

Alan and I recently visited Barnard Castle, (no, we didn't have an eye test!) whilst we were on holiday in Durham, and came across St Mary's Parish Church in the centre of town. It had a notice stating that it was open each day from 10.00 am, so we decided to take a look. However, the doors were firmly closed, and while we were exploring the churchyard, a couple appeared with the keys. It turned out that the church was closed for the performance of a play – The Crucible – but the couple were the lady treasurer, who had come to do some paperwork and her husband who had come to work on the boiler! Sound familiar?? They took us inside, and it was a lovely church with colourful stained glass windows.

It dated from 1130, when Bernard Baliol had built a stone castle, and St Mary's Church had been founded alongside it. The castle is now a ruin, standing high above the river Tees, but the church is still in decent repair, no doubt kept going by a dedicated congregation including the couple we met. It's good to see how our lovely churches up and down the country are still seen as precious to their individual towns and congregations

- long may this continue.

Jenny



# The Messenger

## Ainsdale Village Church

### United Reformed/Baptist

Station Road, Ainsdale, PR8 3HW

**December 2025/January 2026**

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own  
understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make  
your paths straight

**Proverbs Chapter 3, verses 5 and 6**



<b>Minister:</b>	<b>Rev. Hilary Smith</b>	Tel: 01704 792235
	hilary.bell@yahoo.com	
<b>Facebook Page:</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ainsdalevillagechurch">https://www.facebook.com/ainsdalevillagechurch</a>	
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.ainsdalevillagechurch.com">www.ainsdalevillagechurch.com</a>	

Personally, I don't like the word Xmas, and would much rather take the trouble to write or type the word Christmas, but apparently the term Xmas has been used over many centuries.

An early use of Xmas includes Bernard Ward's "History of St. Edmund's College Old Hall" published in 1755, and an even earlier version, Xtemmas, dates back to 1551.

Lord Byron used the term in 1811, as did Samuel Coleridge in 1801, and Lewis Carroll in 1864.

In the United States, in 1977, New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thomson sent out a press release saying that he wanted journalists to keep the "Christ" in Christmas, and not call it Xmas—which he called a "pagan" spelling of 'Christmas'.

Anyway, the people in this picture seem very happy with Xmas!

## Jenny



- Sat 20<sup>th</sup>** Blue Christmas service at 4.00 pm – see item in magazine
- Sun 21<sup>st</sup>** Christmas Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Janice Hill
- Sun 21<sup>st</sup>** Team Carol Service at Birkdale URC at 6.00 pm
- Tues 23<sup>rd</sup>** Christingle-making Coffee Morning in the vestry at 10.30 am
- Wed 24<sup>th</sup>** Christingle Service at 4.00 pm –

Janice Hill and Lucinda Green

**Thu 25<sup>th</sup>** Christmas Day Service at  
Ainsdale Methodist Church - 10.30 am

**Sun 28<sup>th</sup>** Morning Worship at  
10.00 am – Church led

## Calendar for January

**Sun 4<sup>th</sup>** Morning Worship at 10.00 am  
- Janice Hill

**Tues 6<sup>th</sup>** First Coffee Morning  
of the new year in the vestry – 10.30 am

**Sun 11<sup>th</sup>** Morning Worship at Ainsdale Methodist Church – 10.45 am

**Mon 12<sup>th</sup>** Ladies Group in the Vestry at 7.00 pm – see item in magazine

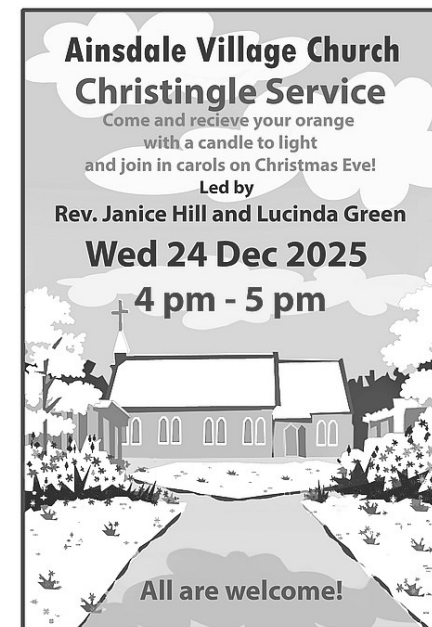
**Sun 18<sup>th</sup>** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Keith Trencher

**Mon 19<sup>th</sup>** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity meeting – AVC at 10.00 am

Meetings for the rest of the week at other churches – vestry notice board

**Sun 25<sup>th</sup>** CTIA service to renew the covenant at St John Stone Church  
at 11.00 am led by Hilary Smith – No service at Ainsdale Village Church

**Tues 27<sup>th</sup>** Prayer in the church from 11.00 am



## Bomb Damage to Church

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With reference to the bomb damage to the church in April 1941, press articles describe nine air raids on Southport between September 1940 and July 1941. The official reports record 17 people killed and 76 injured, 12 houses totally destroyed and 35 others so badly damaged that they had to be demolished. 2650 people were evacuated from danger zones.

Ainsdale suffered bomb damage in the heavier raids in April 1941, including Pinfold Lane, Stourton Road, Salford Road and Mossgiel Avenue, obviously very near the church. In 1941 the small brick building in the yard with the heavy concrete roof was built as an air raid shelter. We now use it to store the Barbecue and the lawn mower!

Referring to the war time Blackout with no street lights, it was a serious offence to allow a light to be shown from a building, and press articles list many cases of Southport people being taken to court and fined. The purpose of the Blackout was, of course, to prevent enemy planes identifying built up areas.

I hope you found this additional information interesting.

Alan

## Calendar for December

**Tues 2<sup>nd</sup>** Advent Bible Study at 2.00 pm in the vestry - Janice Atfield

**Sat 6<sup>th</sup>** Christmas Afternoon Tea at Ainsdale Village Church -  
3.00 pm see item in magazine

**Sun 7<sup>th</sup>** Holy Communion at 10.00 am - Peter Lyth

**Sun 7<sup>th</sup>** Carols round the Christmas Tree - Ainsdale Methodist  
Church lounge at 6.00 pm

**Tues 9<sup>th</sup>** Advent Bible Study at 2.00 pm in the vestry - Janice Atfield

**Sun 14<sup>th</sup>** Morning Worship at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am

**Sun 14<sup>th</sup>** Candlelight Carol Service at 6.00 pm at AVC - Janice Hill

**Mon 15<sup>th</sup>** Ladies Group dinner at Duke's at 7.00 pm - see item in magazine

## Minister:

Rev. Hilary Smith  
Tel: 01704 792235

## Church Secretary

Mrs Imelda Aspinall  
Tel: 07955 874814

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## Church Treasurer:

Mrs Wendy Parry  
Tel: 01704 578214

## Deacons:

Imelda Aspinall Christine Holford  
Joan Green Wendy Parry  
Lucinda Green Ann Swift

## SUNDAY ROTAS

	Door	Communion	Reader	Flowers	Tea/Coffee
<b>7 Dec</b>	Jenny Boulton	Jeremy Lister Wendy Parry	Simon Sutcliffe	Stella Tomlinson	Norma Naisbett
<b>14 Dec</b>	<b>Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church - 10.45 am</b>				
<b>21 Dec</b>	Jeremy Lister	Jeremy Lister Beverly Bush	Imelda Aspinall	Daphne Arch	Imelda Aspinall
<b>28 Dec</b>	Jenny Boulton		Jenny Boulton	Vacancy	Jenny Boulton
<b>4 Jan</b>	Jenny Boulton	Jenny Boulton Imelda Aspinall	Jenny Boulton	Daphne Arch	Jenny Boulton
<b>11 Jan</b>	<b>Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church - 10.45 am</b>				
<b>18 Jan</b>	Jeremy Lister		Simon Sutcliffe	Stella Tomlinson	Jenny Boulton
<b>25 Jan</b>	<b>Covenant Service at St John Stone - 11.00 am</b>				

At present, the gardeners are all busy tidying up for the coming winter season, and planting lots of bulbs. In fact, in various areas of the garden, we have planted 1300 bulbs, so these should give a wow factor in spring! One area of the large bed on the right-hand side as you come up the main church drive has been cleared, and planted with plants which will give winter colour, so have a look at that next time you walk up the drive. The recent warm weather has resulted in a profusion of weeds!! So we are all getting down on our hands and knees, or more sensibly using the long-handled hoe, to get rid of these.

On 4 November, the North West in Bloom awards ceremony took place at Bolton Wanderers Football Stadium – sadly the days of this being held at Southport Floral Hall are long gone! The Community Garden again was awarded an “Outstanding”, and in fact we got a special mention for having been Outstanding for twelve years – now thirteen, so plaudits all round and sincere thanks to our wonderful gardening team. We will soon be finishing our labours for a couple of months and will be treating ourselves to a Christmas get-together at The Sparrowhawk.

Jenny



In January 1944, the hardworking Rev. Nicholson completed fifty years' service as a Minister in the Congregational Church. This was marked by a Grand Social event and a special service, as well as a gift of book tokens. In March 1944 the Ministry of Labour returned the Milton Hall for use by the church, who then purchased the Blackout curtains from the Ministry for £3. At the end of May 1944 Rev. Nicholson stepped down and handed over to the Senior Deacon, Mr Nelson. At the same time, after 17 years as Treasurer, Mr Hodgkins resigned, to be replaced by Mr R H Rimmer. 13

**The Financial Statement for 1944** recorded an income of £604, but no mention of expenditure! However, the minutes stated that the financial situation was highly satisfactory. Then came a setback when “Owing to the recent severe frost, the Heating Apparatus had suffered heavy damage with repairs estimated at over £100”. Appeals were made to various Trust Funds for grants towards the cost. (We are still doing that now, for grants towards upgrading our electrics).

As previously mentioned, in early 1945 **Rev. William Paxton** transferred from Hope Church in Salford to take up the ministry at Ainsdale, at a salary of £300, plus expenses. Number 51 Segars Lane was purchased as a Manse, but there is no mention of how the purchase was financed!

The war years for Ainsdale Congregational Church ended with a Special Service for VE Day on 8 May 1945 (Victory in Europe Day), conducted by the Rev. F Elson, Captain of the Forces in Southport. VE Day revels for all the Ainsdale Churches were held in St John's Parochial Hall. Following an evening service, about 400 people heard a relay of the King's Speech, after which there was dancing until 11.30 pm for the adults and a bonfire for the children. The Mothers' Union provided the refreshments. Members of our church attended the Methodist Church for the 1945 Christmas Day service.

**Aged four and a bit, I have a clear memory of VE Day in Walton**, with a huge bonfire at the junction of four roads. The adults were dancing to music from a radiogram which had been positioned in a neighbour's doorway. We children were happy because the adults were happy!

Alan

**1903:** “The Ladies Sewing Group to make all the arrangements for the Annual Tea, and Mrs Sawyer to get up an entertainment”.

**1906:** “It was agreed that a Ladies Committee be formed to hold a sale of work to be held in the second week of December. Sincere thanks to be sent to Alderman Jones for the valuable gift of a sewing machine”.

**1907:** Mr Smith was appointed Sunday School Superintendent, but there is no mention of the number of children attending or how many classes..... to be continued with more extracts from the records.



## Notes from the Archives – Part 19: The Church in the Second World War

In compiling these notes, I was surprised that in the minutes of what was then known as the **Great War (1914-1918)** there was little comment about the war: church life seemed to roll on unperturbed. It was very different in the 1939-1945 war, when hostilities very much came to these islands. 12

In 1937 the Rev. Frederick Nicholson returned from retirement to act as Honorary Pastor, and he continued through the war years until **Rev. William Paxton took over as a paid pastor** in early 1945. In early 1940 the minutes record an ongoing debate about whether they should morally or financially appoint a paid minister. With many young ministers on active service as Military Chaplains, and with church finances not in a good state, they asked Rev. Nicholson if he was willing to continue in an unpaid role. He agreed and guided the church through the difficult war years. In the minutes for 1940, the family names some of us will recognize, such as Lakin, Henderson, Howard and Rimmer, begin to appear.

In 1941 the Summer Garden Party went ahead on a reduced scale due to rationing and food shortages. It was noted that, as a child, our very own Barbara Henderson was in charge of the Bran Tub!

Despite the constraints of the war, the congregation held Retiring Collections for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Comfort Fund, and for Hampton Road Congregational Church which had a cash flow problem! They also responded to a plea from the Lancashire Congregational Union to help war damaged churches in Liverpool and Manchester. This came closer to home when services had to be held in the vestry as the sanctuary was undergoing extensive repairs following bomb damage on 21 April 1941. **The Milton Hall could not be used as the Ministry of Labour had taken it over to store furniture from bomb damaged houses.** The Ministry said they were taking possession of the hall until the end of the war.

**The financial statement for 1941** recorded an Income of £421 and an Expenditure of £371. The Sunday School teachers and scholars were thanked for raising £23 at a Bring and Buy Sale, this going towards paying for War Damage Insurance. The Membership Roll stood at 55, with an average attendance of 23 at the Sunday Morning service and 15 at the evening service. A recurring theme throughout the war years was the low attendance at evening meetings in the winter due to the Blackout, with no street lighting. This especially affected the frail and elderly members. **For this reason the Sunday evening services were held in the afternoon.**

In late 1942 **Rev. Nicholson took over as Church Secretary** following the resignation due to illness of the long-serving Mr Brownbill. During the war years, the Deacons and Office Holders agreed to carry on with their duties without annual elections. Social events continued, but on a restricted basis. It was reported that in 1942, about 260 home and hospital visits had been made, about one third of which were by Rev. Nicholson. In early 1943 it was reported that "the Sunday School was thriving, the spirit was good, the numbers were growing and the gifts of the Young People quite satisfactory. Miss Evelyn Lakin was the driving force, and long may she continue". **Furthermore, Barbara Henderson was transferred from Junior Membership to Full Membership.**

## Thank You to RAF Woodvale

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We received an offer of help a few weeks back, from Flt Lt Jayne Gojke. Each year they look for a voluntary project to benefit the local community with an emphasis this year on youth. We were more than happy to respond to this; we saw it as an ideal opportunity to get the work in the Youth Group garden finished. We had the money from the Police Profit from Crime Fund which we successfully applied for, thanks to a great presentation from Lucinda. Having spent some of it on getting it cleared and flagged, we then did not have the man/woman power to complete it! Following a couple of visits from Jayne and another officer we came up with a list of jobs, including painting the entrance hall and some work in the front garden around the Christmas tree.

There will be a group of 20-30 RAF guys, not cadets coming on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December to work all day from 9am until 4pm getting as much of this work done as possible. We will be making bacon and sausage barmes in the morning and providing lots of teas and coffees. If anyone cares to bring along some cakes or biscuits to keep them going and show our gratitude that would be great.

Thank you,

With love and blessings, wishing you all the peace and joy that Christmas brings, and hope for the New Year,

Joan xx



## Gift Day

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Our Gift Day actually took place over two days this year, Saturday and Sunday, 4 and 5 October.

Our church friends were as generous as ever and altogether at total of £485 was raised to be used for expenses to help our church's running costs. This total is made up from £385 in donations, plus a further £100 donation following the Harvest Supper. So thank you to all the lovely people who attend and support our church.

## Soup Kitchen

I've spoken so many times about the role of the Soup Kitchen and the part which we play in supporting it so I will just report that we gave 13 large and heavy bags of food and household items plus £80 in cash. The "Soupie" have expressed their thanks to us and of course we remain as their biggest church donor in Southport.

Thank you everyone.

## Imelda

At **Ainsdale Village Church** we will be collecting donations of non-perishable food for

**Southport Soup Kitchen** from 11am - 1pm on Sat 29th November.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone.

Refreshments will be served in the vestry.

All are welcome.



*"What can I give Him  
to show Him my love?"*

*The stars smile on him  
and twinkle above.*

*They sing me a song  
that shines in the dark.*

*I know what I'll give  
him; I'll give him my  
heart."*

That the best gift we  
can offer to Jesus is our  
heart.

May we all be blessed  
with the peace and joy  
within the true spirit of  
giving this Christmas  
and carry this spirit into  
2026.

MERRY

CHRISTMAS

EVERYONE

Appreciation, love and  
blessings to all.

Wendy



## GIVING WHEN WORDS FAIL

10

Dear all,

In life, we often find ourselves in moments where words seem inadequate. Words cannot always express the depth of our gratitude, love and appreciation. They fall short in the face of profound emotions. Yet, in the silent moments, we can discover a truth that sometimes the most meaningful gift is not found in what we say, but in what we choose to give. In the current John Lewis Christmas advert, we are reminded of the tender beauty of giving when we don't have the right words – when a gift becomes the language of the heart. It's a simple, yet powerful act, a loving gesture that says everything.

As we all go in search of that “perfect” gift this Christmas and ensuring that no-one is left out, I invite you to reflect on a different kind of giving. In the film “The Bishop's Wife”, the Bishop is reminded by an angel that we hang up a stocking for everyone, all are filled, all that is except one. The Bishop is asked by the angel, to make sure not to leave out the one person whose birth we are celebrating. He asks him to hang up a stocking for Jesus and to consider “what gift he would give to Him. When the Bishop was lost for words the answer from the angel was simple, the best gift we can all give is the gift of ourselves, our service, our willingness to love.

In the busyness of thinking about the preparations for the festive season, asking myself that question stopped me in my tracks. As small as I am what can I put in His stocking? I had to remind myself that when words fail, it is the act of giving whether through kindness, selflessness, tolerance, forgiveness or love are the best gifts I can give to Jesus and to offer them with a full heart. As we draw near to the celebration of Christ's birth, let us find the words to ask ourselves:

### CAN WE HANG UP A STOCKING FOR JESUS ON OUR WALL?

What can we give to the One who has given us everything? It may not be something wrapped in a bow or held in our hands, but let us remember that when words fail, it is the act of giving – whether through kindness, selflessness, offering forgiveness, or love that “speaks” the loudest. May we all discover as from the words of the hymn:-

## Ladies Group

7

In November, Peter Lyth entertained us with pictures and stories of his travels to America. He told us about Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell and the founding fathers, and showed us pictures of Denver in Colorado.

He also showed pictures of a town in Texas where they had a weekly “stampede” of cows with huge horns down the main street. Visitors watching the show were warned not to sit down, so they could make a speedy escape if things went wrong!

We had a lovely evening although there weren't many of us there, and Peter was treated royally to supper!

In December, it will be our annual dinner, this time at Dukes on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00 pm**. Imelda is organising this, and has placed a poster on the vestry notice board for people to sign if they wish to attend. I'm sure we'll have our usual great time, so please come if you can.

Then in January, we will meet in the vestry to discuss our plans for the coming year.

Jenny

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

This is 18<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> January, and every year people from different churches meet together to pray about this vitally important topic, One Church, One God.

### Venues and times:

Monday 10am Ainsdale Village Church

Tuesday 10am St John Stone

Wednesday 10am Methodist Church

Thursday 10.30am St John's C/E

Friday 2pm Woodvale Chapel

These last about 30 minutes.

Then on **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January at 11am** there will be a **Covenant Renewal Service** at St John Stone Church on Sandbrook Way. With dignitaries from the churches, highlighting the importance of this event it is hoped many people will come along.

All individual churches will be closed for morning worship on that day.

Joan

## The Christmas Story is not just for Christmas

8

Early in November it felt a little early to be thinking about Christmas, for some of us anyway! However, the big retailers have their adverts out, and beyond that, the Christmas story is not just for Christmas.

Because of Jesus, we are invited into a restored relationship with God the Father and our fellow humans. From birth we have an inbuilt longing for relationship with others and with God. We need to be seen and loved, or at least acknowledged and matter!

Now, the John Lewis advert this year focuses on the restoration of an apparently strained relationship between a father and son. If the story moves on it is possibly because we all understand that longing for reconciliation-whether we have found it yet or are still missing it in one or another situation.

And the healing that is brought about by this reconciliation, with the hope for peace and joy.

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## Christmas brings Joy, sometimes sadness!

Eleanor Rigby, the fictional character in a song written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney and sung by The Beatles is about loneliness. The chorus begins “All the lonely people where do they all come from,” and continues about another fictional character, Father McKenzie, an equally lonely Priest.

The song highlights loneliness and the disconnection and depression that can result. I’m not sure where a lot of lonely people come from, but I know that many come to our Warm Welcome Café on a Friday morning. In the few years that we have been serving our community in this way, firm friendships have been developed and lives have been enriched, for some given a lifeline. The privilege of our being able to serve in this way and get to know so many lovely people is underpinned by our prayers each week.

Christmas can highlight the loneliness some people feel when they have lost family or friends through bereavement, estrangement, or other different scenarios. Maybe sadness when they recall Christmases from previous years.

Anxiety, if life is a struggle just managing day to day, or you have lost your job. Or the anxiety that Christmas can bring just coping with everything!!

## Blue Christmas – Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 4.00 pm

9

This was called The Longest Night Service last year and held on the 21<sup>st</sup> December. It’s a wonderful reflective service for everyone for whom Christmas may evoke some feelings of sadness or anxiety, bringing hope and comfort to those who attend.

Having talked with our café people about what our Blue Christmas service is, one lady remarked “Oh that sounds wonderful, but does it mean if you enjoy Christmas and being with family it’s not for you?” I said that is not the case, I absolutely love Christmas as did my parents who I miss. I also find I feel tremendous sadness for all the people and animals highlighted in their annual heart-breaking appeals by the various charities in their TV adverts at this time of year. The knowledge that, much as I would like to support each one, I can’t afford it and need to stick with my ‘own ones.’ I find Blue Christmas a great source of comfort and hope for myself and others.

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On a brighter note:

**FESTIVE**

**AFTERNOON TEA -**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December**

**Doors open 2.30, starts 3pm**

Fabulous food,

great entertainment,

wonderful raffle prizes,

licensed bar

**Tickets £12.50,**

**selling fast!!**

