

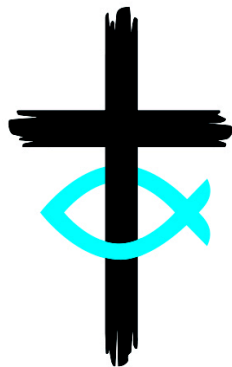
**ALSAGER UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH**

Brookhouse Road

Alsager

ST7 2PA

AURC NEWS
DEC 18 – FEB 19



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

MINISTER'S LETTER:

Dear Friends,

Since I came into the ministry – 12 years ago now – I've been determined to start my day with a period of quiet devotion. It should be easy to do, shouldn't it? It is a time I value; a time to read, to study the Bible, to pray and especially to lay before God the tasks, decisions and opportunities of the day ahead. For these reasons and others, I find that starting the day with a time of devotion is both very useful and very important to me. However, there is often a temptation (particularly when I know the day ahead is likely to be a busy one) to omit this time and plunge straight into the agenda for the day. Every minute of the day seems precious and should therefore be used to produce something visible, an Email, a letter or agenda, or do something "practical", a pastoral visit, assembly or meeting...there is always something to do, as we all know.

In contrast, quiet prayer and reflection doesn't seem to tick any of the boxes on the 'to do' list. Sometimes I can even feel a bit guilty taking time for 'just' reflecting and reading and prayer, instead of getting on with things. I expect we have all felt like that sometimes. But strangely maybe the day seems to flow better, be less hurried and yet often more productive when I give time to devotion, study and reflection, not just at the start of the day but at regular intervals throughout each day. A pattern to daily life is important to Celtic spirituality, which I have encountered on Iona when I have spent time there.

Of course, as Jesus often did, it is possible and desirable to pray within the busyness of the day's

activity. But, as Luke in particular reminds us, Jesus often took himself to one side to talk with the Father. Each of us is different and the shape of our days will also be different, but developing a pattern to the day which places an emphasis on finding regular times when we may lay before God what has been and what is to come, can help sustain us and remind us that God is with us in everything we do and that we should as Paul encourages us:

'In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:6-7 NRSV).

December and January in particular are busy months in the year with seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany and, of course, the New Year all following each other rapidly. There are many preparations to make and much to do. The days seem to flash by all too quickly and it can be tempting to just keep going in order to get everything done. But I would really urge you to take time during each day to stop, be still and turn to God. Reflect on what we are remembering, the journey toward Christmas, the birth, the journey of the Magi and the flight to Egypt. Christmas itself will be joyous for some but stressful, unaffordable and lonely for all too many.

So please take time to read and reflect on the Christmas story, follow the journeys of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the Magi and reflect on their significance and meaning for us today.

Your friend and minister
Murray

CONTINUING TO STUDY THE BIBLE INTO 2019:

Bible Exploration continues to take place every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 2.30pm at Alsager and 7.30pm at Congleton. You are welcome to come to either if you wish as we tend to look at the same material.

We will though take a break during December and early January and resume on the 23 Jan 2019.

Going into future we will continue to explore the Bible and passages that can help us to focus on and develop the Holy Habits outlined in Acts 2:42-47 although there will also be occasions when we will try something completely different.

At the moment we are coming towards the end of our current focus on the Holy Habit of 'Fellowship' and the next major theme will be that of 'Prayer'.

This can be something that for a variety of reasons frightens people, and one of the aims of our explorations will be to ease and dispel some of those fears and give everyone confidence in why and how they pray. So why not come and join us, you would be most welcome.

Murray

<p>THANK YOU for your gift (£110.00) towards the work and mission of Our Daily Bread Ministries. We are so encouraged by all the support of our friends and readers...and it is only through your support that we can continue to come alongside others through our resources...OUR DAILY BREAD MINISTRIES.</p>

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR CHRISTMAS GATHERING:

Just before last Christmas I came across these questions! I leave them with you to use as you wish!! However I am grateful to Margaret Abraham for agreeing to give me her answers:

- 1. What's the best thing that's happened to you since last Christmas?**
Meeting up with a friend I hadn't seen for sixteen years.
- 2. What was your best Christmas ever? Why?**
1985. We had a new baby son who was a month old on Christmas day.
- 3. What's the most meaningful Christmas gift you've ever received?**
A ring given to me by an elderly friend, rather than leave it in her will she wanted to see me wearing it. She died four months later.
- 4. What was the most appreciated Christmas gift you've ever given?**
A holiday in Spain to my sister in law who had never been abroad.
- 5. What was your favorite Christmas tradition as a child?**
A family meal with all the family, dad dressed up as Father Christmas and we all received gifts then played games.
- 6. What is your favourite Christmas tradition now?**
Having our family and friends around us on Christmas day.

7. What do you do to try to keep Christ in Christmas?

Remember all the good things that have happened over the year and thank God for looking after us.

8. Why do you think people started celebrating the birth of Jesus?

The people celebrated the birth of the Messiah who was the Son of God and would rescue His people.

9. Do you think the birth of Jesus deserves such a nearly worldwide celebration?

Yes I do but I think Christmas has become too commercial.

10. Why do you think Jesus came to earth?

To save His people.

Thanks Margaret

THANK YOU:

I would like to express my grateful thanks to everyone at Church for their get well messages, cards, visits and prayers during my recent hospitalisation.

Your support is much appreciated.

Gordon

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Tues Jan 15 Church Meeting 7.15pm

Please make every to attend.

SOCIAL GROUP:

The Social Group, namely, Jacquie, Margaret, Chris W., Philip, Ian, Audrey, Marie, Pat, Ria, Kathleen and Lynne have put together a few events for your enjoyment.

We really look forward to seeing you at any or all of these events which have been put together for you, our church family, your friends and your family too if they would like to join us

Do you have any ideas for future events/get-togethers? Please talk to us about what you like and let's see if we can take your suggestions forward.

Christmas Party

Saturday December 15 at 2.30pm



Tickets £5

including seasonal refreshments and festive fun!

COMING IN 2019:

Jan	19	2.30pm	Beetle Drive £2.50
Feb	16	2.30pm	Film: FREE admission
Mar	17	4.30pm	Café Jam: FREE admission
June	15	2.30pm	Strawberry Tea

DEVOTIONS:

An affirmation of faith written by two 14 year old boys:

We believe in God,
who made the sun and the sky, the stars and the sea
who calls us to live responsibly.

We believe in Jesus Christ
who became human
who healed the sick
who talked to children
who made friends with sinners.
He burned brightly and offended many.
His journey was one of life and death and
resurrection.
His life continues to shine in the darkness.

We believe in the Holy Spirit
who inspires the scriptures
and whose breath we breathe.

We believe that God calls us to be a community
committed to one another
offering a welcome to everyone
old and young
rich and poor
strong and weak.

We believe that God calls us to be
peacemakers
workers for justice

brothers and sisters
a light for our world.
Amen.

The Iona Community

Thanks to Jill Ashmore

Sight and insight: a litany
(based on Mark 10:46-52)

Wounded healer:
For the times we have ignored you
and passed you by
'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

For the times we have stood
in the way of your healing
and tried to keep your grace to ourselves
'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

For the times we have stepped back
afraid to share your words of peace and love
and let fear stifle the gospel
'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.'

Brother Christ, you embrace us in love and mercy
your voice whispers in our hearts
'What do you want me to do for you?'

Teacher, let us see again.
Open our eyes to God's kingdom.
Let us hear your voice, gently spoken:
'Go; your faith has made you well.'

We are called to go, to movement
We are called to faith, to trust
We are made well, made whole
Let us respond, let us invite,
for to us all Christ says
'Follow me!'

David Coaker (URC Prayer Handbook 2018)

**YOU MIGHT THINK YOU DON'T MATTER IN THIS
IN THIS WORLD:**

“You might think you don't matter in this world, but because of you someone has a favourite mug to drink their tea out of each morning that you bought them. Someone hears a song on the radio and it reminds them of you. Someone has read a book you recommended to them and gotten lost in it's pages. Someone's remembered a joke you told them and smiled to themselves on the bus. Someone's tried on a top and felt beautiful because you complimented them on it. Someone has a memory that makes them grin that involves you. Someone now likes themselves that little bit more because you made a passing comment that made them feel good. Never think that you don't have an impact, your fingerprints can't be wiped away from the little marks of kindness that you've left behind.”

(The Minds Journal)

PS Helping one person might not change the whole world but it could change the world for one person.
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FABRIC GROUP REPORT:

Since the Church Meeting gave approval to the Phase Three plan for the improvements to the rear part of the building a more detailed plan has been prepared and a copy is on the notice board in the hall. We are now preparing a specification of the works to be done so that estimates of the costs involved can be assessed. We will then be able to seek grants from various sources to hopefully enable us to commence the work.

At our recent meeting we also discussed a new notice board for the front of the church and details are now being finalised. Quotations will then be sought with a view to ordering it as soon as possible. We are also seeking advice and costs for the extension of the sound system to allow us to record Services and events onto a CD which will then be available for those who are unable to attend.

Other matters from our last meeting include asking our electrical contractor to carry out the testing of all the electrical equipment and plugs in the premises, which is now an annual requirement. We are also arranging for a number of small repairs to be carried out. The piano in the hall will shortly be replaced as agreed at the last church meeting.

MUM TO CHILD:	How was your first day at school? Did it go well?
CHILD:	Don't think so. I have to go back again tomorrow!

WORSHIP AT ALSAGER URC:

December

- | | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 | 10.30am | Gift Service Rev Les Sanderson |
| 9 | 10.30am | Morning Worship
Rev Murray George |
| 16 | 10.30am | Crib Service
Rev Murray George |
| 23 | 10.30am | Carol Service
Rev Murray George |
| 25 | 10.00am | Christmas Day Worship Ian White |
| 30 | 10.30am | Ecumenical Worship at St Mary's |

January 2019

- | | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 6 | 10.30am | Holy Communion
Rev Murray George |
| 13 | 10.30am | Morning Worship Carol Booth |
| 20 | 10.30am | Morning Worship
Rev David Hamblin |
| | 6.30pm | Ecumenical Worship at St Gabriel's |

27 10.30am Morning Worship
Rev Murray George

February

3 10.30am Holy Communion
Rev Dr Marcus Griffiths

10 10.30am Morning Worship
Rev Andrew Lindley

17 10.30am Morning Worship Joseph Pettit

6.30pm Ecumenical Worship
Rev Murray George

24 10.30am Morning Worship
Rev Murray George

March

3 10.30am Holy Communion
Rev Murray George

6 12.30pm Ash Wednesday Service
Rev Murray George

TUESDAY LUNCHTIME WORSHIP:

Dec 4, Feb 5 & Mar 4

Service starts at **12.00noon**, lasts about 35mins and
is followed by lunch at approx 12.40pm

RECENT VISIT TO NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM AT ALREWAS:

The Townswomen's Guild recently arranged a visit to the above to coincide with the placing of a memorial to all the ladies of T.G. who died during the war.

We were given a very warm welcome on the coach by one of the many volunteers who informed us that a Service of Remembrance would take in the Chapel at 11.00am.

There were 380 exhibits and the area covered 150 acres which was once a sand quarry and this was equal to 90 football pitches. Leonard Cheshire along with John Major who was Prime Minister at the time managed to secure the land for a peppercorn rent of £1.00 per annum and the Arboretum was opened in 2001.

The running costs exceed £4000 each day and these are met by generous donations with no help from any other source.

All the armed services are represented and we were able to see most of them as we had hired a buggy which enabled us to have a very close view. Of course the main memorial was the stone walls which included all those who had died in the two world wars. These were so arranged that at eleven o'clock when the sun was out in between the walls a shaft of sunlight spread over them. We were informed that the walls were the same diameter as the dome of St Paul's Cathedral.

During August – November they will be commemorating 100 years since the end of the First

World War as well as 100 years since the formation of the Royal Air Force.

In the Chapel there were four large trunks of wood holding up the roof and each one had the carved face of one of the disciples, the other eight being outside.

Admission is free and I urge anyone to visit. They are open daily and children are welcome.

Thanks to Barbara Hurst

TEN LITTLE CHRISTIANS:

Ten little Christians went to Church when fine,
But it started raining, then there were nine.

Nine little Christians stayed up very late,
One overslept himself, then there were eight.

Eight little Christians on the road to heaven,
One joined a rambling club, then there were seven.

Seven little Christians hear of Sunday "flicks",
One thought he'd like to go, then there were six.

Six little Christians kept the faith alive,
One bought a TV, and then there were five.

Five little Christians seemed loyal to the core,
The Minister upset one, and then there were four.

Four little Christians argued heatedly,
Over forms of worship, and then there were three.

Three little Christians sang the Service through,
Got a hymn they didn't know, then there were two.

Two little Christians disputed who should run,
The next harvest social, then there was one.

One faithful Christian, knowing what to do,
Got a friend to come to Church, then there were two.

Two sincere Christians each brought in one more,
So their numbers doubled, then there were four.

Four sturdy Christians simply couldn't wait,
Til they found four others, and then there were eight.

Eight eager Christians searching round for souls,
Praying, working, witnessing, drew others in by
shoals.

Shoals and shoals at every Service, cramming every
pew,

O God please supply this grace and zeal in my own
Church too.

Thanks to Jill Ashmore

TEACHER: How old is your father?

KID: He is 6 years old.

TEACHER: What? How is that possible?

KID: He only became a father when I
was born.

(Logic!! Children are quick and always speak their
minds.)

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS ANAGRAMS:

COUNTRIES:

- 1 AUSTRALIA
- 2 BELGIUM
- 3 SCOTLAND
- 4 GERMANY
- 5 ICELAND
- 6 NETHERLANDS
- 7 NORWAY
- 8 SPAIN
- 9 ARGENTINA
- 10 SWITZERLAND

RIVERS:

- 1 EUPHRATES
- 2 LIMPOPO
- 3 TIGRIS
- 4 NILE
- 5 YANGTZE
- 6 TIBER
- 7 THAMES
- 8 DANUBE
- 9 MISSOURI
- 10 RIO GRANDE

Weave a silence, O Lord, onto our lips, a silence into our minds and a silence within our hearts. Close our ears to distraction, our eyes to illusion and our heart to temptation, and fill our lives with the glory of your presence. Amen. Based on a trad Celtic Prayer)

FIND THE FAMILY PRESENTS ANAGRAMS:
(ANSWERS NEXT TIME)

- | | | |
|----|----------------|---------|
| 1 | FEE RUMP | 7 |
| 2 | NITRATES | 5, 3 |
| 3 | JAW RESET | 5, 3 |
| 4 | RANGE SIR | 3, 5 |
| 5 | CAGE MIST | 5, 3 |
| 6 | BY EX MOON | 5, 3 |
| 7 | A BARD TROD | 4, 5 |
| 8 | BEADED TRY | 5, 4 |
| 9 | A BROAD GEM | 5, 4 |
| 10 | WARS TWITCH | 5, 5 |
| 11 | FOB TOKES SO | 3, 2, 5 |
| 12 | BALED BROIL | 6, 4 |
| 13 | FARM HOOPED | 4, 6 |
| 14 | SHOULD LOSE | 5, 5 |
| 15 | WEB FOOT INLET | 6, 2, 4 |

16	EMBOSS FIX LOFT	3, 3, 2, 5
17	BIONIC TUFTS IS	3, 2, 8
18	CHALICE REVERTS	8, 6
19	PROMPT OUT PLACE	6, 8
20	COBALT CHOOSE FOX	3, 2, 10

An old Native American tale: An old man tells his granddaughter he has two warring dogs in his soul. One represents hate and fear, the other love and kindness. "Which one wins?" the little girl asks. "The one I feed," the old man replies.
(Friendship Book 2018, Oct 27)

I relayed a comment from a friend that sums up the foundational truth of the season (ie Christmas) well: "The thing that keeps my stress levels down most is to keep remembering that no matter what we do – or don't do Christ still comes. Emmanuel is still with us. Even if we did NOTHING, Christmas would still be Christmas."
(Finding Myself in Britain Amy Boucher Pye p80)

"We all have our time machines. Some take us back, they're called memories. Some take us forward, they're called dreams."
(Quote by Jeremy Irons in Friendship Book 2016, November 1)

REGULAR ACTIVITIES:

Mondays:

SOUP/SALAD & SING:

From 1.00pm (weekly in Church):

A light lunch followed by a good sing, hopefully something for everyone, ending with tea and cake with good fellowship.

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

Wednesdays:

BIBLE EXPLORATION:

From 2.30-3.30pm (2nd Wednesday in the Hall)

Next meetings:

Jan 23

Feb 13 and 27

Mar 13 (Lent Course begins)

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

Thursdays:

THURSDAY AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP:

Since we returned from the summer recess the latest programme of speakers and events have proven very popular with our members and visitors.

We celebrated HARVEST and reviewed the past year's activities and learned that we had donated £600 to good causes over the year and made a further contribution of £300 to the Church refurbishment fund.

We enjoyed an excellent luncheon prepared and served by Lynne and Ria and heard about the Railway Children Charity from David Maidment OBE, with our latest speaker, Theresa Longhurst telling of the history and future of the Guiding Movement.

At the time of going to press we are eagerly awaiting a talk from Wesley Place Minister Rev. Rob Hilton, finishing our year off with the Annual Christmas Dinner on December 6 followed by carols in the Church. The meal must be pre-booked, though we offer an invitation to everyone to join us at 2.30pm for our Carol Service.

We will then have a Christmas break until 2.30pm on January 10 2019 when a new programme will be issued.

Contacts: Philip/Lynne Eardley 01270 877861

Fridays:

CARRY ON DANCING!

This relatively new group has gradually established itself and from 10.00am on Friday mornings we begin gentle exercises with our teacher Valerie. She explains and demonstrates movements and steps using a wide genre of music, a huge variety of props and we are now even getting some of the dance steps in the right order!

We are amazed at how much is really achieved each time, and most of all we exercise our laughter lines and chuckle muscles constantly!

Contact: Lynne Eardley 01270877861/Valerie 07817 172052

Saturdays:**COFFEE and CHAT:**

The first Saturday of every month is an opportunity for fellowship and refreshments at our Coffee & Chat sessions in the church hall from 10.00am–12.00noon. There is always a sales table and handmade cards on sale with different offerings every month.

Forthcoming Hosts:

Dec 1 Bob & Ria
Jan 5 Kathleen & Philip
Feb 2 Doreen & Barbara
Mar 2 Audrey & Marie

If you are unable too fulfil your duty, Tom has offered to help, so please approach him directly on 01270 883823.

Thank you ALL for your support.

Contact: Philip Eardley 01270 877861

BIRTHDAYS:**December**

6 Marion Rowbotham
7 Karen George
15 Norma Barnes
19 Eileen Walker
22 Diane Owen

January

2 Lynne Eardley
5 Margaret Abraham
20 Barbara Hurst
 Kath Selbourne
31 Amy Coe

February

18 Phillip Eardley
23 Gilbert Band

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU ALL

AND FOR 2019:

Happy New Year!

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



AULD LANG SYNE

BABY
BALL
BALLOONS
CALENDAR
CELEBRATION
CLOCK
CONFETTE
COUNTDOWN
DANCING
DECEMBER

EVE

FATHER TIME
FIRECRACKER
FIRST
GAMES
HAPPY
HAT
HOURGLASS
JANUARY
KISS
MIDNIGHT

MUSIC

NOISE MAKER
PARTY
RESOLUTION
SPARKLER
STREAMER
TIMES SQUARE
TRADITION
VOW
YEAR



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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: SUN JAN 27