

The Messenger
Ainsdale Village Church
United Reformed/Baptist
Station Road, Ainsdale, PR8 3HW
April/May 2024

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Romans 15, verse 13



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Dear Friends,

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

The season of Easter is upon us, and from a liturgical point of view, will last for 50 days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. So even if we've eaten all our chocolate eggs, Easter is not finished with us – it still speaks to us its message of new birth and hope.

It's always good to welcome the signs of spring after the long, cold winter, but even the cold and dark remind us that unseen, there are seeds and bulbs growing, and are witnessing again splashes of colour all around us, as the flowers rise up out of the ground and towards the light.

God has brought us through another season, a reminder that we are in God's hands and that every day is a gift from Him and a source of joy to us, and hopefully you have found again something to take you on into the future with renewed grace and strength.

One familiar Easter reading is the story of Mary at the empty tomb, when she mistakes the Risen Lord for the gardener, and it contains these words of Jesus: "Do not hold on to me....", or "noli me tangere," used much in Renaissance art, and interestingly, is on the reverse of the 1861 flag of Alabama. It is a curious quote, and its meaning has been much debated.

For me, it's about freedom and letting go. Yes, Jesus had risen, and shown himself to be above our human condition, the Son of God, worthy of worship. But even in his call to us to follow him, he has always allowed for freedom and change; he told the young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life that he must sell all his possessions and give to the poor, he often disturbed people by his challenge to their unbelief and their lifestyles, and he never hid the fact that there are always choices. To follow Jesus is to choose to follow him, it is not an order. And it's often about letting go of things that hold us back.

When he said "Do not touch me," or "do not hold onto me," he was saying both that Mary, as a human being, was to let him go so that he would no longer be bound to this earthly life, and would be free to be fully God again, and that this would free Mary to take his message to the others.

Sometimes we also need to let go of earthly things so that we can embrace more of the things of heaven. We cling to our structures, rules, and the things that are familiar because they give us a sense of security, but in fact they keep us prisoner, and so it's up to us to challenge all that serves to negate the gospel message of love and salvation, renewal and rebirth.

So if there is something in your life that is running contrary to the hope of Easter, pray for God to reveal new truths to you, as yet unseen, perhaps long buried, about how to welcome Jesus into your very being, and in so doing you will find freedom, in spite of earthly troubles, to live life to its joyful fullness.

May you have a blessed Easter season

In the name of our Risen Lord.

Community Garden

The gardeners are progressing with the making of the new Dry Garden. 4 tons of mulch have been heaved into wheelbarrows and spread throughout the main beds, and the side beds under the trellises, not forgetting the bank. This has been back-breaking work but should result in better water retention in the soil in preparation for the inevitable drought in the summer.

This is quite a momentous year in that Ainsdale in Bloom, which includes the Community Garden, will be entered into the main event of Britain in Bloom. For the last thirteen or fourteen years, the Garden, along with Ainsdale in Bloom, has entered the annual North West in Bloom event, and eleven of those years have resulted in an "Outstanding" category award. This year, as well as North West in Bloom, we will have an inspection by the Britain in Bloom judges, because Ainsdale as a town has been chosen to represent the North West in the national competition. So, onwards and upwards!

Jenny



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Imelda Aspinall
Christine Holford
Joan Green
Wendy Parry
Lucinda Green

Weekly Church Activities

Sunday: Morning Worship at 10.00 am
Tuesday: Gardening from 9.30 am
Coffee Morning 10.30 am – 12 noon in the Vestry
Last Tuesday in each month,
Prayer for our Local Community
Thursday: Knitting Group: 10.00 am at the home of Jean Harding,
55 Leamington Road – all welcome
Friday Welcome Café: 11.00 am – 1.00 pm.
Connect Youth Group 6.00 – 7.30 pm -
check church website for YG dates.

Ladies Group

We had a most enjoyable evening for our February meeting. As it was Chinese New Year, we had a meal at The Jade Garden, and were entertained by a Lion Dance. The lion cavorted around the tables and “ate” envelopes containing coins from our hands. I suspect that somewhere under the sparkling red lion costume there were two people, front and back!

In March we spent a very pleasant evening discussing what we might be able to do over the next few months, and in April we will be taking part in a beading workshop which is being arranged for us by Mary Mulholland, to whom very many thanks for thinking of such a great idea. There will be an update on this in the next Messenger.

Jenny



NEWS FROM SYNOD

I have recently attended the URC Mersey Synod meeting at Trinity URC Wigan. The hospitality was wonderful, and we were welcomed by their church secretary, the recently retired Revd Malcolm Fife. Those of you who have come along to Café Jam will know him as the great musician with the truly amazing Doc Martens! This is his 'new church,' and he shared the good news that in September they held their first single sex marriage, which was his.

The Bible Study 'Talking Faith, Talking Creation' was led by the Moderator, Rev'd Geoff Felton. This was followed by themed workshops. You could only attend 2 of the 4 options, I attended 1 and 2.

Community Church Gardens, 4 very different but equally wonderful gardens. Jenny did us proud with a well-prepared excellent presentation.

Where do we begin in the Eco journey? An interesting insight into how we can go about this, something worthy of us looking at as a church.

Lobbying MP's and others

Understanding Climate Justice, Taking Action.

MERSEY DOES MERCY: Saturday 11th May, 10am-3.30pm at Hoole URC, Chester.

There is a flyer on the notice board in the vestry, giving details of the event and its workshops.

URC Partners with CHRISTIAN AID: If you get chance please take a look at the literature on the sideboard in the vestry, in particular the introductory leaflet '*Commitment for Life.*' *What is this?*

The United Reformed Church's global justice programme, supporting the work of partners Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

Joan

Sunday Rotas

	Door	Com- munion	Reader	Flowers	Tea/ Coffee
Sun 7th April	Jeanne Taylor		Jenny Boulton	Jean Harding	Joan Green
Sun 14th April	Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am				
Sun 21st April	Jeanne Taylor		Jeremy Lister	Gay Do- wie	Norma Naisbett
Sun 28th April	Jeanne Taylor		Wendy Parry	Ann Swift	Jenny Boulton
Sun 5th May	Ann Swift	Jenny Boulton Joan Green	Imelda Aspinall	Suzette Gorman	Ann Swift
Sun 12th May	Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am				
Sun 19th May	Ann Swift		Beverly Bush	Daphne Arch	Imelda Aspinall
Sun 26th May	Ann Swift		Janice Hill	Jenny Boulton	Donna Barnacle

Messenger Letter April May – Janice Hill

Hopefully you are reading this edition of the messenger on or near Easter Sunday so.....

HAPPY EASTER!

Easter Sunday is such a joyful day after the sadness of Good Friday. We, as Christians see beyond Good Friday, to the celebration of the risen Christ on Easter Sunday.

But I often wonder how many in our Society understand what Good Friday and Easter Sunday are all about. Like Christmas, Easter can get lost in the commercial...the shops started stocking chocolate eggs just after the New Year !

How can we explain the message of Good Friday and Easter Day?
Would you feel confident if someone asked you to explain it?

I'm sure we could all have a gobut to talk about our faith we need to have confidence and I think confidence comes from understanding through lifelong learning.

Have you read the memorial stone outside Church? It refers to the

“CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL CHURCH”.

I have to confess my ignorance of the origins of this but when I saw this I immediately thought of School Church being for children.

Then I questioned myselfsurely school church should refer to all of us.
Are we still a school church ...a place of learning for all?

Is there more we could or should be doing?.....so thatwe feel equipped to answer questions about our faith and feel able to do what Jesus asks us to do

“.....go and make disciples of all nations,

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

In the knowledge that“ *I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Matthew 28 v19-20

Something to ponder on.....

God Bless Janice.



Alan's Look back

I really enjoy reading Alan's reminiscences in the Messenger. The latest one talked about 2005 and the Alpha Course held at Cornerstone.

Well that struck a chord. At that time David, the son if anyone doesn't know, was a Young Leader at Cornerstone youth group Offshoot, having attended there since year 8. He, Patrick Wu and Robert Levy all looked after the younger members. (Actually they played a lot of football with the younger lads from what I remember!)

He and the other two enrolled for the Alpha course. It may have been at Cornerstone or St Johns, can't quite remember. In any case he was most impressed and asked would I go to church with him on a Sunday. I duly did and we were bowled over by the welcome and services at Cornerstone and after a month Peter joined us. He was similarly impressed and we all attended until it closed.

Peter became a deacon at Cornerstone and remained as one at AVC until his hearing deterioration forced his retirement a couple of years ago.

I volunteered to join the Offshoot organising team, and there I discovered the delicacy Cheesy Beans. (Beans on toast with melted cheese on top for the uninitiated.) I worked in the kitchen for about 2 years, serving various snacks to 'starving' preteens and teenagers between 3.30 and 6, originally on Wednesdays and then on Fridays. I also found out why David had never wanted his dinner on Wednesday evenings, he'd had two cheese toasties at Offshoot!

Sadly Offshoot folded a few months before we moved over to the URC and the rest as we all say is history.

Imelda

Notes from the Archives – Part 9 2006

Minister's report: Robert noted that 2006 was the tenth anniversary of the Ainsdale and Formby Joint Pastorate, and it was also Formby's 125th anniversary. He said the two churches were rather different in that, at Formby, he worked with an all-male eldership, and at Ainsdale he worked with an all-female eldership, which resulted in a different approach to the conduct of the meetings! A successful joint eldership awayday was held in January. He felt that each church supported and encouraged the other. However, the Joint Pastorate did put a strain on things. He could not spend time at Ainsdale after the Sunday service as he had to get to Formby for their service. On Easter Day in 2006, he held five services and attended two breakfasts!

He commented that joint or multiple pastorates were likely to increase in the future, due to the shortage of ministers. It was not unknown for a church to be without a minister for over three years, with ministers like Robert serving as Interim Moderator to those churches.

Secretary's report: Jenny reported that Diane and Phil Vernon from the Formby church had hosted a very successful Lancashire Folk Evening to raise money for the Hall Building Fund. Ainsdale and Formby members together enjoyed a bracing walk along the Sefton Coastal Path. In May we were able to cover all the roads allocated to us for collections during Christian Aid Week.

The Summer Fair in early June raised over £1000. The Church Day Out included a trip to the Lady Lever Art Gallery, a walk around Port Sunlight, and a visit to the Wirral Museum

Together with a couple of young people, Joan started a Breakfast Café on alternate Saturday mornings. The Christmas services were well attended, especially the Christingle service. We were saddened by the deaths of Emma Kilborn and Izzy Podesta, two very long-serving church members.

Churches Together in Ainsdale: Joan reported on successful Lent meetings, and that the Ainsdale Puppet Theatre at the Ainsdale Show had been well received. About 200 people attended the Sunday morning service in the tent. The CTiA distributed a Welcome Leaflet around Ainsdale with details of the seven churches, their location and the times of services.

The Woodvale Holiday Club was very successful. John Ives, from Cornerstone, on behalf of the CTiA had encouraged Somerfield (now the Co-op) to stock and promote Fair Trade products. The Advent carols around the Christmas Tree at Ainsdale Methodist Church was well attended, with £100 collected for the Southport Homeless Shelter. CTiA Christmas cards were delivered to every home in Ainsdale.

Brownie Pack report: Catherine McNair (Brownie Guider) reported a severe fall in numbers, with several girls going up to Guides. The Brownie Pack at the Methodist Church was in the same position, and also there was a shortage of leaders. It was therefore decided that from September 2006 the two packs would merge and meet at the Methodist Church Hall, resulting sadly in the closure of our Brownie Pack after so many years.

The new arrangement had worked well, with sufficient Guiders to support one Pack of reasonable size.

Alan



CHRISTIAN AID BIG BREAKFAST

SATURDAY 18th MAY

10am – 12noon

Hopefully the weather will be good as we are usually in the garden with a couple of tables in the vestry. We will be selling the usual assortment of breakfast barmes plus toast and toasted tea cakes/hot cross buns.

Along with hot and cold drinks.

Any donations would be wonderful, especially of home-made cakes, marmalade, jam, and anything else you wonderfully talented people make.

There will be envelopes in the church for you to donate and if anyone would like a few to give to a few friends and neighbours please just let me know. There are probably a few people who find it difficult to donate now we don't go door to door!!

Thank you all in advance.

With love and blessings

Joan



Calendar for April

- Sunday 7th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith - followed by the Church AGM at 11.15.
- Monday 8th** Ladies Group at 7.00 pm
- Tuesday 9th** Deacons' Meeting at 7.30 pm in the vestry
- Sunday 14th** Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am
- Sunday 21st** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Janice Hill with Mike Smith playing the organ
- Sunday 28th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am - Jeremy Lister with the Methodist congregation

Calendar for May

- Sunday 5th** Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Janice Hill
- Sunday 12th** Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am
- Monday 13th** Ladies Group at 7.00 pm
- Tuesday 14th** Deacons' Meeting at 7.30 pm in the vestry
- Sunday 19th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith
- Sunday 26th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Janice Atfield with the Methodist congregation



Praise to the Lord! The Almighty! The King of creation!