

PRENTON NEWS

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



FEBRUARY & MARCH 2024

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Church & Community Activities during school term time

Monday	1 st 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.

From the Manse

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.

That was the promise of Jesus recorded in Matthew 16:18, 'I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

And it's true that there has been much talk over the last couple of years about church growth (it became the study focus of my recent sabbatical).

2 years ago, we partnered with LICC (London Institute of Contemporary Christianity) and have been considering since what it means, as individual Christians, to be fruitful on our frontlines Monday through to Saturday, not just when we gather together on Sundays and many of you have been sharing small victories as you've tested the waters speaking about your faith outside of the church. We have also been praying for growth now for just over 12 months and have become a more invitational church. And we have seen the fruit of those labours with new people joining our church.

That said, I feel that much of our approach as individuals and as a church has been half hearted and there hasn't been much enthusiasm to do those things we need to do that lead to growth. I think a lot of this is due to a lack of confidence in the message we have and our ability to share it.

It's evident to me that there has been growth within individual's spiritual walk helped by the Prayer group and Study groups, but our focus and efforts now as a church need to be on numerical growth. And there are signs that we are becoming more confident in our approach to this. Of course, we want more and more people to know of the saving grace of Jesus. Let's face it, the main purpose of the Church is to make disciples.

I am hoping that as we enter 2024, we, that is you and I, will have some renewed hope that our church will grow and that we will allow that hope to lead to some more action.

We need to have a common purpose with God in growing the church through us rather than us just trying to maintain the church and the things we do in it (which can be exhausting).

So, how can we become a more invitational church which cultivates genuine connections with our local community so that we can plant seeds of curiosity?

How can we become more united in the task of growing church?

How can we better embrace individual spiritual growth?

We can start by continuing in prayer which will always be the force behind growth. We must continually seek God's guidance as we pray for wisdom.

And we need to embrace Christ's promise to build His church and recognise that He uses faithful people like you and me in that task.

May God bless us as we join with Him.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours, yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth, yours are the feet by which he is to go about doing good and yours are the hand by which he is to bless us now.

Jeff.

NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY & FRIENDS

During December, **Margaret Higson, Maureen Makin and Margaret Meade** have all spent time in Arrowse Park Hospital and we wish them all a speedy recovery.

There is an unpleasant cold and cough and 'flu doing the rounds and several of our members including our Minister have been out of circulation for at least a week. I understand that the cough has a name - "The Wirral 100 day cough!!"

We continue to remember all the members and friends who need our prayers at this time and in particular: **Jeanette Adams, Donna Birks, Harry & Joan Bradley, Peter & Joan Carroll, Richard & Mary Hambly, Iris Hatton, Don Howard, Jo Johns, Julie & Tim Jones, Dylis & John Letchford, Margaret Lloyd, Nora McGrath, Glennie Mortimer and Mary Segar.**

Just a line to thank you for the beautiful yellow roses that you sent me at the beginning of January. They have lasted for three weeks.

I think I'm on the road to recovery but I thought that a fortnight ago when I was starting to use a walking stick. Now sciatica has attacked the "good" leg so I am back propelling myself around with the wheeled zimmer and occasionally using the walking stick. To use the car, I have to be able to do an emergency stop and at the moment that is not possible. However, I am hoping that I will be able to get back to church in early February.

Margaret Meade

THANKS to Pam and her helpers who decorated the hall for Christmas. You did a grand job and the hall looked very festive. Thanks again.
Anne Foulkes

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

HOME GROUPS

Starting on the Wednesday 7th February, there will be a Home Group meeting at the Manse from 7.00 p.m.

We will initially meet for 7 weeks up to the Easter break and will be focussing on Paul's letter to the Ephesians which I introduced at the beginning of the year.

I have printed some copies of the letter in the New Living Translation of the Bible which appears easier to understand. These will be available for those who would like a copy.

GARDEN & CHURCH WORKING PARTY.

There is a working party scheduled for 23rd March from 9.30 a.m. Lunch will be provided from 12.30 p.m. We will be working in the garden and in church, making our premises a little tidier and getting rid of items no longer in use. All are welcome especially the more able bodied, those with a knowledge of gardening and supervisory skills, and those skilled at making a good cuppa.

AGM

The Church's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 17th March 2024 following the morning service.

Thanks

Jeff

FROM OUR CHURCH SECRETARY

THANK YOU

Our thanks go to all who helped put out the Christmas decorations - and those who helped to clear them away!

Many hands do help. Thank you all.

We hope you enjoyed our Christmas services although we know that quite a few people were unwell, so not able to join us. Hopefully the "bugs" will soon disappear and we can get back to normal.

AGM. Our AGM will be on March 17th. If you are one of the people who appears on the list of "job holders", please let me know that you are willing to continue, or if you wish to relinquish your role. If you do wish to give up it would help greatly if you could suggest a replacement.

We are always glad of volunteers and are always looking for people to meet and greet on a Sunday, volunteers to do readings or lead Prayers of Intercession. More help is also needed for Coffee mornings - it's no problem if you only have to do it every three months, but that needs more helpers! Please offer, it's not too difficult.

ANOTHER REQUEST FOR HELP

Saturday March 23rd 9.30 a.m. to lunch time. We are having a Spring clear-out. Not just the gardens, but inside as well.

Please come and help if you possibly can. It's amazing the amount of "stuff" which just appears. We are sure we have lots we don't need, so let's have tidy and organised premises. We can do it if we all work together. Thank you.

Jean

GIFT MONTH - MARCH 2024

As agreed by the church meeting, we will be holding our Gift Month in March again this year.

Once again, we are challenging ourselves to look at our giving to the Church as we seek to serve God and His mission within this community and we ask each person to prayerfully consider your giving to the church, both the regular contribution you make week by week or by a one off donation and, if possible, to make an increase, however small.

As a small church the cost of contributions to Maintenance of the Ministry, Ministerial expenses, and the running costs and maintenance of the church buildings remain proportionately high. This coupled with declining numbers of regular attendees to worship and the cost-of-living crisis all add to our financial pressures.

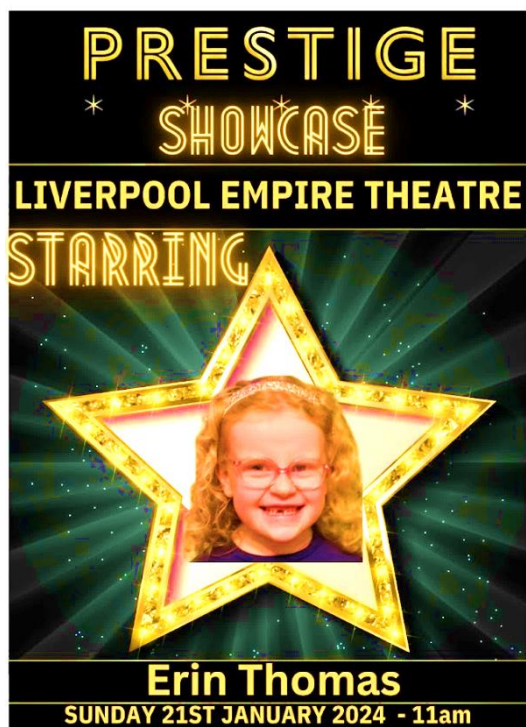
Although hall bookings have increased, resulting in higher income from lettings, the costs of running the building and maintaining ministry increase each year and need to be covered. Whilst it is beneficial to have income from donations for using our halls the responsibility for our Church income largely depends on the regular, voluntary giving of members and friends.

During March, you will each receive a letter asking you to consider increasing your giving to the church and in the meantime, I would ask you to prayerfully consider what God might be asking you to contribute and to make an increase, however small.

We have much to be grateful to God for in the life of our church and we thank Him for the way he uses people in our church to further His mission in this area.

God bless. Jeff

ERIN THOMAS - STAR OF THE SHOW



Ever since she could move Erin has wanted to dance. She joined Phoenix Dance and Drama, based in Upton last year and has lessons in Ballet, Tap and Modern Disco.

In November, Erin was asked to perform in the Prestige Dance Show at the Liverpool Empire. It was an early start on a Sunday morning, but the class had a full run through on the stage before the show started.

The parents dropped the children off outside the theatre and then clapped and cheered as they paraded round the corner and in through the stage door.

I was a lot more nervous than Erin as the show started and the lights dimmed.

Dance schools from all over the country performed and there was a great atmosphere as parents cheered their children on. When Erin's big moment arrived, what can I say, except she took her moment on the famous stage and sparkled! She performed her routine perfectly; all her steps were in time and most importantly she had the biggest smile on her face.

Grandma and I welled up in our seats, we were so proud. Erin's favourite part of the whole experience was being allowed to wear stage make up (including bright red lipstick!) and her gold sparkly dress. Maybe this will be the start of a career in the spotlight!

Claire and Erin Thomas

KILLER CHRISTMAS PRESENT:

I got a killer jigsaw for Christmas. It was one of those odd-shaped ones with no square edges. The picture on the box was of a tiger but it didn't say how many pieces. As I said it was a killer jigsaw and I was really struggling to find two pieces that would fit together. After a while I called Heather to come and help.

She looked at the picture on the box, looked at the pieces on the table and then looked at me. She patted the back of my hand and with a shake of her head she quietly said, 'never mind dear, just put the Frosties back in the box.'

DIARY FOR FEBRUARY 2024

FEBRUARY			
Friday	2nd	1.00 p.m.	Masonic Ladies
Sunday	4th	11.00 a.m.	Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes
Tuesday	6th	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God
Wednesday	7th		Warm Welcome Space
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	Home Group at the Manse
Friday	9th	1.00 p.m.	Masonic Ladies
Sunday	11th	11.00 a.m.	"Songs of Praise"
Tuesday	13th	Shrove Tuesday	
Ash Wednesday	14th		Warm Welcome Space
Valentine's Day		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	Home Group at the Manse
Sunday	18th	11.00 a.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes
		12.15 p.m.	Church Meeting
Tuesday	20th	1.00 p.m.	Elders' Meeting at the Manse
Wednesday	21st		Warm Welcome Space
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	Home Group at the Manse
Sunday	25th	11.00 a.m.	Mr Ron Taylor
Wednesday	28th		Warm Welcome Space
		10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	Home Group at the Manse

DIARY FOR MARCH 2024

MARCH			
Sunday	3rd	11.00 a.m.	Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes
Tuesday	5th	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God
Wednesday	6th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m. 7.00 p.m.	Warm Welcome Space Coffee Morning Lunch Home Group at the Manse
Mothering Sunday	10th	11.00 a.m.	Mrs Pam Lawrence
Wednesday	13th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m. 7.00 p.m.	Warm Welcome Space Coffee Morning Lunch Home Group at the Manse
Sunday	17th	11.00 a.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes Church Annual General Meeting Items required for the April & May 2024 Magazine
Wednesday	20th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m. 7.00 p.m.	Warm Welcome Space Coffee Morning Lunch Home Group at the Manse
Saturday	23rd	9.30 a.m.	Spring Clean & lunch
Palm Sunday	24th	11.00 a.m.	Mr Ron Taylor
Wednesday	27th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	Warm Welcome Space Coffee Morning Lunch
Friday	29th	Good Friday	
Saturday	30th	Clocks spring forward an hour tonight.	
Easter Sunday	31st	11.00 a.m.	Rev Jeff Hughes

FABRIC WORK UPDATE

West Room: the roof has been finished and we have had a new lower ceiling put in too with new long lasting strip lights. We also had a water leak and this has been fixed with a new radiator.

Outside the old brick wall which was dangerous has been reduced in size and a new door fitted.

In the main hall we have had new long lasting lights which could probably last for 30 years!! Thanks to all who oversaw the work.

Special thanks to Jean for her organisation in phoning, arranging everything with the builders and electricians who were doing all this work as well as the pointing of the stonework at the front.

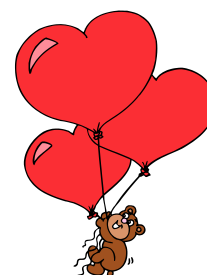
Thanks also to Pauline and staff for all the super lunches on a Wednesday at the Warm Welcome Space.

Date for your diary: Saturday March 23rd 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon including a bacon butty lunch, "Garden Clear Out" and for people who cannot garden "Clear Out and Tidy" the rooms in the building. Everyone is welcome to come and do what you are able to do and enjoy the company.

Fred

THE HISTORY OF ST VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honour Juno, who was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses and also the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.



The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate, but one of their customs was name drawing. On the eve of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II, Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. He was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues and believed that the reason was that Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, he cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome.

Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and

for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270.

The pastors of the early Christian Church in Rome endeavoured to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those maidens. And as the Lupercalia began about the middle of February, the pastors appear to have chosen Saint Valentine for the celebration of this new feast. So it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year arose in this way.

Supplied by Philip Roper and adapted from an item in the magazine of Thomas Risley URC, Warrington.

NEW YEAR PARTY:

A man was holding a New Year's party when there was a knock at the door. Expecting another guest, he opens the door and finds a snail on the step. To the man's amazement he began to talk, 'can I come into the party?' said the snail. 'Don't be absurd' said the man as he bent down, picked up the snail and threw it across the road into the neighbour's front garden and went back in the party.

The following year, the man was holding another New Year's party when there's a knock on the door. He opens it and sees the same snail. The snail looks up at the man with an angry look in its eye and says, 'Was there any need for that!'



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

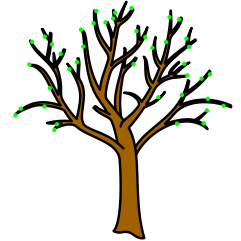
SPRING

*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 fields,
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!*

From the Friendship Book

EASTER



Lent gives us the chance to follow and reflect on the events leading up to Easter.

The story of Easter engages us each year, as much as it did when we first became aware of it.

We travel through Lent when we are given the chance to experience it, with the disciples, the plotting, loyalty and integrity and the nearer we get to Easter, the violence and betrayal.

Unlike the disciples, who must have thought that the cross, on which Jesus died, was a terrible ending, but we know



that it was not the end, as we celebrate on Easter Sunday the final episode which was the New Beginning when Christ's resurrection made all things new.

Jesus said in John 14:19, "*Because I live, you shall live also.*"



Alleluia! Easter morning
Hear the bells ring out,
Feel the joy and new upliftment
Banish fear and doubt.

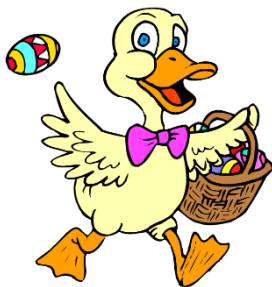
Alleluia! Gone the darkness,
Feel the hope within,
Onward to a bright tomorrow
See the way begin.

Alleluia! Share the gladness,
Joy be unconfined,
Gifts of wonder, love and beauty
Filling heart and mind.

Alleluia! He is risen
Farewell darkest night,
Death and sadness gone for ever,
Welcome Love and Light!

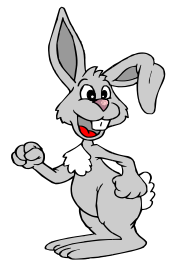
*Look up and seek God,
Look back and thank God,
Look forward and trust God,
Look around and serve God.*

From The Bible in one year - Nicky Gumbel



The essential Easter question -
"What came first - the chocolate chicken or
the chocolate egg!"

What do rabbits use to dry themselves with?
A hare drier!



ROTAS FOR FEBRUARY 2024

Duty Elder

February 4th Elaine Parkin
11th Pauline Green
18th Sue Jones
25th Shelby Ambrose

Communion Elders

February 4th Fred Foulkes & Sue Jones

Door Duty

February 4th Jean & Les Bayley, Joan Bradley
11th Barbara Jones, Sue Jones, Barry Lawrence
18th Margaret Higson, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
25th Jean & Les Bayley, Joan Bradley

Readers

February 4th Marian Davies & Barry Lawrence
11th Fred Foulkes & Jean Bayley
18th Joan Bradley & Shelby Ambrose
25th Joyce Holland & Glyn Roper

Prayers of Intercession

February 4th Claire Thomas
11th Philip Roper
18th Pauline Green
25th Barry Lawrence

Church Flowers

February 4th Margaret Higson
11th Marian Davies
18th Shelby Ambrose
25th Joyce Holland

Where in the Bible can you find adverts for ice cream?
'Lions of Judah' and 'Walls of Jericho'

ROTAS FOR MARCH 2024

Duty Elder

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

Communion Elders

March	3rd	Pauline Green & Elaine Parkin
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Door Duty

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

Readers

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

Prayers of Intercession

March	3rd	Heather Hughes
	10th	Sue Jones
	17th	Claire Thomas
	24th	Jean Bayley
	31st	Philip Roper

Church Flowers

March	3rd	Pam Lawrence
	10th	Joan Lawrence
	17th	Heather Hughes
	24th	Margaret Meade
	31st	Easter Sunday

