

ROTAS FOR MARCH 2013

	Stewards	Lessons	Flower distribution
3rd	Linda Crump	Arnold Rayton Jackie Cochrane	Sylvia Bairstow Mollie Ward
10th	Irene Entwistle	Ann Gill Jan Chapman	Jan Chapman Jackie Cochrane
17th	Eddie Reynolds	Sarah Goldson Mollie Ward	Marjorie Wrennall Alison Dempsey
24th	Marjorie Wrennall	Uniformed Organisations	Barbara McHugh Linda Crump
31st	Sylvia Bairstow	Ian Dempsey Stephen Crump	Linda Barnes Lois Porter
(4th April)	Frank McHugh	Stella Eccleston David Holmes	Barbara McHugh Linda Crump)

SUNDAY REFRESHMENTS FOR MARCH 2013

3rd	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
10th	Linda Barnes	Marion Howard
17th	Barbara McHugh	Linda Crump
24th	Uniformed Organisations	
31st	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle

SATURDAY CAFÉ MARCH

2nd	Linda Barnes	Jackie Cochrane
9th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
16th	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
23rd	Lois Porter	Ann Gill
30th 6th April	No café No cafe	

Opening our Calendars

The planet on which we stand takes 365.256363 days to orbit around the sun and during every 24 hours we also complete one rotation on that axis. Over the centuries our calendars have developed to mark this natural movement and fit it into a structure that works for us. We add leap years and occasionally lose a few seconds to fit this dance of the cosmos into a pattern of days, weeks and years. In this way we live our lives and mark their progress in relation to others. We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, remember those who have died, and plan our time marking events, holidays, and all the activities of our lives.

Our calendars and diaries place an order upon our lives. They can give us a routine, a way of managing competing pressures, and give us things to prepare for and/or look forward to. They are useful, but they should never completely rule us. There should always be the space for change, for responding to an opportunity when it arises, and for breaking out of a routine if we realise it has become more of a burden than a benefit.

By now we will have turned the first page of our 2013 calendars. Birthdays and anniversaries will be marked down, holidays will be pencilled in, and appointments and engagements for the coming weeks noted. I'd ask you to take a moment to flick through your new diary or calendar. What are you looking forward to? Is there any reason why you shouldn't do it sooner or more often? What are you not looking forward to? How can you concentrate on the silver lining within that cloud? What is missing from your plans? How can you make room for the things you should do or want to do?

Within all of this we need to remember that these diary or calendar entries on a page are a way of ordering the universe. A universe set spinning by our Creator God, energised by the Spirit and within it we are offered the example of Christ for how we should live. How can we be open to that, to create space to listen, wait, and be present to God, in whom we live and move and have our being?

How do our calendars open ourselves to God and reflect God to others? How could they?

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

On the page in this magazine which reviewed the Church's Christmas programme reference was made to the excellent visual impression made by the really wonderful decorations in church . We offer our warmest thanks to Betty, Jackie, Lesley and others in the flower team, to Linda and others who decorated the tree, to Bob for the choir stall candles and to the organisations and individuals for the superb window tableaux and displays.

We add to this our thanks to those who took part in the special service perhaps especially Ian and the Junior Church leaders for the Junior Church playlet. It was good that in Rita and Mark we had a real mother and baby Jesus (with Stephen also involved!) with Sally and Stella playing key roles in the story. Sally and James also provided a musical contribution. Thank you also to Mollie for wardrobe provision.

The Uniformed groups service, with both boys and girls sections fully involved, meant that many children were found things to do – and that takes a great deal of organisation to make it happen. So for performers, readers, musicians and those who did the preparation and training we are so very grateful. Special appreciation goes to the creators of the wonderful alphabet cards which were inspired works of art in their own right. We also thank those people who brought the International Aid shoe boxes.

The Christingle Service also relied on volunteers for assisting in the DIY preparation of the oranges and obtaining material. Again we are grateful .

We also give special thanks to David and Janet for the extra work which was necessary for all these extra events

We offer congratulations to Sam and Chris on the birth of another daughter, Chloe, granddaughter for Ian and June Holt and a great granddaughter for Doris.

ROTAS FOR FEBRUARY

	Steward	Lessons	Flower Distribution
3rd	Glynis Bury	Mollie Ward Stella Eccleston	Jan Chapman Jackie Cochrane
10th	Frank McHugh	Ian Dempsey Stephen Crump	Marjorie Wrennall Alison Dempsey
17th	Julie Rhys	David Holmes Linda Barnes	Sylvia Bairstow Mollie Ward
24th	Barbara McHugh	Uniformed Organisations	Linda Barnes Lois Porter

If you need to change your place on the Lessons rota please arrange your own swap and then let Stella know

SUNDAY REFRESHMENTS FOR FEBRUARY

3rd	Linda Barnes	Marion Howard
10th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
17th	Ann Gill	Lorna Bowling
24th	Uniformed Organisations	

SATURDAY CAFÉ FEBRUARY

2nd	Linda Barnes	Jackie Cochrane
9th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
16th	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
23rd	Lois Porter	Ann Gill

FLOWER LIST FOR FEB/MARCH

- Feb 3rd Vacancy
- Feb 10th Memories of Ivy Ainsworth from the family
- Feb 17th Memories of mum—Julie Key
- Feb 24th Memories of parents—Diane & Greg Bolan
- Mar 3rd Memories of Mary—Eddie & Allison
- Mar 10th Brenda Holmes-Memories of mother
 Janet Baxter Bennett—Memories of mother
- Mar 17th Olwyn & Arnold Reyton—Memories
- Mar 24th Edna Harvey—memories of Frank & mother
- Mar 31st Barbara & Frank McHugh - Memories



FOOD BANK

We are collecting items of food to donate to St Mary's food bank.

Lists of appropriate food items are available in church and it is hoped that this will become a regular weekly activity

Please look out for details in church and try to support this worthwhile initiative.

We offer congratulations to Arnold and Olwyn Rayton who will be celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary on March 30th. Arnold also wishes to thank all those who sent cards and good wishes for his recent 80th Birthday.

We welcome Ruby-Mae Clare Webster into our church family. She was christened by our minister on December 9th.

Lesley Lowe's father has been in hospital for a serious heart operation and, though now at home, needs a great deal of individual care. Since her mother also needs help Lesley is very involved and we remember them all in our prayers. *We now learn that due to these extra pressures, Lesley has been compelled to step down, we hope temporarily, from her responsibilities as Church Secretary. No doubt the Elders will somehow share the load between them but it is Lesley herself who we will miss the most.*

Eddie Reynolds has been suffering from a nasty cyst on the chest while Les North is recovering after a minor operation.

It has been good to see Janet Holme back in church and feeling better.

David and John Holmes recently spent a long full day moving the Screen computer projection controls from their old position in the children's pew to a new location in the gallery. They also cleared out the mass of dumped material which had accumulated up there and we are so very grateful to them both for their efforts. What they did was a major undertaking and demanded a great deal of technical expertise. We thank them for this – and add to it appreciation to Jackie's husband, Ellis for smartening up the woodwork there.

The move also means that the keyboard operator, usually Jackie, sits in lonely isolation up in the gods throughout the service. Apparently this is a job which can be fairly easily mastered so volunteers to take turns would be most welcome. See Jackie to learn more.

THANK YOU

FROM:

Lesley Lowe wishes to thank everyone for all the messages, phone calls and prayers during the last few weeks. It was much appreciated.

St Mary's Food Bank sends a BIG Thank You to all who donated items in the past year and hope we will continue in 2013.

TO

Huge thanks to Arnold Rayton, Bob and June Kay for all their years of hard work and dedication on the Fabric Committee (and previously Management Committee). They hung up their hats at the end of 2012 and will be sorely missed. Linda Kay takes over as chair.

A big thank you to John Mercer and friends for removing the unwanted wood from the rear of church and the balcony, things look much better now!

ADVANCE NOTICE

SPRING FAIR

The Spring Fair will take place on Saturday 6th April from 9.30 to 1pm. All donations of raffle and tombola prizes, books, good as new bric a brac, toys, cakes or preserves as well as any new fundraising ideas. Offers of help on the day would be much appreciated.

See Mollie Ward, Linda Crump, Lorna Bowling or any other member of the fundraising committee.

Thankyou

GARDENING

At the time of writing this while snowdrops are pushing through the soil and daffodils are also peeping through, it is frosty, quite a change from the rain. However, if the forecast for tomorrow is to be believed the morning should see about six inches of snow.

In the gardening press it comes as no surprise to find that slugs and snails were the main garden pests of last year due to all the rain. Another interesting article stated that motorists could soon drive to work on a dandelion (no this is not April Fools Day). Prototypes have been produced in Europe and it is hoped that tyres could be produced as early as 2014. It was found that the sap of the plants is similar to that of the rubber tree.

Now is the time to watch out for winter flowering such as Hellebores (Christmas Rose), winter jasmine and Viburnum Bodnantense, the latter giving off a strong fragrant perfume. Visit garden centres now and see them in bloom, it will give you a better idea of what to plant.

Leyland Gardening cCub has got a full programme of monthly talks arranged for this year, we meet on the second Friday of each month at 7.30 at St Ambrose church hall. Cost is £1.50 for non members and you get refreshments thrown in.

Do come along.

Enjoy your garden!

Eddie



RAMBLES AND PLODS

There is little to report as the Christmas/End of Year period is too busy with other preoccupations but we did have the traditional Mollie's Meander on New Years Day when fifteen walkers explored parts of a very busy Cuerden Valley Park. We had no canine companions but other visitors certainly made up for this. The weather was quite mild with no frost and, though there had been plenty of earlier rain, we avoided the worst of the mud.

Following the walk we were joined by another six people from Church and all enjoyed the hospitality provided by Mollie and Peter. The three warmed mince pies and three cups (Note. not mugs!) of tea were just what I needed.

We have had a Pensioners Plod already in January with a walk round the dockland area of Preston. It was a very cold day but we kept moving until returning to the warmth of the Ribble Pilot for our lunch. We thank Don and Phyllis Hopkin from Penwortham URC for leading this Plod

The 2013 Ramble Diary has also been arranged though without the usual Planning Meeting..

Feb 23 rd	Nicky Nook	Ernest Wrennall
Mar 16 th	Leighton Moss	Chris Baines
Apr 13 th	Wrea Green	Arnold Rayton
May 18 th	Levens	David Lamb
June 15 th	Appley Bridge	Roy Barnes and Rosamund
July 6 th	Catforth BBQ	Ian and June Holt
Aug 17 th	Lake District	David Lamb
Sept 14 th	Whittle le Woods	Mike Chapman
Oct 12 th	T.B.A	Chris Baines
Nov 16 th	Local (+tea)	Malcolm and Karen Birrell

2014

Jan 1 st	Mollie's Meander	Mollie Ward
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Sea of Faith:-

is a six-part documentary television series, presented on BBC television in 1984 by Don Cupitt. The programme deals with the history of Christianity in the modern world, focussing especially on how Christianity has responded to challenges such as scientific advances, political atheism and secularisation in general. A chance to watch the six-part BBC series together, and reflect on the story it tells.

Outline of time together:

Welcome and refreshments

Watch episode (1 hour)

Brief closing discussion

Thursday:

10th, 31st Jan, 7th, 28th Feb, 7th, 14th Mar

7.30-9.00pm

1, The Mechanical Universe - Copernican revolution. Blaise Pascal and René Descartes respond differently, faith and knowledge are set divided.

2, The Human Animal - Genesis account. Revolutions of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

3, Going by the Book - Scripture and practice. Views of Martin Luther, David Strauss, and Albert Schweitzer.

4, Prometheus Unbound - Karl Marx and Søren Kierkegaard, society and the individual.

5, Religion Shock - Encounters with the world religions. Arthur Schopenhauer and Eastern religions.

Vivekananda, Hindu missionary. Annie Besant, atheist and anthropologist.

6, The New World - Friedrich Nietzsche and the death of God. Ludwig Wittgenstein's austerity and rigor towards language, his suspicion of built-up religious theories.

FABRIC COMMITTEE REPORT

IT'S DECISION TIME -

Please try your best come to the next Church Meeting on the 10th February as we need to discuss the next phase of the organ maintenance.

As you may have realised there is currently a problem with the pedal board on the organ. Also the next phase of the maintenance plan needs to be addressed. Jackie has had a quote of almost £4,000 (inc VAT) for the work that now needs doing. We need to make a decision as to whether we spend this money and where the money is to come from. Jackie will inform us of the current financial situation so we can make an informed decision.

If anyone would like to make donations towards this please see Jackie.

The quinquennial report is due to be done this year which also incurs a cost.

We need volunteers to learn how to operate the sound system which is now in the balcony. Jackie can't always be available every Sunday. Please note—No children are allowed up in the balcony (and that includes the Uniformed Organisations).

We would like to welcome Stella Eccleston back onto the Fabric Committee and thank Linda Kay for offering to chair the meetings.

GUILD PROGRAMME 2013

29th January	Carol Banks
5th February	Norman Pearson
12th Feb	Brenda Fox - Preston Guild
19th Feb	Gordon Fairweather Blackburn Orphanage, past and present
26th Feb	Trip to Oswaldtwistle Mills
5th March	Canon Brunswick—'The Law'
12th march	Jim Atkinson, Switzerland, Austria and Passion Play (slide show)
19th March	Go on our
26th March	To be arranged

The Guild will be holding a trip to Oswaldtwistle Mills on Tuesday 26th February. There will be shopping, dinner and entertainment. The coach leaves church at 10.45am and the price will be £20 inclusive. Anyone is welcome to join us. Mollie Ward is taking names

Points to Ponder???

If God wanted you to touch your toes he would put them on your knees

The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth

The only time the world beats a path to your door is when you are in the bathroom how true!

Then home by bus for there was a Christmas day timetable in those days. Christmas Dinner always was the more welcome. All this in short trousers and big brimmed hats. And no mention of Health and Safety issues.

About the same time I remember the traditional evening service on the Sunday before Christmas when there was the 'Procession of Lights' as many children filed in with candles in jars as the sole illumination.

But earlier still? Was Christmas in, say, Victorian times, the sort of traditional event such as Charles Dickens describes in 'Christmas Carol'? Reference to old Leyland Congregational minute books suggests otherwise.

1881 "Church choir to present the service of song, 'Rose of Sharon' on Christmas Day evening instead of the usual service and that a collection be made

1889 "A Tea Meeting in connection with the Sunday School on Christmas Day with the Superintendent and teachers to make arrangements"

1890. "Christmas Day Conversazione"

And the Christmas season was not prolonged. In 1882 the monthly Church Meeting was on Wednesday December 27th.

Different times indeed!

Ernest Wrennall

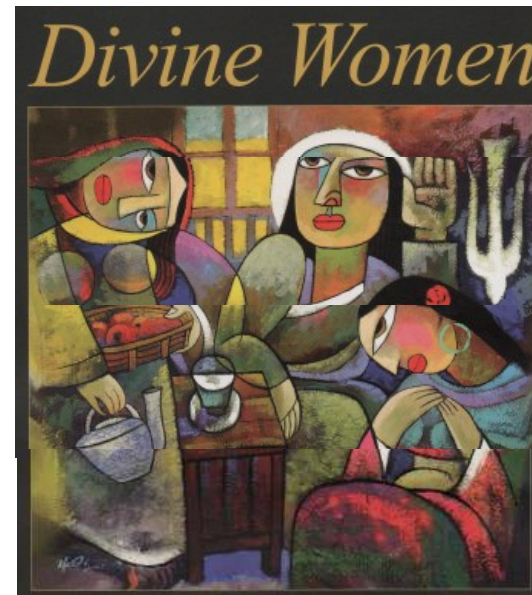
CHURCH AGM—10TH FEBRUARY 12 NOON

The AGM will be held at 12 noon therefore a soup lunch will be available and we hope everyone does their best to attend.

Reports are needed from Fabric, Guild, Fund Raising group, Rambling, Pensioners Plod, Mens Group, Scout Section, Guide Section, Atlantis. These are needed by the 3rd Feb, please email or give to Ann.

All the reports will be ready to hand out on Saturday 9th February at the coffee morning.

Thank you



Bettany Hughes sets out on an epic journey across continents and back in time to trace the hidden and often controversial history of women in religion.

1 When God was a Girl

Why did our ancestors think of the divine as female?

2 Handmaids of the Gods

Examining the lost era of the priestess, from the ancient Greeks to early Christianity.

3 War of the Words

Bettany reveals the remarkable women from history who left their mark on their faiths.

Wednesday: 13th and 27th Feb

A CHANCE TO WATCH THE THREE PART BBC SERIES TOGETHER AND REFLECT ON THE STORY IT TELLS.

OUTLINE OF TIME TOGETHER:

Welcome and refreshments

Watch episode (about 1 hour)

Brief closing discussion

7.30-

Penwortham
United Reformed Church

9.00pm



Serving, celebrating, and living the way of Christ together

commitment for life

LINK PERSON NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2013

Let us pray that we do not take our food for granted.

Food is so important in our lives that not having enough has an effect on everything else we do. Last year the FURY advisory board took part in 'Living below the Line' where people sponsor you to live off £1 a day for five days. Most people who took part say how it affects your concentration and ability to do your work properly as all you think about is food.

Many times in the Bible Jesus used either food in his stories or as illustrations to help people understand what he meant. He described himself as the 'bread of life', something we can't possibly live without. He also said that when we feed those who are hungry we are doing it to him.

Let us pray that we do not take our food for granted. In this year of the launch of the Joint Food campaign let us remember those 1 in 8 people on the planet who are hungry today, yet there is enough food to feed everyone. It is lack of political will, not food, which means people go to bed hungry every night. This is the year to take action.

Prayer can move mountains but we must also back this up with time and money. In these hard economic times it is great that we have still been able to raise over £500,000 for Christian Aid and the World Development Movement. However this did include the final part of the legacy we first received in 2010. Next year it is crucial that we 'make that sacrifice' to consider what is 1% of our disposable income. We may be in hard times but for those who have almost nothing, this could be a year of despair.

Let us give thanks for what we have received and act accordingly.

In fact we can't really even say as much as that about the numbers who came to our other special Christmas Services - Lessons and Carols on the Sunday evening and the 4pm Christmas Eve Service. All rather sad. The five of us who went to share in the Christmas Day service at Penwortham at least found a fairly well filled church for they seem to have a tradition of using that service as a family reunion occasion.

So that was Christmas 2012.

My mind however goes back to Christmases when I was a teenager. Tradition then was that we had a link between our church - or perhaps rather our Sunday School - and the children's home associated with Shepherd Street Mission in the Avenham area of Preston. An earlier Sunday afternoon Toy Service, attended by the 'orphan' children from the home who, as it were, 'sang for their supper' had resulted in our members giving several hundred 'good as new' toys which were to be passed on as perhaps a sole Christmas gift to children from needy families in the town of Preston. The distribution would be made at first light on Christmas morning and, to assist Father Christmas deal with crowds, there was a tradition that a group of young teenage Scouts and Guides from Leyland Congs. would assist. So at about 5.30am on Christmas morning we would meet at Leyland Station and, with no actual leaders, then walk to Preston in the icy darkness via Lostock Hall and eventually arriving by way of the Tram Road and Tram Bridge, through Avenham Park.

Getting near Shepherd Street we would be conscious of the sound of many voices and then we saw the cause of the noise - a long queue of children snaking away from the Mission door. We would take up our positions as doorkeepers, crowd controllers, seeing that everyone got one (and only one) toy and giving out the brown paper goody bags each containing an orange, a meat pie and a mince pie. When all the children had been through, second visits were allowed until all the toys had gone, and we would assist with clearing up before going on to the orphanage to meet the children in residence and for the scouts to play football against the orphanage boys in their yard using the football which, again traditionally, had been a gift from the Leyland Congs Men's Group.

LOOKING BACKWARDS (EVEN FURTHER) TO CHRISTMAS

On other pages of this month's magazine there are words of gratitude to people most involved in preparing for, and taking an active role in, the activities of the church during the Christmas season. These words of thanks are well deserved but there is perhaps a need to include some sort of more objective report on what their efforts led to.

The decorations, which were in place right through the month of December were really extra special and it was so good that the impression which they made were not just for the benefit of our regular worshippers.

The early start was for the open house Christingle Service on Friday 30th November when, promoted by South Ribble Borough Council's Hough lane Development Team, we were 'invaded' by a great number of mainly 'outside' family parties as well as many from our uniformed groups who were clearly impressed by what they saw and by the way they were so fully involved in the activities which were going on.

I stood in the porch (freezing – it was a bitter night) as a greetings person and so clearly became aware of how very many people otherwise without church links were seeing us at our very best. I really felt that we were living up to our aim of being a community church and the splendid well lit Christmas tree in our garden was a lasting reminder of this throughout the season

The same sort of impression of being an open and welcoming place was confirmed by the splendid Uniformed Groups service when once again the church was really full largely by many non regular people brought in because their families were involved in the Christmas Alphabet presentation. Twenty Six letters - and for each, a poem reader, a card hanger and a bible passage reader. That is a lot of youngsters. To say nothing of the really remarkable letter cards which were original works of art in their own right. The music making was also in their hands too.

I did not see our own Junior Church 'Babushka' presentation, being at Lytham URC as visiting Lay Preacher (and having a punctured tyre to deal with - serves me right!) but I am told it too was well done though the congregation was really confined to just our regulars which was a pity.

This prayer was included in January's Commitment for Life Newsletter and as many of us make New Year resolutions I thought it could be that as Christians we consider making 'Commitment for Life' our New Years resolution in the form of a regular donation to Christian Aid.

If you are interested please see Alison Bamber for details. Of course we must not forget our other commitments of placing items in the box for the food bank or remembering to save 5pences for our Mite Scheme. All worthy causes and all a valued New Year resolution to make.

Alison Bamber

ANAGRAMS

The 'Anagrams' quiz which was set originally for the Autumn Fair had a tie break task which was to create an original anagram using the letters from a phrase from the Lord's Prayer to make another word or phrase with some sort of interesting message. These are the best attempts

BE THY NAME

ME? BETHANY

THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD
ON EARTH

READ YOUR DAILY THIS BAD
ANOTHER

ART IN

TRAIN

AND THE GLORY

GLAD TORY HEN

OUR FATHER

A TURF HERO

OUR DAILY BREAD

I BARRED YOU, LAD

DAILY BREAD

LADY BRIDE

AMEN

NAME

The one judged the winner - for appropriateness

"THE POWER AND"

"ADORN THE PEW",

Congratulations to Pat and Colin Whalley from Penwortham URC.

For silliness, try this one as worked out, for no good reason, by E.W.

"FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY,
FOR EVER AND EVER, AMEN"

becomes

"O LORD, WE PRAY THE SHRINKING FARMER NEVER GOT
IN THE HEN FOOD AND MET EVE"

Well, it passes the time!

Ernest Wrennall

Dreaming God's Future

Abridgment of Advent Sermon

In Christ we see God's dream for the world fully lived, we see the kingdom within a life, and we remember that we too are called to live as Christ lived. We are called to follow Christ's way, to live out the Kingdom, to have peace, justice and love the hallmarks of our lives, and to do our utmost to support, declare, and share those values in the world around us.

As a congregation we face a dilemma. How we do things is how we like to do things. We have our pattern of worship, what it includes and when we have it, and we have other activities we opt in our out of as we choose. What we do suits us, and from time to time others come along, discover it suits them too, and we trundle along together. Things do change, but gradually and it's hard to notice when it has. When we do want to try something very different most of us are willing to give it a go but, more often than not, we come up with a compromise. A compromise that we hope keeps our existing people on board and may interest some of the folk on the fringes of the fellowship. There are a few problems with this. Yes we do need to keep everyone on board but compromises in worship in my experience never seem to work.

For a compromise to have any chance it needs everyone to commit to the compromise, but too often only some of the congregation buy in to it. It also falls down with the folk we are trying to attract. How we do Sunday worship doesn't suit them, and any compromise we make to keep ourselves settled will never be different enough for it to suit them. There is also the fundamental problem that we don't really know what might suit these people we don't yet know.

How could we find out? We could send out questionnaires, but we would only get about 10% replying if we were lucky, and if you were asked the question: 'How would you like to spend some time each week in order to find peace, reflect on your life, engage with life's meaning, and connect with other people and the divine?' How would you answer? Would you simply list our order of service? And if you did that, would all of that order fully answer the question? Do you agree that it is the right question? How would you define what we are doing, or should be doing, on a Sunday morning? I think we would have a very hard time working out what questions to ask. And if we'd struggle to answer them, then I don't think other people would stand any chance at all. .



Lancashire Area

Open gatherings for fellowship, discussion, and exploration

6th Feb: Derian House

Hear about the work of this children's hospice based in Chorley www.derianhouse.co.uk

6th Mar: Changing church...?

Linda Rayner (URC Co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions) will show how can we be church in a fast-changing world, where generations have never heard of Jesus or seen a Bible?

3rd Apr: Meal at Penwortham Golf Club

A three course meal followed by coffee and mints for £16-. Places need to be booked—
see separate poster

Penwortham URC, Liverpool Road, PR1 0QB
7.00pm for refreshments and a bring and share meal

We hope this will create opportunities for us to build relationships, discuss issues relevant to our lives together, and experience different ways of being Church to help discussion and activities within congregations.

For more details contact: Rev'd David Coaker
(01772) 462229, pastoral.urclancs@gmail.com

Moving the Backdrop forwards

Blockbuster, Jessops, HMV, Woolworths; all names that have, or are, vanishing from our high streets. Such names, signage and logos, that were part of the backdrop to our everyday lives. We took them for granted, we thought they'd always be there. We'd go in to browse but more often than not we'd order what we wanted online, or in the case of Woolworths see what we found in a £1 shop.

These businesses are no more. The decisions that all of us have taken means they are no longer profitable. They can no longer afford to pay staff, maintain premises, buy stock or advertise themselves within the market place. As a society the decisions we have taken about where and how we spend our money, have resulted in these, and other enterprises, ceasing to be. The same story is being played out in many areas. In the licensing trade pubs are shutting, libraries are closing, butchers and grocers are hard to find, hospitals are being merged, milk rounds are few and far between, and our high streets have more and more charity shops and estate agents filling the gaps. This backdrop to our everyday lives is rapidly changing, and as it is the result of decisions that we have all made it is hard to work out what each of us can do.

But as in all areas of life each decision is important, and the challenge is for each of us to try and make the right ones. Big changes are made up of thousands of small decisions, and if we make enough of the right ones positive changes follow. People tend to make decisions based upon what the world around them tells them, and if we actively add our voices then who knows what might be possible. If we add our voices, stepping forward trusting in God, following Christ's example and relying upon the Spirit – then in God all things are possible.

Our churches are also are part of the backdrop to the everyday lives of our society. Just like the businesses people are looking elsewhere for what we can offer. People are looking to a host of spiritualities and other community groups rather than to the Church to fulfil their needs. How can we reconnect? How can we help folk rediscover the peace, fellowship and challenge our faith offers?

With every blessing, *Rev'd David R. Coaker*

We might just get other church-goers replying, which doesn't really help us.

Congregations grow because the people who already attend invite others to come along. Growth comes through relationship. We all have relationships with family and friends outside of the congregation, but clearly there are stumbling blocks to them accepting invitations to Sunday worship. So maybe Sunday worship shouldn't be a direct, or our only, invitation? Maybe we should look at more social, more accessible activities, to gather folk together and then have the invitation to Sunday worship follow on? Maybe we should have some honest and open conversations about what we think we are doing on a Sunday morning and what we should be doing? Are we tying ourselves up trying to do what we think we should be doing, rather than liberating ourselves to worship in a way that gives us what we really need? How can we make Sunday worship truly the central part of our life together so that we find it easier to commit and celebrate it – and not pick and choose when to attend and find it near impossible to invite someone along?

But we still need to think about that invitation. Are our invitations to Sunday worship as concise as: 'Would you like to come to Church?' Concise and to the point, but very easy to say No to, or Yes if it is someone who has already walked themselves up to the door. We need to reflect on why we come to Church. What do we get from it? What would we like to get from it? And find ways of personalising our invitations and giving them depth. Offering an invitation that begins a conversation rather than just a Yes or No answer. There is also the question of whether what suits us on a Sunday morning will ever suit those that do not come. We are here because to a greater or lesser extent what happens suits us. We need to face the hard truth that rather than, in effect, blaming the people who don't come, we may need to create space for them. Sunday morning works for us, let us celebrate that but not assume that because it suits us it will suit everyone. As I said compromising Sunday morning doesn't help any of us. Take the example of a parade Sunday. Parades are a compromise between a normal Sunday and trying to make things of more interest to the Scouts and Guides. If you have a room full of children and young people and you wanted to engage them with our faith you wouldn't end up with our pattern of parade services. And again it is also a compromise to keep our existing folk happy, but not everyone buys into that compromise.

We have also tried the Sunday Welcome services. Their aim was to create an informal space for us to welcome people we invite to worship. But we just end up with a cross-section of our existing folk and seldom a new face. We all want to see the Church grow, develop and thrive but it does seem that too often we focus on ourselves and not so much on our community or the challenge that our faith places before us. We hold a desire for our church to grow in one hand, and our preference for things to stay the same in the other, and our focus on security tends to mean we drop the growth idea.

We could continue as we are. Doing what we can, relying on the efforts of a few to maintain what we have, keeping things going, trying the occasional new thing, but that plan hasn't served us, our community, or God, that well so far. The world and the Church is a very different place from when we grew up. We could come up with a whole list of reasons why this is so, or we could accept that we are where we are, and try to find ways to take us forward.

That is the ministry that I am committed to. If I weren't it would make life so much easier – maintaining the status quo in two churches and balancing the demands of family life and the wider Church would be so much more manageable. But that isn't the ministry I feel called to, or the understanding of the faith I have. As Church we need to create space to develop relationships. We can do this through social events, engaging with the needs of our community, finding ways of deepening and articulating our faith, developing our worship and perhaps exploring other styles of worship at other times and places away from Sunday morning. Through committing ourselves to the inevitable compromises and celebrating them because we are opening ourselves up to where we see God leading us, not simply limiting it to what we want. The compromises are inevitable as we are dealing with limited resources. Making one thing a priority will always mean that other things receive less time and effort. Together we can come up with a plan trying to discern, through church and elders meetings, how we can engage ourselves and our community with our faith. Taking the Mission Plan we agreed and reviewing it, agreeing it, and focussing on it. Giving it the focus we should have given it and not allowing it to become lost in events and the pressures of routine. Something, I and we all, have been guilty of. We must commit to that plan, engage with it, and see where that leads us as we reflect on our faith, renew our faith, and respond to the challenges that our faith places upon our lives. Committing to it and investing our time, energy and resources to living it out.

Cyclone (the local word for hurricane) Evan struck Samoa on 12th-13th December with much damage to property, disastrous flash floods and long lasting loss of power. With an economy so much based on coconut and copra products many farmers have lost heavily. Though widely covered by the media in Australia and New Zealand there was little more than a mere mention, if that, in the UK – hence the appeal a month later via our denomination to respond to assist our brothers and sisters in distress. If you missed the unannounced appeal in church you can still make a contribution through our Treasurer or any Elder

It is a matter of regret that the affairs of churches in other lands has such a low profile these days. Our own Mission Committee and World Church Group once had individual links with other churches in Mozambique, South Africa, Guyana and New Zealand which are no more; our Synod in theory has made contact with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan but nothing of this seems to reach us while perhaps the most striking thing at a national level is that CWM is no longer a British based organisation. Ever since the days of the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, the headquarters of the now thirty one strong church group that is CWM has been based in London. Then in the last couple of years a new General Secretary, Dr. Collin Cowan from the West Indies, was appointed – and was refused an entry visa to take up the appointment by our Government. So CWM is now working from new offices in Singapore which probably correctly reflects where the 'mission' church is now active.

To think that in 1965 one young man from our church, John Watson, was inspired enough to offer himself as a volunteer to the CCWM, the forerunner of CWM, and so wound up working in education in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) relatively near to Samoa in the mid Pacific Ocean. Our old friend Revd Gwen Thomas (who is not well at the moment) served as a medical missionary in Zambia and Betty Metcalfe from Inglewhite Congregational Church was a nurse at a mission hospital in what is now Botswana.

We don't seem to be on that wavelength at all these days.

Ernest Wrennall

THE SAMOA APPEAL

On a recent Sunday there was a retiring collection for the people of Samoa following a recent cyclone disaster. This appeal was promoted by CWM. You may be wondering what this is all about? where is Samoa? what is CWM? how comes we never heard of the Disaster?

Twenty years ago, supplying answers to questions such as these would have been taken care of by the World Church Committee and/or the Church Meeting World Church Team but these groups no longer exist in our church nor, in fact, are there such specialist interest groups at virtually any level in the entire United Reformed Church

CWM is the **C**ouncil for **W**orld **M**ission, an organisation of 31 different, independent protestant churches in as many different countries of which our United Reformed Church is one. They are mainly churches set up by Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries often in the 19th Century. Older church members may remember the series of John Williams missionary ships sent out by the original London Missionary Society – it was John Williams himself who took Christianity to Samoa in 1832. Their spiritual descendants make up the **C.C.C.S.** (**C**ongregational **C**hristian **C**hurch of **S**amoa) with nearly half of the 194,000 inhabitants as members.

Samoa is made up of two main volcanic islands, Upolu and Savai'i, lying in the Pacific Ocean about half way between Hawaii and New Zealand. At one time before 1914 they were claimed as a colony by Germany but after 1918 were looked after by New Zealand until gaining full independence in 1962. Just to the east of Samoa lies the smaller island of American Samoa which is a territory of the USA and has its own CWM member church, the CCCAS, similar in tradition and member percentage to the CCCS. One fascinating difference between the two Samoas is the way that American Samoa drives on the right and uses its position to the east of the International Date Line to keep its time as near as possible to America. Western Samoa, in 2009, changed to left hand drive and has taken advantage of a kink in the Date Line to drop 24 hours to keep New Zealand time and calendar as the norm.

Also we must take responsibility for the decisions we have made as church meeting. At Church meeting we gather to discern through prayer the will of God, and we raise our hands to indicate the choice we believe God is leading us towards. We are not a democracy, we are not expressing our preferences; we are discerning the will of God. We make those decisions together before God. So for us to do that each of us need to be there. As elders we are trying to make the practicalities of that easier by having at least some meetings after Sunday worship – but as church members that gives you the right to be part of decision-making and it also makes you responsible for it. For us to better be able to discern God's will for us, we need to all share in these meetings, to pray, discuss, and discern God's will. Then for us to be better able to live out those decisions, we all need to take responsibility for them and get on with it. Not everything that is decided and elders or church meetings, Synod, General Assembly or Mission Council, I personally agree with, but I am committed to the process and to God's Spirit within it. That is the nature of the United Reformed Church, that is who we are, and I thank God for that.

I hope that this will be the beginning of conversations, and of discussions at elders and church meetings in the New Year, as we discern together where we believe God is leading us. I offer these questions at the start of Advent as we reflect on our faith, renew our faith, and respond to the challenges that our faith places upon our lives. These are questions I am posing, not demands. As a minister I am much more interested in making sure congregations and individuals engage themselves with the right questions, than in simply accepting my answers. It is in the questions that we open ourselves up to God, the world and each other – and in that questioning, and in responding to the answers we discover, that I see God's Kingdom.

In Christ we see God's dream for the world fully lived, we see the kingdom within a life, and we remember that we too are called to live as Christ lived. We are called to follow Christ's way, to live out the Kingdom, to have peace, justice and love the hallmarks of our lives, and to do our utmost to support, declare, and share those values in the world around us.

May God bless us, inspire us through the Spirit, as we seek to declare and live out Jesus' prayer that God's kingdom may come, on earth as it is in heaven. **Amen**

CHURCH AND WORSHIP DIARY FOR FEBRUARY



Sun 3 rd	Worship led by Carol Rose Lunch after the service (£10)	10.30am
Tues 5 th	Amnesty International	7.30pm
Wed 6 th	Area Gathering at Penwortham URC "Derian House" presentation.	7.00pm
Thur 7 th	Sea of Faith DVD part 3 <u>at the Manse</u>	7.30pm
Sun 10 th	Worship led by the minister Communion Church Meeting (AGM) after the service	10.30am
Mon 11 th	Fabric Committee	7.30pm
Sun 17 th	Worship led by Anne Oakden	10.30am
Wed 20 th	Pensioners Plod	
Thur 21 st	Elders Meeting	7.30pm
Sat 23 rd	Ramble	
Sun 24 th	Worship led by the minister Parade	10.30am
Thur 28 th	Sea of Faith DVD part 4 at the Manse	7.30pm

Sunday Welcome –

Elders recommendation to Church meeting

Through discussion at elders and the agreement of church meeting we established these services in an attempt to create an informal worship service at which we could invite and welcome folk on the fringes of our congregation and newcomers. Due to the lack of support and engagement from the congregation the elders propose that we cancel these services.

Whatever the decision of church meeting the elders are still keen to explore other opportunities to engage us, and our community, with alternative forms of worship.

CHURCH AND WORSHIP DIARY FOR MARCH 2013



Fri 1 st	Women's World Day of Prayer Service	
Sun 3 rd	Worship led by Ernest Wrennall	10.30am
Tues 5 th	Amnesty International	7.30pm
Wed 6 th	Area Gathering at Penwortham URC "Changing Church?" Linda Rayner.	7.00pm
Thur 7 th	Sea of Faith DVD part 5 at the Manse	7.30pm
Sun 10 th	Mothering Sunday Worship led by the minister Induction of Elders	10.30am
Mon 11 th	Fabric Committee	7.30pm
Thur 14 th	Sea of Faith DVD part 6 at the Manse	7.30pm
Sat 16 th	Ramble	
Sun 17 th	Worship led by Sally Watson	10.30am
Wed 20 th	Pensioners Plod	
Thur 21 st	Elders Meeting	7.30pm
Sun 24 th	Palm Sunday Worship led by the minister Parade	10.30am
Thur 28 th	Maundy Thursday Service	7.30pm
Fri 29 th	Good Friday CTL Walk of Witness	
Sun 31 st	Easter Sunday Worship led by Yvonne Hawkins Communion	10.30am

ITEMS FOR NEXT MAGAZINE

APRIL/MAY 2013 TO LINDA KAY BY 20th March
AT THE LATEST PLEASE

Email: lindakay@blueyonder.co.uk