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

See you next time for coffee, cake and conversations.



**We send you all our very Best  
Wishes for Christmas and for the  
New Year**



Shelby Ambrose

Marian Davies

Carys Evans

Pauline Green

Margaret Higson

Don Howard

Joyce Holland

Barbara Jones

Julie & Tim Jones

Joan Lawrence

Pam & Barry Lawrence

Maureen Makin

Margaret Meade

Elaine Parkin

Glyn & Philip Roper

Claire, Phill & Erin  
Thomas

### **RUDOLF THE RED NOSED REINDEER**

As the holiday season of 1938 came to Chicago, Bob May wasn't feeling much comfort or joy. A 34-year-old ad writer for Montgomery Ward, May was exhausted and nearly broke. His wife, Evelyn, was bedridden, and on the losing end of a two-year battle with cancer. This left Bob to look after their four-year-old daughter, Barbara.

One night, Barbara asked her father, "Why isn't my mommy like everybody else's mommy?" As he struggled to answer his daughter's question, Bob remembered the pain of his own childhood. A small, sickly boy, he was constantly picked on and called names, but he wanted to give his daughter hope, and show her that being different was nothing to be ashamed of. More than that, he wanted her to know that he loved her and would always take care of her.

So, he began to spin a tale about a reindeer with a bright red nose who found a special place on Santa's team. Barbara loved the story and made her father tell it every night before bedtime.

As he did, it grew more elaborate and because he could not afford to buy his daughter a gift for Christmas, Bob decided to turn the story into a homemade picture book.

In early December, Bob's wife died. Though he was heartbroken, he kept working on the book for his daughter. A few days before Christmas, he reluctantly attended a company party at Montgomery Ward. His co-workers encouraged him to share the story he'd written. After he read it, there was a standing ovation. Everyone wanted copies of their own. Montgomery Ward bought the rights to the book from their debt-ridden employee.

Over the next six years, at Christmas, they gave away six million copies of Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer to shoppers. Every major publishing house in the country was making offers to obtain the book. In an incredible display of goodwill, the head of the department store returned all rights to Bob May. Four years later, Rudolf had made him into a millionaire.



Now remarried with a growing family, May felt blessed by his good fortune. But there was more to come. His brother-in-law, a successful songwriter named Johnny Marks, set the uplifting story to music. The song was pitched to artists from Bing Crosby on down. They all declined. Finally, Marks approached Gene Autry, the cowboy star who had scored a holiday hit with "Here Comes Santa Claus" a few years before. Like the others, Autry wasn't impressed with the song about the misfit reindeer.

Marks begged him to give it a second listen. Autry played it for his wife, Ina. She was so touched by the line "They wouldn't let poor Rudolf play in any reindeer games" that she insisted her husband record the tune. Within a few years, it had become the second best-selling Christmas song ever, right behind "White Christmas". Since then, Rudolf has come to life in TV specials, cartoons, movies, toys, games, colouring books, greetings cards and even a circus act.

The little red-nosed reindeer dreamed up by Bob May and immortalised in song by Johnny Marks has come to symbolise Christmas as much as Santa Claus, evergreen trees and presents.

As the last line says, "He'll go down in history."

Supplied by Philip Roper from the Magazine of the United Parish of Birchwood & Woolston

## CHRISTMAS CORINTHIANS

The “Love” verses from Corinthians are amongst the most famous lines in the Good Book. But allow me, please, to offer up this extract from Christmas Corinthians by someone whose name I do not know, but whose heart I feel I know well.

“If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows and strands of twinkling lights, but do not show love, I’m just another decorator.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend myriad holiday parties and sing in the choir’s cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though tired.

Love doesn’t envy another’s home that has co-ordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love doesn’t yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn’t give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can’t.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure.”

As the poet Christina Rossetti pointed out, “Love came down at Christmas.”

Supplied by Marian Davies from the Friendship Book 2017

## 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.

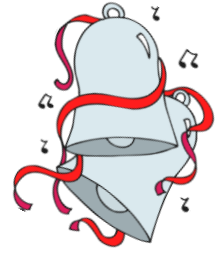
‘Forever’ is hard to imagine,  
‘The future’ may seem far away,  
But every new dawn brings a  
wonderful chance  
To do what you can on that day.

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

## RING IN THE NEW YEAR

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

### MOVING FORWARD

We must keep moving forward,  
No time for standing still  
The past and present urge us on  
Towards that distant hill.  
Towards the bright horizon  
Where hopes and dreams come true,  
Where joy and peace and happiness  
All wait for me and you.

The past has much to offer,  
And lessons we should learn,  
But yesterday has slipped away  
And never will return.  
Tomorrow holds a promise,  
Today's for you and me,  
So keep on moving forward,  
The best is yet to be!

Iris Hesselden





## ROTAS FOR DECEMBER 2023



### Duty Elder

December 3rd	Elaine Parkin
10th	Jean Bayley
17th	Fred Foulkes
24th	Pauline Green
31st	Elaine Parkin

### Communion Elders

December 3rd	Fred Foulkes & Sue Jones
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### Door Duty

December 3rd	Margaret Higson, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
10th	Barbara Jones, Sue Jones, Barry Lawrence
17th	Pauline Green, Maureen Makin, Elaine Parkin
24th	Jean & Les Bayley, Margaret Higson
31st	Joan Bradley, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper

### Readers

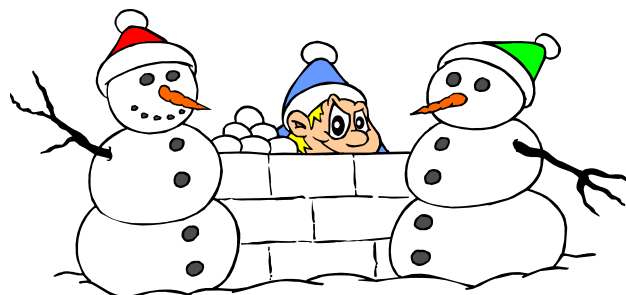
December 3rd	Pam Lawrence & Heather Hughes
10th	Philip Roper & Glyn Roper
17th	Joyce Holland & Shelby Ambrose
24th	Pam Lawrence & Marian Davies
31st	Barry Lawrence & Fred Foulkes

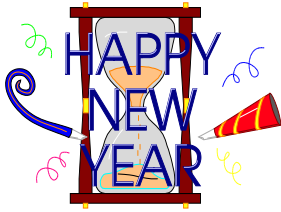
### Prayers of Intercession

December 3rd	Jean Bayley
10th	Claire Thomas
17th	Heather Hughes
24th	Sue Jones
31st	Pauline Green

### Sound System

December 3rd	Elaine Parkin
10th	Elaine Parkin
17th	Marian Davies
24th	Elaine Parkin
31st	Marian Davies





## ROTAS FOR JANUARY 2024



### Duty Elder

January	7th	Sue Jones
	14th	Shelby Ambrose
	21st	Jean Bayley
	28th	Fred Foulkes

### Communion Elders

January	7th	Shelby Ambrose & Jean Bayley
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### Door Duty

January	7th	Pauline Green, Maureen Makin, Elaine Parkin
	14th	Barbara Jones, Sue Jones, Barry Lawrence
	21st	Margaret Higson, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
	28th	Pauline Green, Maureen Makin, Elaine Parkin

### Readers

January	7th	Joan Bradley & Heather Hughes
	14th	Jean Bayley & Glyn Roper
	21st	Joyce Holland & Shelby Ambrose
	28th	Pam Lawrence & Philip Roper

### Prayers of Intercession

January	7th	Barry Lawrence
	14th	Philip Roper
	21st	Heather Hughes
	28th	Jean Bayley

### Sound System

Marian Davies
Elaine Parkin
Elaine Parkin
Marian Davies

### Church Flowers

January	7th	Carys Evans
	14th	
	21st	Don Howard
	28th	Anne Foulkes