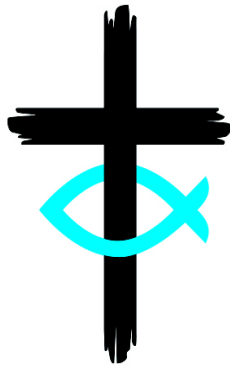


# ALSAGER UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Brookhouse Road

Alsager

ST7 2PA



*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

## **MINISTER'S LETTER:**

Dear Friends,

*'Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, He entered the synagogue and taught.'*

Mark 1: 21

*'And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons.'*

## Mark 1: 39 (New King James Version)

The synagogue was a meeting place, primarily but not exclusively, for worship in villages and small towns in particular. It would have been the place where most gatherings, meetings and markets took place. It was often to the synagogue that Jesus went when he first entered a town or village for the first time.

Similarly, the history of Church buildings is a history of their significance as meeting places, primarily but certainly not exclusively, for worship. Although it is the people who make up the Body of Christ on earth, the buildings we gather and worship in are special, they are sacred; one might even use the word "Sacrament" to describe them, as they are the outward and visible signs of an invisible and spiritual grace. In the case of our Church buildings, they are visible signs of God in the midst of His world, His people. It was a celebration of that reality which is at the heart of an ancient form of act of worship known as a Clypping Service that is probably Roman in origin. It is a Service that celebrates the place of the Church in community and involves people 'embracing' or 'hugging' the Church.

One of the responsibilities of having buildings is their care and upkeep. Each one needs constant repair and maintenance, and these demands can be draining; the never-ending drip, drip, drip, of significant and finite resources. Could these resources be better directed toward developing the Church's worship, service and mission? This is one of the reasons perhaps why some may view a Church

building as a burden rather than an asset. However, it doesn't have to be like that. Every Church building is a resource; a visible and (hopefully) accessible presence of God in the midst of a community, a gathering place for worship and a base for Christian service from which to undertake mission. Whether a Church building is used to its full potential will depend on whether it is included in the visioning of the Church. Only when the purpose(s) of a building are identified and incorporated into the overall vision of the Church can Church buildings shine like the lights they are; places that illuminate the Glory of God. The question is, how do we let them speak?

Your friend and minister  
Murray

**CHURCH MEETING DATES:**

Monday June 4 at 7.15pm  
Monday August 13 at 7.15pm

**DEVOTIONS:**

**A MEDITATIVE LORD'S PRAYER:**

**God in heaven,**

Dear God remind me today that you live and reign, not only in heaven but all around me and in my life. Make me aware of your active presence all day, in all my undertakings and in the people I meet.

## **hallowed be your name,**

How can I recognize you, dear God, in the splendour of nature, in the odd mix of people I meet, in the still voice that call me to be more like you? May I 'hallow' what lies before me, by consciously referring it to you, and also honour your perfection, your holiness, by seeking to become more like you.

## **your kingdom come,**

Yes dear God, allow me to be an agent of that kingdom by bringing peace to the anxious, grace to the needy and your love to all whom I touch. May people believe in your reign of goodness because of how I live today.

## **your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

I see that will most clearly in Jesus, who healed the sick and comforted the grieving, who lifted up the downtrodden, who always stood for life and not death, for hope and not despair, for freedom and not bondage. He lived out heaven's will on earth. Dear God, help me be like Jesus.

## **Give us today our daily bread.**

We have no guarantee of a day beyond this one. So may I trust you, dear God, for what I need today, nourishment for both body and soul, and help me not

to worry about future needs and wants. May I also be ever responsive to those who lack bread today.

**Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.**

Dear God, remind me of my true state as a debtor who can never buy my way into your favour. Thank you God, that I do not have to. Grant me the same attitude of forgiving grace towards those who owe me, and who have wronged me, that you show towards me.

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**

Dear God, let me not slide endlessly towards evil today. Make me alert to its temptations and strong to resist it, with neither fear nor regret. Amen.

(Philip Yancey 'Prayer Does It Make Any Difference?' pp163f alt.)

### **OBITUARY: JOAN HEATON**

A long-time member of Alsager URC together with her husband Ken, Joan sadly passed away on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018. When I first visited Alsager I was introduced to Joan and Ken and that is how I always thought of them, two who had truly become one. They were completely devoted to each other and their marriage of 64 years was a true partnership during which they cared for and served each other. Each

had their distinct role. Ken's was to go out to paid employment, whilst Joan looked after the home. Joan was very proud of the fact that Ken had never cooked or cleaned over the course of their marriage. Joan cared for Ken through a prolonged period of ill health until his death on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016 and she missed him greatly. She would say that she never really felt whole after that as she felt a piece of herself was missing.

Joan had a simple but strong faith and had a real ministry of engagement. Joan would talk to everyone (as did Ken) and in doing so make all feel welcome and valued. This was not just in church, but was something that happened wherever they went. I realised the power of this while Joan was in Lawton Manor and I started receiving phone calls enquiring how she was from people as far away as North Wales and Kent. Joan made everyone feel that they were important and had something to offer, and for that she will be missed and remembered. But the love of her life was always Ken and she often in her final months expressed how much she missed him and wished to be reunited with him. Our loss is their gain and one

consolation maybe is we can now start talking of and remembering Joan and Ken, Ken and Joan.

**Thanks to Rev Murray.**

### **NEWS FROM THE FABRIC COMMITTEE:**

Having completed improvements in phase two, we are now turning our thoughts to the next phase of our refurbishments plans. This consists of the rearrangement and upgrading of the rear part of the

building, including new toilets, improved facilities for storage, office, meeting room and generally bringing the premises up to a better standard of finish.

This objective is not going to be quick or easy. We need to get the plan right and then assess the cost of all the works, apply for any possible grants, seek approvals as necessary, secure the funding etc. We will keep members informed as we proceed with the proposals and try to incorporate the thoughts and requirements of the various sections of the church and other users.

Therefore if members wish to make any comments or have any proposals for us to consider please let us know. The group try to meet at least once a month, and the current members are: Revd. Murray, Tom Beamon, Ian White, Gordon Stockton, Pat Taylor and **David Riley**.

“You don’t keep grace in the freezer for later. It’s an endlessly available gift, but its use-by-date is always now.”

(Anon - Friendship book 2018, April 22)

## **JUNE 19: BIRTHDAY OF CONGREGATIONALISM?**

Does your church have a congregational government? If local members make its decisions rather than an outside bishop or presbytery, then your form of church government is congregational. It is one of the most common ways that Protestants govern their churches throughout the world today.

When did congregationalism begin? There are several suggestions. Some writers say the earliest

churches planted by the apostles were run by local congregations. However, most historians look at it as arising within a tide of democratic ideals in the sixteenth century which it fed and to which it contributed. They often point to this day, **June 19, 1567** as a red-letter day in its origin.

This was the day that Richard Fitz and several others were arrested in Plumber's Hall, London. To understand why, we need to remind ourselves of conditions of that day. Many Englishmen and women were unhappy with the Church of England. According to some it went too far in reform. According to others, not far enough. Some of this last group called for purifying the church. They were called Puritans. Others wished to separate themselves entirely from the Church of England. They became known as Separatists.

Around 1550 small, secret congregations of Separatists sprang up. One was led by Richard Fitz and John Robinson (who later played a key role as leader of the Pilgrim Fathers who came to America). Their movements are hard to trace.

The Separatists really surfaced when they established what they called a "Privye" or private church, one that would not answer to English bishops or to Rome or any other religious authority. In short, it would be governed by its own pastor and members. This put them on a collision course with the queen who was head of the Church of England and personally liked the colour, splendour and ritual of worship that the Puritans and Separatists detested.

One particular band of Separatists, reported as a hundred strong, rented Plumber's Hall to celebrate





Rev Murray George

17 10.30am Morning Worship Rev John Keeling

6.30pm Ecumenical Worship  
Rev Murray George

24 10.30am Morning Worship  
Rev Murray George

## **July**

1 10.30am Holy Communion  
Rev Murray George

8 10.30am Morning Worship Carol Booth

15 10.30am Morning Worship Rev John Keeling

6.30pm Ecumenical Worship  
Rev Murray George

22 10.30am Morning Worship  
Rev Les Sanderson

29 10.30am Morning Worship  
Rev Andrew Lindley

## **August**



- 6 THEN ANNOYED
- 7 WRONG OR BOND
- 8 ENEMA IN JAILBIRDS
- 9 A AS CHUBBIER AS A MONK
- 10 LOWER PORTABLE
- 11 AN ORAL DANGER
- 12 WELL BANDY SAINT
- 13 A HOODLUMS SACRILEGE
- 14 GOD WELL ANIMALIST
- 15 WAR ON HE GETS GOING
- 16 AN ILL CLOWN, I'M IT
- 17 I CHARM ALL OLD MAN
- 18 STARMAN HURRY
- 19 PLEB TORIES ERR
- 20 THE HATED
- 21 JAM MERIT CRY
- 22 GOD, I'D LEG OVER LADY!
- 23 NOW WRITE HIGH DEEDS
- 24 CLASH A JAM ANGEL
- 25 OH MAN! BRAIN CALL
- 26 WINDOW LOW OR SO
- 27 THROW UP ELITE MALIGNITY
- 28 TORY IN LAB
- 29 DISHONOR WALL
- 30 MAD RASCAL MONDAY

**ANSWERS TO KNOW YOUR SHOWS:**

- 1 Annie Get Your Gun
- 2 Jesus Christ Superstar
- 3 Carousel
- 4 My Fair Lady
- 5 Singing In The Rain
- 6 Evita
- 7 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

- 8 High Society
- 9 Grease
- 10 Fiddler On The Roof
- 11 Whistle Down The Wind
- 12 Chess
- 13 Aspects Of Love
- 14 Hairspray
- 15 Half A Sixpence
- 16 The Man In La Mancha
- 17 Pickwick
- 18 Phantom Of The Opera
- 19 Les Misérables
- 20 A Little Night Music

### **BIRTHDAYS**

**JUNE:** 1 Gordon Stockton & Pat Taylor 2 Jan Wood & Coral Sibery 9 Gwen Pask 15 Nan Owen

22 Joy Stockton

**JULY:** 5 Graham Dawber 8 Margaret Summers  
 11 Doreen Baker 12 Elsie Georgeson  
 15 Murray George 21 David Keeling

**AUGUST:** 4 Stuart Alcock & Enid Griffiths  
 9 Malcolm Summers 28 Eileen Wallace & John Keeling

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU ALL**

### **FILM REVIEW: Jesus Christ Superstar**

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April was a ground breaking day at our Church when the Social Group arranged for the 2012 arena production of Jesus Christ Superstar to be shown at Church.

It's almost 50 years since Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice wrote this musical; a contemporary presentation of the final days of Jesus on earth.

Since 1970 the musical has been produced all over the world in venues large and small. And here at Alsager we had the benefit of seeing and hearing one of the most lavish versions.

Following the BBC television show *Superstar*, an unknown actor was selected to perform the role of Jesus. This person was Ben Forster who was later to tour in the show from September to October 2012 with Tim Minchin as Judas, Chris Moyles as King Herod and Melanie Chisholm (one of the judges in 'Superstar' as a beautifully performed Mary Magdalene (I knew that her spice girl tattooed cross on her arm would come in useful one day!))

So strong was Ben Forster in the role of Jesus that this unnoticed person was destined to take up a significant West End career notably as the Phantom in *Phantom of the Opera* – which is interesting as *Phantom* may be the next film we present.

The story of the final earthly days of Jesus needs no explanation and in many ways defies adequate description. It is graphic and deeply uncomfortable. This large-scale production is graphic and uncomfortable beyond words. One lady said to me at the end that she had suffered through this film but recognised in a sense she had shared in the suffering of Jesus. It's a long time since I have seen something at any church provoke so much reaction and discussion. Some loved the music. Some no doubt hated it but were too polite to say. All of us had been through a common experience.

Thanks to Murray the visual and audio impact was immense. The sound quality in particular was outstanding and the new harmonisation of many of the songs was full of impact.

I first saw Jesus Christ Superstar at the Palace Theatre London in around 1976 (I was quite young in those days) when it was in the middle of an eight year run which equated to almost 3500 performances. It was hard hitting and it still is. Lloyd-Webber and Rice were masters of turning stories into contemporary messages. That was over 40 years ago. And just six years ago large crowds in some of the country's biggest arenas saw another contemporary version full of political rallies, mobile phone messaging and inane television quizzes.

Ultimately it's not the stage show (wonderful though it is) which counts, it's our reaction to it. In words from the show "What shall we do about Jesus of Nazareth? Miracle worker, pilgrim or fool?" Do we look away (or decide we do not like it) or do we wonder what the message says to us today.

If we don't like the style of Jesus Christ Superstar, how do we communicate to this generation?

Now there's a question.

Of course the musical leaves us short. There is no resurrection. So in a way the production is literally hopeless – it's a reminder of Christ's passion but it by no means tells the gospel (good news) story.

Fortunately we know better!

I started by pointing out that it's almost 50 years since the musical was written. Remarkably almost 50 people shared in our viewing of this version on this day.

The social and fellowship activities at Church have been massively popular and we have welcomed a large number of new faces.

Long may it continue and thanks to all who were involved.

**Thanks to Ian White.**

### **NEWS FROM THE ELDERS:**

At the Church AGM in April Lynne was elected to become a serving Elder and was ordained at the Communion Service on 27<sup>th</sup> May. Please pray for Lynne as she takes this step of faith. Melanie has decided to stand down as a serving Elder in order to concentrate on other things including preaching studies. We wish her well and thank her for her service to the Eldership in the past and continue to remember her in our prayers. We remain a small group and are grateful to those non-serving Elders who help out with Sunday duties.

**Blessings Chris K.**

### **SOCIAL GROUP NEWS:**

STRAWBERRY TEA Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June at 2.30pm.

Food, Fun and laughter guaranteed! Make a date in your diary and tickets will be available shortly.

### **REGULAR ACTIVITIES:**

**Mondays:**

**SOUP/SALAD & SING:**

From 1.00pm (weekly in Church): Soup/Salad at 1.00pm, then singing until 2.15pm, followed by



tea/coffee & cake! Not a performing group, just people who enjoy a sing-song in good company.

**Contacts: Ian (01270 877243)/Lynne Eardley 01270 877861 (for catering purposes)**

**NB. PLEASE ENTER BY CHURCH DOOR.**

### **Wednesdays:**

#### BIBLE EXPLORATION:

From 2.30-3.30pm (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday in the Hall)

Programme:

June 13	Walking the Way	Rev Murray
27	Walking the Way	Rev Murray
July 11	Walking the Way	Rev John
25	Walking the Way	Rev Murray
Aug 8	Walking the Way	Rev Murray
22	Walking the Way	Rev Murray

**Contacts: Rev Murray (01260 273873)/Rev John (01782 771288)**

### **Thursdays:**

#### THURSDAY AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP:

TAF meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays at 2.30pm usually in the church hall unless otherwise advertised. Meetings have continued to be held with some interesting speakers on a wide variety of topics. We are in the process of planning our annual **Coach Trip** on June 14<sup>th</sup>, details of which will be advertised shortly. Our final meeting of this session will be the **Afternoon Tea Party** which includes stalls on Thursday July 12<sup>th</sup>. Please join us for what always proves an enjoyable and friendly afternoon.

**Contacts: Philip/Lynne Eardley 01270 877861.**

## PRE-TEENS:

From 6.00-7.00pm (weekly during term time)

It would be lovely just to put a “smiley” face here, but that wouldn’t give you any idea of what is going on in our Pre-Teens club at the moment.

We have new children attending, new activities and also a new helper!

The **Alsager Rocks** initiative has been adopted and the children and helpers have enjoyed painting and varnishing rocks and placing them around town. The aim is to bring smiles to the faces of people finding the beautifully decorated rocks which have been hidden by the artists. Of course **we** put on where they have been decorated so the name of our group and of the Church is being spread! People are encouraged to take photos of their finds and share them on social media. Some that we have seen are truly amazing!

This year we have also entered into the **Alsager Animal Safari** which runs in the build-up to the Carnival. Everyone at the club will be helping to replicate the Church’s dove window on a large board, hopefully ‘touchy feely’, and displayed outside the Church, for the townsfolk to view and mark it off on their town trail sheets. Just another way to let people know where we are and what’s going on at our Church.

**Contacts: Philip/Lynne Eardley 01270 877861**

## **Fridays:**

### CARRY ON DANCING!

From 10.00-11.30am weekly in the hall.

You all must have seen the poster on the noticeboard in the Church hall advertising this new activity at the

Church, but if you haven't please take a look at some of its members enjoying themselves.

Yes, at times we use 'props' such as top hats, fans, feather boas, and ribbons, as we gently exercise to music. Sometimes we sit, sometimes we stand while following dance movements which help to keep our joints moving. Our chuckle muscles also get a lot of exercising as we often laugh quite a lot!

Why not consider coming along on Friday morning.

It only costs £2 per session and this includes refreshments.

A qualified teacher leads the sessions and it really is good fun.

**Contact: Lynne Eardley 01270 877861/Valerie 07817 172052**

### **Saturdays:**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in every month is known as COFFEE & CHAT (10.00am-12.00noon) with refreshments, handmade cards, books and a sales table always available.

Forthcoming hosts:

June 2 Lynne Eardley & Jacquie McCullough

July 7 Audrey Dawber & Marie Riley

Aug 4 Chris Keeling & Eileen Wallace

Sept 1 Bob & Ria Harrison

\*PLEASE NOTE EXTRA HELP ALWAYS NEEDED\*

**Contact: Philip Eardley 01270 877861**

### **CHURCH CONTACTS**

**MINISTER:** Rev Murray George

01260 273873

[rev.murray@btinternet.com](mailto:rev.murray@btinternet.com)

**SECRETARY:** Chris Keeling  
01782 771288  
[chriskeeling1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chriskeeling1@hotmail.co.uk)

**ELDERS:** Chris Winskill  
01270 879695  
[christine.winskill@sky.com](mailto:christine.winskill@sky.com)

Lynne Eardley  
01270 877861  
[ljearldley@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ljearldley@yahoo.co.uk)

David Keeling  
01562 913146  
[davekeeling1@googlemail.com](mailto:davekeeling1@googlemail.com)

**TREASURER:** Tom Beamon  
01270 883823  
[tom.beamon@me.com](mailto:tom.beamon@me.com)

**EDITOR:** Rev John Keeling  
01782 771288  
[revjohnkeeling@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:revjohnkeeling@hotmail.co.uk)

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: SUN JULY 1**