

# PRENTON NEWS

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



*May God's peace be with you this Christmas and  
in the coming year*



DECEMBER 2025 &  
JANUARY 2026

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Minister: Rev Jeff Hughes      Tel: 201 1883  
E-Mail [prentonurcminister@virginmedia.com](mailto:prentonurcminister@virginmedia.com)

Church Website: [prentonurc.org.uk](http://prentonurc.org.uk)  
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

Monday	1 <sup>st</sup> Tranmere Rainbows, Brownies & Guides	5.00 p.m.
Tuesday	Guitar Group	6.30 p.m.
Wednesday	Welcome Space	
	Coffee	10.00 a.m.
	Lunch	12.15 p.m.
	House Group	7.00 p.m.
	Men's Group	7.30 p.m.
Thursday	Creative Writing Group	7.30 p.m.

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

# FROM THE MANSE

## “FIXING OUR EYES ON THE VISION OF CHRIST”

Where has 2025 gone? But it has. And, as we come to the close of another year and stand on the threshold of a new one, let's thank God for all that he has accomplished through us and let us look ahead to 2026 full of expectation.

Christmas reminds us of the hope that entered the world through Jesus Christ – “the true Light that gives light to everyone”, as the Gospel writer John says. And it is in that same light that we are called to walk into the coming year, guided by God's vision for His people.

Christmas is not only a celebration of Christ's birth but also a renewal of purpose. It is God's declaration that darkness will never overcome the light. As a church family, we are reminded that vision is not merely about seeing what lies ahead – it's about seeing *through* the eyes of faith. Seeing what God has already done in and through us and looking ahead with faith for what God has planned next. Where others may see uncertainty, we see opportunity. Where the world grows weary, we need to hold fast to hope.

As we look to the New Year, let us ask: *What vision has God placed before us?* Perhaps it is a deeper compassion for our community, a renewed commitment to discipleship, or a greater unity within the body of Christ. Proverbs 29:18 reminds us, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Vision gives life, direction, and momentum. It is the spiritual compass that keeps us centered on God's purposes rather than our own comfort.

May this be a year when we, as a church, lift our eyes to see what God is doing among us – to recognise His movement in our families, our ministries, and our community. Let us be a people who dream God-sized dreams, who step forward in faith, and who bear witness to His transforming love in all we do.

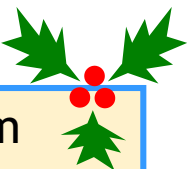
As we celebrate Christ's birth and anticipate the dawn of a new year, may our hearts and minds be renewed. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus – the author and finisher of our faith – and run with endurance the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1-2).

My prayer for you is that your Christmas be filled with peace and joy, and may the coming year be marked by divine vision, steadfast faith, a sure hope and the light of Christ shining through all you do.

**Merry Christmas and a peaceful and Blessed New Year!**

**God Bless.**

**Jeff.**



Jeff & Heather invite you to join them  
for Mulled Wine, Mince Pies  
& Mingle at the Manse  
for an evening of Festive Fun & Fellowship  
on Thursday 4th December 2025  
from 6 p.m.



Everyone is very welcome

## **NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY & FRIENDS**

**Elaine Parkin** has moved into her new flat and has also had a successful operation on her knee and is walking (not running yet) without a crutch.

**Pauline Green** is in the process of moving into a new home and we hope and pray that her plans come to fruition in the new year, and that she will be happy in her new abode.

Several members of our congregation and **Ron Taylor** are waiting for a date for surgical procedures and we hope and pray that these will come sooner rather than later and that they will then be out of pain.

We also hope that it will not spoil their celebrations of Christmas and the New Year.

**Margaret Higson** has spent some time in hospital and we are pleased that she is back in Church on a Sunday.

**Jean Bayley** has been unwell and hopefully she is now on the road to recovery.

Quite a few members will be spending Christmas and the New Year with their families and friends away from Birkenhead and we wish them all the joys of this festive season.

**Pam Lawrence** has been in hospital and **Barry** has also been poorly and we look forward to seeing them back at church soon.

**Don Howard** passed away, peacefully on Tuesday 25th November and we send our love, sympathy and condolences to Julie, Jane and Jason and their families at this very sad time. Don's funeral will be on Monday 15th December at 10.30 a.m. at Landican.

We continue to remember in our prayers, all the members and friends who are unable to join us regularly on a Sunday morning and we want them to know that we have not forgotten them.

## THANK YOU



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT THIS HARVEST

Thank you for your generous gift of £225.00. Your donation is reaching communities around the world, supporting farmers challenged by climate change to bring in a harvest of hope.

This includes farmers who, with the help of Christian Aid's partner WoNES, have been able to secure their farms, send their children to school, and feel empowered as decision makers in their communities. Maryama, one of the farmers supported by the scheme, reflects *"When I go to the farm, do my farming, the leadership derived from the VSLA has been a support to me."*

Mohamed, a farmer and dedicated volunteer, has seen first hand the benefits of receiving training and having a rain gauge installed in his community. Reflecting on the impact, he shares: *"We find this project so helpful for us as farmers. It has helped me in terms of basic farming information in the area of the climate change. And based on the trainings that we receive from WoNES and Christian Aid, it has helped us, amazingly - with regards to the cultivation of our crops in the community and beyond."*



Thank you for supporting those in the harshest of circumstances to enjoy a bountiful, varied harvest. With your continued help, we have already made a big difference.

Yours sincerely,

Lilli Kenyon

Harvest Celebration Team



Thank you for a gift of £100 to MAF following Stan & Anne Chedzoy's visit to Prenton United Reformed Church.

We recently flew a team of eight specialists from the organisation CURE Kenya, to the remote location of Kilifi. Our flight took just one hour, yet to do the journey by dirt road would take ten hours!

CURE provides funded surgeries and Christian care for children living with disabilities. The team was able to treat 96 patients for a range of conditions such as bowed legs, cleft lips and club foot. Reflecting on the trip, CURE team member Elvis Lemaiyan shared, "The partnership between MAF and CURE helps us reach the areas no-one thought we ever could. We are very grateful for this."

We too are grateful for your kind support, that allows us to continue serving wherever we are needed.

Yours sincerely,

*Ian Oliver*

Supporter Relations Manager



# Thank You!

## 139 Boxes.

A huge THANK YOU! to everybody who has been part of the wonderful achievement of filling and sending 139 Boxes of Love. [79 from Prenton and 60 from Wallasey Village]

These gifts will be distributed to children around the world, so that they can know that they are loved by God. These simple beautiful boxes are a demonstration of love and hope in what may seem like a dark and hopeless world, and you have been a part of that.



So, to all who bought, who knitted, who scoured shops for bargains throughout the year, those who gave cash, those who gave time, those who packed, those who prayed and those who loved - thank you all.



We had more volunteers to pack the boxes this year, that made the task so much easier, so a very special thank you to them.



A special Thank You to Jeff who packed all the boxes into his car and took them to the collection point.

**Heather x**

The end of a year and the beginning of another, is the time to thank everyone who works, behind the scenes or out front, to make our Church what it is.

You are too many to name individually and I would probably forget someone unintentionally, so a big THANK YOU, your work really is appreciated.

If you feel that you are able to do a “small” job then please volunteer, you will be welcomed with open arms.

**Editor**

**MERSEY SYNOD AUTUMN MEETING  
At St Stephen's URC in Wavertree  
on Saturday 11th October.**

**The theme was**

**LIVING FAITH. OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES**

Our Moderator, Rev Geoff Felton, opened the meeting reminding us that we “press on together with God beside us.”



◀ Elaine  
◀ Pauline

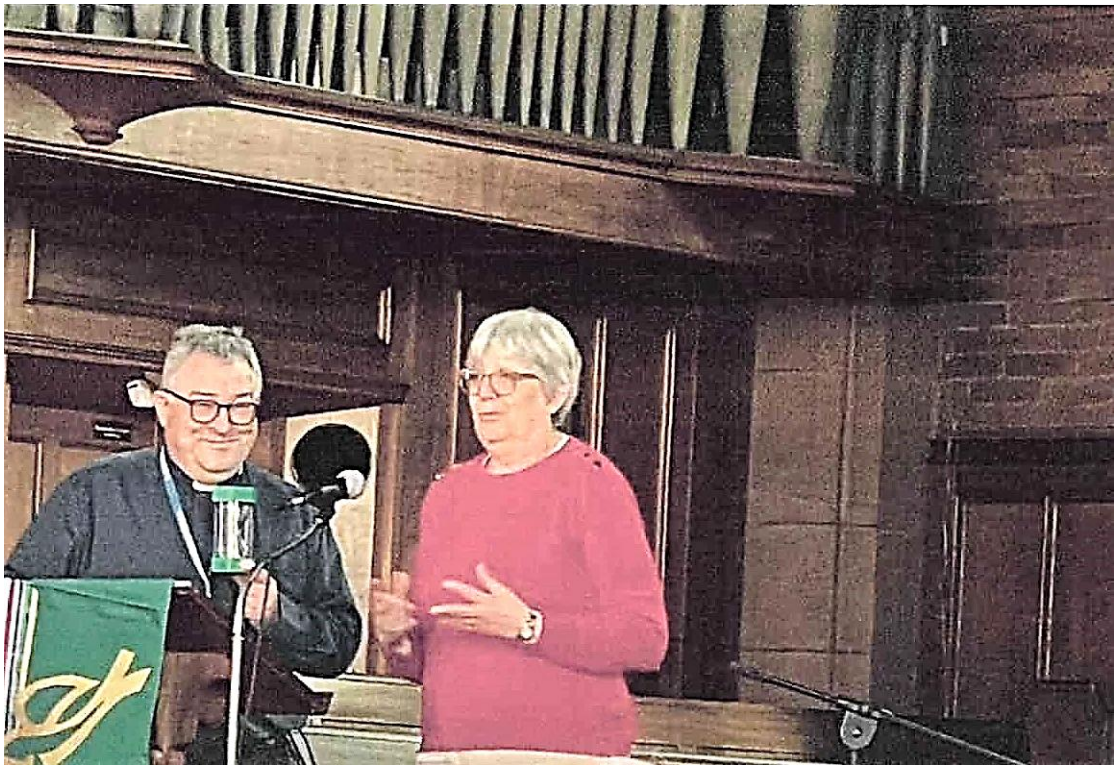
Rev James Green led the Bible Study on the Synod theme and encouraged us to build communities “where everyone is able to flourish.”

Rev Stuart Radcliffe invited us to consider “Living faith in the moment” through the simple but powerful question “Where will your faith take you this time tomorrow.”

Since “tomorrow” was a Sunday the answer was probably “to church”.

This picture of Pauline is of her explaining “where her faith would take her on Monday”. Her answer would have been, “Down into Birkenhead to the bank with Sunday’s collection and talking to homeless people sitting on the pavement”.

Whatever Pauline is actually saying, it is definitely amusing our Moderator.



Another item on the Agenda was Good News where we were mentioned for our successful and busy prayer groups.

We look forward to another report from the next Mersey Synod which is on Saturday March 14th 2026 at St John's URC, Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Anyone and everyone is allowed and encouraged to attend.

May our lives and our prayers be like lights shining in dark places. And may the Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit fill our hearts and homes with light this Christmas and in the new year to come.

*Christian Aid*



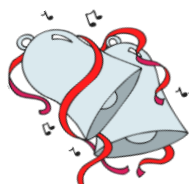
# Merry Christmas



## DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2025

<b>DECEMBER</b>			
Wednesday	3rd	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch
Thursday	4th	6.00 p.m.	Mingle at the Manse
Friday	5th	1.00 p.m.	Masonic Ladies
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>7th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes</b>
Tuesday	9th	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God
Wednesday	10th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Lunch Decorate the Hall for Christmas
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>14th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Toy Service. Mr Ray Craig</b>
Monday	15th	10.30 a.m.	Don Howard's Funeral at Landican
Wednesday	17th	10.00 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning Christmas Lunch
Friday	19th	12.30 p.m.	Christmas Lunch at the Masonic Temple in Clifton Road, Birkenhead
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>21st</b>	11.00 a.m. 6.30 p.m.	<b>Rev Jeff Hughes</b> <b>Carol Service</b>
<b>Christmas Eve</b>			
Wednesday	24th	4.00 p.m.	Carols Round the Tree
<b>Christmas Day</b>			
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>25th</b>	10.30 a.m.	<b>"Celebration" Service.</b> <b>Christ is born</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>28th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Mr Ron Taylor</b>





# Happy New Year



## DIARY FOR JANUARY 2026

<b>JANUARY</b>			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>4th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Communion. Rev Jeff Hughes</b>
Tuesday	6th	1.30 p.m.	Conversations with God
Wednesday	7th	10.00 a.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	House Group at the Manse
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>11th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Mrs Marian Davies</b>
Tuesday	13th	1.00 p.m.	Elders' Meeting at the Manse
Wednesday	14th	10.00 a.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	House Group at the Manse
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>18th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Rev Jeff Hughes</b>
		12.15 p.m.	<b>Church Meeting</b> Articles for the February & March 2026 Church Magazine
Wednesday	21st	10.00 a.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	House Group at the Manse
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>25th</b>	11.00 a.m.	<b>Mr Ron Taylor</b>
Wednesday	28th	10.00 a.m.	<b>Warm Welcome Space</b> Coffee Morning
		12.15 p.m.	Lunch
		7.00 p.m.	House Group at the Manse



## **FABRIC REPORT**

New blinds have been fitted to the windows in the Kinghorn Vestry.

Thanks to everyone who helped in the Church Garden Autumn “clean up” on October 25th.

Thanks to Barry for getting the faulty light switches sorted out.

Thanks to Pauline and all the other willing helpers who make our Wednesday Lunches such a good gathering of 20 to 25 people. Sadly, one of them, Sylvia, had a fall and broke her jaw. Get well soon.

**Fred**

## **CHURCH VISION DAY by Philip Roper**

Our Church Vision Day was held on Saturday 1st November. 17 of us attended. We started with tea or coffee and a short time of worship and then Jeff led us through a series of discussions.

We played People Bingo by filling in a sheet, identifying someone in the Church who matched certain descriptions, e.g. has sung in the choir, has taught in Sunday School etc. (there were 30 in total). This required us to talk to other people and get to know each other.

Thinking about the past, we were given a brief history of the Church and then asked to think about the years that we have been attending Prenton and then choose a year that we considered to be the “best” in the life of the Church. Obviously, those who have been at the Church for many years had a much greater range to choose from than those who have only recently joined. We shared the results and they ranged from 1968 to 2025 with an even spread across those years.

This showed that that everyone has a different idea of when was “best”. We also discussed times and events when we felt proud or moved by something our Church had done; in some cases, this could be something which made us feel proud personally. We then looked for common themes in the results.

After another break for refreshments, we thought about the present life of the Church and filled in a sheet about various roles in the Church identifying who does what and whether there was scope for other people to get involved and provide help. This also involved discussions to help people get to know more about everything that goes on.

We considered the constructive things that our Church is doing now and how we might build on these.

We thought about the future. Results were presented of the questionnaire that Church people had been asked to complete, identifying and ranking the 5 things (out of a list of 18) which we considered to be the most important that the Church should be involved in. Jeff had analysed these and noted that many people had produced very similar results. We used these to talk about ways in which we can build on those areas and whether additional resources might be needed to achieve our vision.

We ended with a summary of our ideas and closing worship. We then enjoyed a buffet lunch, including a delicious apple dessert which Pauline had made.

It was a really good time of fellowship and sharing and we all felt positive about our ideas for the future vision for the Church. We plan to have follow up discussions next year.

## **FROM THE PEWS**

I would just like to add to the comments Philip has written about the Vision Day.

Jeff had obviously given a lot of time and thought to the programme that was both interesting and thought provoking.

We came away looking at the future here at Prenton with more confidence and certainly hope.

Thank you, Jeff.

**Shelby**

The Vision day was very positive. There were some good ideas put forward and we came away with hope for the future.

Thank you, Jeff for all your hard work.

**Anne & Fred**

Following our 'Vision' day, Barbara Jones asked me to include in this magazine what she thought was her Best Year at Prenton United Reformed Church and this is her article for a booklet that we produced called Memories of Prenton United Reformed Church.

### **Barbara's "Best Year" was 2015.**

I had been attending our Church since 1987 when I returned to Prenton. I had been welcomed by Mary Hambly, the Minister's wife and she had encouraged me to come along to the Monday Group.

I made a very nervous entrance but Mary was there to greet me and introduced me to three members: Lynda, Hilda and Joan Gilbert. I went on to work with Joan at the Wirral Talking Newspaper. Joan has since died but

I have continued on with my work with them in many different venues over the years.

As the years have passed I have been approached to become a member of Prenton URC; first by Rev John Wadhams who was very understanding of my opinion. More years have passed and now we have a new minister, Rev Jeff Hughes and this year he approached me and invited me to attend a meeting on the background of the United Reformed Church. I gave it some thought and agreed although it fell on a Wednesday evening which was my 'walking night' with my friend from the Methodist Church which I have always enjoyed.

Another chapter. Would you believe it . . . . What an outcome . . . . What has happened to me . . . . I am now **A MEMBER OF Prenton URC . . . . SUCH JOY** has come upon me. No concerns, no guilt, no old concerns, knowing the ways of God throughout my life. Here I am in a good place.

*This is a story about four people named: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.*

*There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did.*

*Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.*

*Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it.*

*It ended up that EVERYBODY blamed SOMEBODY when NOBODY did what ANYBODY could have done.*

## **DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS**



**Thursday December 4th**  
**Mingle at the Manse**  
from 6.00 p.m.

**Sunday December 14th**  
**Our Annual Toy Service**  
**11.00 a.m. with Mr Ray Craig**



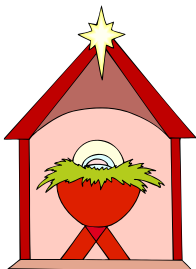
**Wednesday December 19th**  
**Warm Welcome Space**  
**Christmas Lunch**



**Sunday December 21st**  
**Carol Service at 6.30 p.m.**



**Christmas Eve**  
**Wednesday December 24th**  
**4.00 p.m. Carols Round the Tree**



**Christmas Day**  
**Thursday December 25th**  
**10.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.**  
**Family Service**





## WHEN JESUS WENT MISSING

After the Christmas morning service. the baby Jesus was missing from the crib. The minister 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!"

## THE NATIVITY PLAY



There is a lovely story about the infant school nativity play where one little boy was desperate to play the part of Joseph. The day came when the teacher announced the parts and the little boy was **not** chosen to play the part of Joseph. However, he was asked to play the part of the innkeeper.

Even though he had been picked, he was still not happy. The day arrived for the performance of the play. The entire school was there. There were parents, grandparents, teachers and governors in the audience. Mary and Joseph arrived at the inn and Joseph knocked on the door. "Can my wife and I come in?" There was a pause, and then the little boy replied, "SHE can come in but YOU can't." He then said, "I wanted to be Joseph!"



At a nativity play, all was going well until the angel appeared and told the little girl playing Mary that she was going to have a baby.

"But how can this be," said Mary, "since I am a Viking?"

## CHRISTMAS TRADITION

### FATHER CHRISTMAS AS WE KNOW HIM TODAY

It wasn't until the Victorian era that the modern image of Father Christmas began to take shape in Britain, and when it did, it came from the unlikeliest of sources — America. The older Father Christmas character in Britain had been suppressed by the Puritans and, along with many of the Christmas traditions, had never really recovered. But across the pond in the New World, a new figure based on European traditions was taking shape.

Dutch emigrants had brought the tradition of St Nicholas (or Sinter Claes, as they called him) with them to east-coast America. Somewhere along the way, the tradition moved from 6 December to Christmas Eve and the name Sinter Claes became anglicised by the English-speaking inhabitants of New York. By the early 19th century many American children expected Santa Claus to bring them presents on Christmas Eve.

But it was a poem by the Episcopalian minister, Clement Clarke Moore, that really helped to cement this new figure as a key part of Christmas and added some crucial elements into the mix. An account of a visit from Saint Nicholas, written in 1822 and better known as '*The Night Before Christmas*', described a jolly man with a round belly, dressed all in fur, and coming down the chimney. All of these features were brand new but the poem was an immediate hit, and so gradually they became engrained in the popular consciousness.

This new image was reinforced by illustrations drawn by the American caricaturist Thomas Nast. His classic version of a portly, bearded Santa appeared in Harper's

Weekly in 1863 and Nast continued to develop the image into the 1880s, by which time the character had gained the furry suit, hat, boots and wide belt.



It was during the 1860s that this new Santa figure crossed the Atlantic for the first time. He could not have arrived in Britain at a better time. The family-orientated Victorian Christmas was gaining momentum and the idea of giving gifts on Christmas Day rather than at New Year had just caught on. Although he kept the more traditional British name of Father Christmas, he eagerly took on all the new traits of his American counterpart.

### **But what about the reindeer?**

Moore's poem is also wholly responsible for the introduction of reindeer to the Santa legend. Before 'The Night Before Christmas' the traditional mode of transport for St Nicholas was a flying horse, but Moore described 'a miniature sleigh with eight tiny reindeer'. He also named them Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.



These are familiar names to us today, but in 1823 they had never been heard before.

Of course. one key name is missing from Moore's poem. The most famous of all the reindeer, Rudolph, did not make an appearance until more than 100 years later. In fact. it was Santa himself who had the red nose, 'like a cherry' in the poem.

## ROTAS FOR DECEMBER 2025

### Duty Elder

December	7th	Elaine Parkin
	14th	Fred Foulkes
	21st	Sue Kite
	28th	Marian Davies

### Communion Elders

December	7th	Pauline Green & Elaine Parkin
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### Door Duty

December	7th	Jean & Les Bayley, Heather Hughes
	14th	Barbara Jones, Sue Kite, Barry Lawrence
	21st	Pauline Green, Heather Hughes, Elaine Parkin
	28th	Jean & Les Bayley, Deryk Jones

### Readers

December	7th	Deryk Jones & Fred Foulkes
	14th	Joyce Holland & Philip Roper
	21st	Barry Lawrence & Marian Davies
	28th	Fred Foulkes & Glyn Roper

### Prayers of Intercession

December	7th	Claire Thomas
	14th	Pauline Green
	21st	Sue Kite
	28th	Philip Roper

### Church Flowers

December	7th	Christmas Decorations
	14th	
	21st	
	28th	



## ROTAS FOR JANUARY 2026

### Duty Elder

January	4th	Pauline Green
	11th	Jean Bayley
	18th	Shelby Ambrose
	25th	Elaine Parkin

### Communion Elders

January	4th	Jean Bayley & Fred Foulkes
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### Door Duty

January	4th	Barbara Jones, Sue Kite, Barry Lawrence
	11th	Pauline Green, Glyn Roper, Philip Roper
	18th	Heather Hughes, Deryk Jones, Elaine Parkin
	25th	Jean & Les Bayley, Barry Lawrence

### Readers

January	4th	Deryk Jones & Pam Lawrence
	11th	Shelby Ambrose & Julian Megraw
	18th	Joyce Holland & Jean Bayley
	25th	Philip Roper & Deryk Jones

### Prayers of Intercession

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

### Church Flowers

January	4th	Pam Lawrence
	11th	Pauline Green
	18th	
	25th	Anne Foulkes