

The Messenger
Ainsdale Village Church
United Reformed/Baptist
Station Road, Ainsdale, PR8 3HW
October/November 2026

*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the
Word of our God endures forever.*

Isaiah Chapter 40, verse 8



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As the year moves on towards autumn and winter, once again I find myself amazed at the passing of time, and glad that I have the chance to, as the liturgy says, “be glad that we live within the knowledge of God’s eternity.”

In my school days, I’m sure each hour took as long as a year does these days – it’s all about perspective, as we are made “of frail flesh and gentle spirit” and have to accommodate the passing of time with the things going on in our lives – growing up, growing older, new generations coming through, new challenges and joys day by day.

A few weeks ago I was fascinated by the news of the lunar eclipse – and not so much the eclipse itself, but the fact that scientists knew exactly when it would happen! Thank God, we have the knowledge to understand such things, and I can only imagine the fear and awe of people in the past who must have been terrified when the moon – or worse, the sun, suddenly disappeared! We may have lost something of that sense of awe, but there are always new things that we don’t understand and that, in our frailty, we can only offer into God’s hands – the health and safety of ourselves and our loved ones, the unpredictable weather, affecting us all in terms of food and travel, and the way even experts in science and astrology, whose very knowledge has come from God, sometimes have to say, I don’t know. Only God knows.

In the meantime, we continue our lives of faith and joy, meeting week by week, and doing just that – offering ourselves and our lives into God’s hands, where we know that whatever happens, all will be well. I conclude with the quotation from Ecclesiastes, which reminds us that the human condition is full of the richness of life, and to accept that fact is indeed to find peace.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to reap, a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and time to laugh; a time to mourn, and

a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and time to gather them up; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain; a time to seek, and³ time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to reap, and a time to sow; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and time to hate; a time, for war, and a time for peace.”

*Yours in the service of our Lord,
Hilary*

Queenscourt Hospice - September 2026

I recently attended a meeting for church members in the Southport area, hosted by Karen Groves, from the hospice. The purpose of the meeting was to ask us as community leaders to keep raising the profile of the need for funding to ensure that the hospice, and all the services that it offers in the wider community, stays open.

Not only does the Queenscourt Hospice provide beds for respite and palliative care, they also go out to the hospitals and into the community to provide expert care and reassurance for people and their families facing serious illness, and they are desperately in need of support.

If 8,000 people set up a regular donation of £5 per week (the cost of a coffee and cake), then Queenscourt’s services will still be there for those who will need them in the future – and that could be any of us.

They are most grateful for all donations, and also for pledges of regular giving. I will leave pamphlets and information cards in all the team churches and ask you to spread the message far and wide, and to pray for the Hospice and all the care that it can provide. If you are able to organise anything, like a coffee morning, in aid of the hospice, that would be wonderful. The hospice website is Queenscourt.org.uk

The Queenscourt Grace:

Lord, bless the food we eat, those who prepare it, and those who share it. Bless those who cannot be with us, those whose struggle we share, and those who have left us to sit at your table. Amen.

Calendar for October

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- Saturday 3rd** TLG Lunch Fundraiser at St John's CE Church. Soup, sandwich and a drink for £5.
- Sunday 4th** Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith, followed by a Church Meeting
- Monday 5th** Bible Study at the home of Hilary Smith, 13 Hatfield Road, Ainsdale, at 10.30 am. All welcome.
- Sunday 11th** Morning Worship at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am.
- Sunday 11th** Café Church at Ainsdale Village Church at 11.00 am
- Sunday 11th** Walk of Unity starting from Southport Synagogue, Princes St, at 2.00 pm. Please see the notice in the Vestry.
- Monday 12th** Ladies Group Film Night – Vestry at 7.00 pm. See item in magazine.
- Tuesday 13th** Deacons' Meeting in the vestry at 7.30 pm.
- Sunday 18th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Janice Atfield
- Sunday 25th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Peter Lyth, and the Ainsdale Methodist congregation will be attending.
- Tuesday 27th** Prayer in the Church from 11.30 am.



- Sunday 1st** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Keith Trencher
- Monday 2nd** Bible Study at the home of Hilary Smith, 13 Hatfield Road, Ainsdale at 10.30 am.
- Sunday 8th** Service of Remembrance on the Village Green at 10.45 am
- Monday 9th** Ladies Group at 7.00 pm in the Vestry – topic to be announced.
- Tues 10th** Deacons' Meeting in the vestry at 7.30 pm.
- Sunday 15th** Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith
- Sunday 22nd** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Church led
- Tues 24th** Prayer in the Church from 11.30 am
- Sunday 29th** Team Service at Birkdale URC at 10.45 am



Church Family Youth and Children's Worker

We are so pleased to let you all know that we have appointed someone to the above position. Hayley Smith is starting on the 1st November and will be coming along to church on that date when Lucinda will introduce her to you all and she will join us for coffee in the vestry afterwards.

As some of you may know, on numerous occasions, Ian and I and the family have spent many wonderful holidays staying at Jean and Tony Harding's apartment in the village of Wilderswil in the Swiss Alps.

It is a village, where faith and community seem to meet in a particularly peaceful way. It has a very historic village church, part of which dates back to the 8th Century. Attached to it is a beautifully tended sloping graveyard where local people have been laid to rest including the composer Mendelssohn's daughter. All the graves are beautifully decorated with fresh flowers and it is easy to reflect on the faith that has been part of the village for so many centuries.

The church bells are another unmistakable part of Wilderswil. Their sound carries across the village every day and night. The bells do more than tell the time, they are a reminder of the presence of the church and of a rhythm of life that has been maintained for generations.

Perhaps nowhere is this rhythm more noticeable than on a Sunday. In Switzerland Sunday has traditionally been regarded as a day of worship, rest and quiet. Shops and businesses may be closed, church services bring people together and the pace of life seems slower and more peaceful.

I find this particularly meaningful, their Sunday reminds me that life is not only about work, achievement and possessions; it is also about taking time to worship, remember those who have gone before, spend time with others and to be grateful for the blessings that I have received.

Personally, I feel I can learn something from the Swiss respect for Sunday; I could take more time to pause, listen and to remember to make space for God.

Also, whilst standing beside the church in Wilderswil, hearing the bells and looking towards the graves, I am reminded that my faith is not simply to practise for an hour on Sunday; it is a faith that connects, generations, communities and families.

With every blessing

Wendy

Minister:

Rev. Hilary Smith
Tel: 01704 792235

Church Secretary

Mrs Imelda Aspinall
Tel: 07955 874814

Church Treasurer:

Mrs Wendy Parry
Tel: 01704 578214

Deacons:

Imelda Aspinall
Joan Green
Lucinda Green

Christine Holford
Wendy Parry
Ann Swift

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



The Church in the 1960s

The 1960s saw many new people join the church, some of whom became very active members, merging well with the stalwarts who had served the church for many years. The same names keep appearing in the minutes, and each year all the “officer posts” were filled, apparently without difficulty, and in addition to the “Diaconate”. In fact, page 257 in the Minute Book shows that 20 positions and committees were filled, with some people holding multiple roles. So, as always, the church was very active in matters of faith and in serving the Ainsdale community.

I’ll mention just a few names among many. Gavin Henderson (Barbara’s father) stepped down as Church Secretary and became an “Elder Statesman” with his name then appearing repeatedly in a wide range of activities.

Marion Meyer was another multi-tasking member, and she was later joined by her sister, Lilian who transferred from Bootle Congregational Church. I remember seeing both these ladies on their knees fitting lino to the corridor next to the stage! For several years Marion was the Sunday School Superintendent, and the minutes record that she did not like Sunday School work, but only did it because at the time no-one else was available.

Young people were involved in running the church, including leading some Sunday evening services. They also chose and sang the opening hymn at the morning service, and likewise a bible reading. They also led the Primary Department (under 7s) held in the kitchen. Pauline Haig (nee Rimmer) reported that eight to ten children attended each Sunday. The Young People’s Fellowship organised the occasional Saturday Evening Dance. Our Treasurer, Wendy Parry (nee Huyton) tells me that in her time at Southport High School for Girls (now Greenbank) she organised a disco to raise funds for the church.

In September 1961 it is recorded that there were 36 names on the register for the Senior Class, meeting in the Upper Room. In that year, 15

young people took the Temperance Essay Competition, and 13 were awarded prizes. I well remember taking the Temperance Exam in my Methodist Church, but I didn't win any prizes! 9

The six teachers in the Senior Department met for a fortnightly training class, and three teachers in Primary had a training class less regularly. The Sunday School was divided into three houses, named after famous Congregationalists (Greatbatch, Howard and Milton), with house points for attendance etc. It was agreed that, to spread the work, people not involved in the Sunday School would take on duties such as organising the Rose Queen event.

The Rev. Frederick Lines retired from the ministry in October 1962, and was later appointed Minister Emeritus in recognition of his devoted service in a long career. In early 1963, Rev Walter Lazenby became the minister at a salary of £550 pa, with time off on ten Sundays for educational appointments, plus Manse and other benefits. The minutes state that a new manse was required, but does not give a reason. Gavin Henderson then undertook all the work of selling 15 Limont Road and purchasing a house in Hillside Road. Unlike previous manse moves, no house prices are recorded.

The financial report for 1964 shows an income for the year of £1637, and expenditure of £1447. Marion Meyer was the Treasurer. Giving amounted to £584 from Standing Orders, loose cash etc. Hall Lettings totalled £117. In those days each Congregational Church was responsible for funding its minister, including salary, which in 1964 was £605 pa, plus on costs of £60, with the mortgage on the manse costing £173 pa.

In the same year, all the corrugated iron panels on the large hall were replaced, at a cost of £250. To pay for it, a loan of £200 was obtained at an interest rate of 2 ½ per cent from the Lancashire Congregational Union, together with a £50 grant. Pat Sutcliffe joined the church in 1964, and soon became an active member of the Drama Group. She continued with many years of involvement both on and off the stage.

To be continued **Alan**

Each year, the Church is entitled to receive from the Government a tax refund on our church giving and also on small donations which we collect during the course of our church work, eg coffee money, extra cash in the Sunday offertory, donations from funerals, etc.

If you pay tax in the UK (and nearly all of us do), you can ensure that the church receives an extra 25 per cent of your giving, as long as you have completed a Gift Aid Declaration form.

The best way to give your offertory to the church is by completing a Standing Order with your bank, for an amount which you agree to pay on an annual basis. Some people have already done this, and at the end of each tax year, therefore, we are able to claim our refund for the church.

However, if you do not wish to have a Standing Order with your bank, it is still possible, and indeed extremely helpful to the church, to complete a Gift Aid Declaration form, choosing an amount of money which you agree to give to the church on an annual basis. This amount will be confidential, and will not be checked in any way. It is for the giver to ensure that they give the annual amount chosen, in whichever way they choose – probably normally via the offertory on a Sunday – but not exclusively so. For instance, it could be that the church requires a new kettle and you purchase this. Therefore the cost of the kettle can be part of your annual payment promise.

It is very important for the church finances that Gift Aid Declaration forms are completed by as many people as possible, as we are only allowed by the Government to claim for a certain percentage of small donations in relation to the amount we claim via the Gift Aid Declaration system. In the tax year just gone, for instance, we were not able to claim for all our small donations, as the ratio of small donations to Gift Aid Declarations was too large.

Please consider carefully if you are able to commit an annual amount to the Church, and therefore Gift Aid it via a Declaration Form. As previously stated, the amount will be confidential, and those of you who have already set up a Standing Order with your bank and completed a Gift Aid Declaration form do not need to do anything else.

Wendy **Church Treasurer**
Jenny and Alan **Gift Aid Co-ordinators**

A Working Creed

I believe that I am made in God's image.
I believe that in Jesus I see God's image lived to perfection.
I believe that, by listening to the promptings of the Spirit,
by following Jesus's example of love and service,
and by making his priorities my own,
I become more in tune with God's image within me
and closer to the person I was made to be.

I believe that I cannot do this if I live in isolation
or surround myself only with those I understand -
but that I must touch the world I find around me
and engage with the people I meet there.
I believe that institutions are sometimes necessary,
but often misleading - blinding people with their power
or fooling them with an appearance of anonymity.

I believe that there is no such thing as anonymity,
and that every interaction is between people,
who are made in God's image, who love and suffer and rejoice and
weep,
who do their best and sometimes fall short.

I believe that God has placed me in the world at this moment in time,
and that I must do my best to inhabit it beautifully.



We've recently been blessed with lots of lovely rain, and the garden is beginning to green up and look refreshed.

As a thank you to all who opened their gardens for the Ainsdale Civic Society Open Gardens event earlier in the year, including our Community Garden, the Civic Society kindly invited people to a coffee morning at The Spitfire on Monday 7 September. Only Alan and I, and Chris Rimmer were able to attend, as Mary had gone down with a nasty cold and others were away. However, we had a very pleasant morning with superb refreshments which we really enjoyed.

We are getting on with work on our list of tasks for the autumn, and in particular we have lifted out many plants which had become overgrown in the long bank border next to the main path. This is now looking much tidier. We have also pruned many of the climbing and rambling roses, and having lined the new troughs with plastic material, these have been filled with good quality compost and planted to make a colourful and hopefully long-lasting display. We will be ordering more bulbs to bloom in the spring, crocus - narcissi and hyacinths. We await our judgement from North West in Bloom and this should be available in the next Messenger.

Jenny



Our Summer Fete A SUCCESS!!

Yes, maybe financially we have done better in previous years, but that was back when Ainsdale had a 'Village Fun Day,' with a parade and the crowds of people that went with it. But we are all older and burdened with more responsibilities now and decided that nobody had the energy to take on organising a Summer Fair which is why there hasn't been one for many years.

Fast forward to our community church hall amateur theatrical group, Ghostlight Performers. In return for special discounted rates for the use of the halls they have committed to supporting the church and so took on this years Summer Fete, hopefully an annual event going forward. With the postponement of the initial one due to bad weather and with Lynn joining our planning group, it morphed into something bigger and better with the involvement of many local businesses in the village.

Lynn was an inspiration and along with the usual stalls, and BBQ there was a fabulous band and Teddy Bears Picnic, featuring Topsy Bear generously provided by Steve's company. Having laid a trail via posters during the previous week, Topsy Bear, aka Tony the husband of Vicky from Ghostlight, went walkabout greeting children in the village at the start of the event. He had very limited sight and very large feet, so Lynn acted as his minder giving careful guidance, as children, encouraged into the church were treated to story time with Lucinda, and activities with Rainbows provided by Ghostlight and pebble painting courtesy of Bev. The book, craft, and bric- a -brac, stalls all did fairly well, but being inside needed better signposting.

In the garden, braving the weather, which was probably worse than the initial postponed event, the BBQ, manned by Luke, Ghostlight's treasurer, sold quality burgers and hot dogs with tea, coffee, and juice. The cake stall manned by Lynn's son and neighbour was a resounding success with delicious home-made cakes and marmalade. All this to the fabulous sounds of SOS, the band. Having made a profit of approximately £620, we hope to do better next year with hopefully better weather and a review of prices!!

A huge thank you to everyone who made the event a success and to everyone who contributed in any way and came along to support it.

Joan

This article is specifically about running out of provisions, not running out of the house to play football rather than do homework. (The person I live with was guilty of this misdemeanour according to his sister!!!) Surely not!

Back to the first meaning, both Peter and I are acquainted with this subject for different reasons. His first. In his younger life was a lady he refers to as Auntie Crwyd (pronounced Crid). She lived near to his family when growing up and was great friends with his mother, (both Welsh 'immigrants' whose first language was Welsh). Auntie Crwyd ran the local corner shop, most definitely of the 'open all hours' variety. Seven am to nine pm were her usual hours. A long enough day you might say, however not long enough for some customers, who used to bang on her front door at any time up to eleven at night asking for a loaf of bread, milk or whatever! It seems she always obliged.

That last little story would have sent my mother into almost shrieks of horror. While still at school I would start to recount what I thought was a most interesting, frightening or funny story. It would usually start with Mary, (Margaret, Anne, Pauline, some of the most popular names in my class - take your pick) being sent out to the local shop of an evening, as milk was running short at home, when they met I never got any further. "What do you mean? She ran out of cornflakes, (or whatever). That's disgraceful, what sort of mother/housekeeper/wife is this person?" This would go on for a minute or so and of course I never reached the end of the story!! I would wander off, hearing her recount this shameful story to my Dad who was smoking his pipe and trying to watch the telly.

Looking back now, I can see that these women were not inefficient, lazy etc. but had large families, any one of which would secretly raid the fridge or store cupboards and take a whole pack of biscuits for themselves. To counteract that some women resorted to drastic measures. A girl I worked with was horrified to learn that her boyfriend's mother used to lock the food cupboards, as any one of her seven children might empty them at any time! The girl herself was an only child so would be the only identifiably culprit in her house.

All these years later, my mother's views have definitely passed down to me. I usually have overstocked cupboards in my kitchen to avoid the shame and fear of her looking down on me with my careless ways as a housewife!!

Sunday Rotas

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	Door	Communion	Reader	Flowers	Tea/ Coffee
4th Oct	Ann Swift	Jeremy Lister Ann Swift	Jenny Boulton	Daphne Arch	Jenny Boulton
11th Oct	Service at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am				
18th Oct	Ann Swift		Jeremy Lister	Jenny Boulton	Ann Swift
25th Oct	Ann Swift		Wendy Parry	Jean Harding	Imelda Aspinall
1st Nov	Wendy Parry		Bob Dixon	Daphne Arch	Joan Green
8th Nov	Remembrance Service on Village Green at 10.45 am				
15th Nov	Wendy Parry	Jenny Boulton Lynn Connolly	Jenny Boulton	Dorothy Binks	Norma Naisbett
22nd Nov	Wendy Parry		Simon Sutcliffe	Christine Holford	Jenny Boulton
29th Nov	Team Service at Birkdale URC at 10.45 am				



Ghostlight Performers

Following a 'recruitment drive' on social media we had a Welcome and information evening on Saturday 12th September with lots of people coming along, many interested in non-acting roles as well as performing. With people joining and paying a subscription we can now afford to go ahead with our March production of Agatha Christie's 'Go Back for Murder' which is based on the novel 'Five little Pigs.'

Dates for your diary next year:

Saturday and Sunday March 13th and 14th

Go Back for Murder

Saturday and Sunday June 12th and 13th

The Thing about Time



Flowers in church on Sundays

There is a vacancy for flowers in the church on **27th December** so please contact me if you can help with this date.

Many thanks, Jenny

Ladies Group

In August, we had a picnic in the Community Garden, where boules was played by a few enthusiastic people. However, many of us were away, so perhaps it might be an idea to dispense with an August meeting next year. Our Chinese meal at the New China City in September was enjoyed by all who attended, but in fact we had rather a low turnout, although some people were not well and therefore obviously could not attend. Jean has kindly offered to host a film night for the October meeting, so hopefully the technology will co-operate! The film is called Oranges and Sunshine.

The Ladies Group needs a rethink, so possibly it might become the Monday Social Group which will be open to all, friends and family etc, to make it more inclusive and hope we can get more people attending – perhaps this will be discussed at the next Church Meeting.

Jenny



Here is some autumn gardening advice from Which magazine. I'm sure our hardy gardeners shown here were doing a grand job of following this advice, and also wishing coffee time would arrive soon!

Weeds will still be germinating and growing strongly in mild periods of weather, so be vigilant and remove them when you see them. Try to dig them out rather than pulling them up, as you're more likely to get them out with roots and all that way, which is especially important for perennial weeds, such as dandelions, which will regrow if roots are left behind.



Some Autumn quotations:

The heat of autumn is different from the heat of summer.

One ripens apples, the other turns them to cider.

JANE HIRSHFIELD

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;

Lengthen night and shorten day;

Every leaf speaks bliss to me

Fluttering from the autumn tree.

I shall smile when wreaths of snow

Blossom where the rose should grow;

I shall sing when night's decay

Ushers in a drearier day.

EMILY BRONTE

It's amazing who you meet
when out and about with a
walking group in the autumn

Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.

ROBERT FROST



Then and Now in the Community Garden

