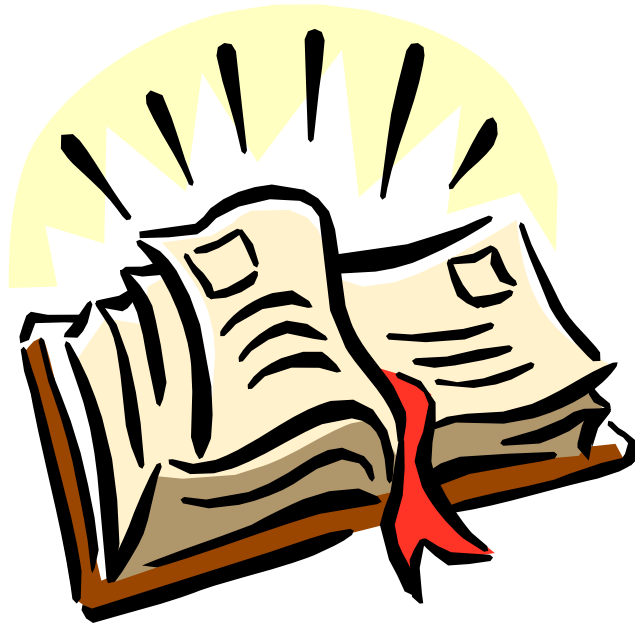


CONTACT MAY 2011

MAGAZINE OF PRESTBURY METHODIST CHURCH
MINISTER: REV. ANDREW HALSTEAD TEL 01625 424361



**Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.**

Psalm 119 v. 105

THE MINISTER'S LETTER

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Dear Friends

Taking Chances

It's not many weeks ago that we were celebrating Christmas - a time when God took a chance on us. God stepped out of a different dimension and became real in our lives. God walked the earth as Jesus Christ. God did this out of a desire to be in relationship with us, he took a chance on us - hoping that we would respond in a positive way.

We now find ourselves in the Easter Season - the time between Easter Sunday and Pentecost. We have followed the twists and turns of a story - and a relationship - full of surprises. Towards the end, God in Jesus is rejected and on Good Friday is put to death. We think it's the end but it isn't. Instead God raises Jesus to life, and in doing so points out to us all that with God, death is not the end.

So this Easter Season is a time of great celebration. It marks new life and new hope. It brings a purpose to our lives.

It is also a time that offers us a choice - to believe, or not. A little over two thousand years ago, God took a step of faith towards us. Every Christmas we celebrate God doing it again. But every Easter, we are challenged to take a leap of faith back towards God - to believe in resurrection, to live a new life in Jesus Christ. It's a challenge that we can choose whether or not to take, an invitation we can either accept or decline. And if we say yes then a world of new possibilities and new opportunities opens up before us.

Happy Easter. David

PS - Andy has now started his sabbatical and will be back in August - with, I'm sure, lots of new experiences to share with you. In the meantime, I'll be providing cover for any urgent needs as they arise. I'm also planned to lead services at Prestbury more frequently than usual so that our paths will cross more often.

PRESTBURY NEWS

Beta Group will meet on **Wednesday 4th May** (note the date) at 7.00pm The topic is "South American Street Children"

Craft Group will meet at 2.00pm on Monday 16th May.

The Service at Beaumont will be held on Tuesday 31st May at 11.00 am All welcome to join us.

Rambling Group meets at 10.00am outside Church every Thursday . Newcomers welcome, just turn up ! Afterwards we meet at the Admiral Rodney for lunch.

Prayer Group we are meeting fortnightly at 2.00pm on Tuesdays - 3rd May and 17th May. Do join us for this very special time of prayer followed by refreshments.



Network Circuit Easter Offering Service

6.30pm on Sunday 8th May at Bollington Methodist Church.
This is preceded by a bring and share tea.

Copy Date for June's Contact is 15th May.

Rev Andy's Sabbatical Leave 1st May - 31st July. We remember Andy and pray that God will richly bless him and that this 'time out' will be a special time for him of refreshment and renewal.

Ploughman's Lunch at Macclesfield Methodist Church 12noon - 1.30pm on 14th May. Please try to come to this event .
Proceeds for Home and World Missions

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

One-man play "Impossible God" by Mark Topping Saturday 18th June at 7.30pm at Langley Methodist Church. An event not to be missed.

Martyn Donaldson Music Trust. On Saturday 21st May The American organist Carlo Curley is playing at Macclesfield Methodist Church. See notice in the foyer.

St Patrick's Breastplate

Christ as a light
I illumine and guide me
Christ as a shield
O'ershadow me
Christ under me
Christ over me
Christ beside me
On my left and my right
This day be within and without me
Lowly and meek yet All-powerful
Be in the heart
Of each to whom I speak
In the mouth of each
Who speaks unto me
This day be within and Without me
Lowly and meek yet All-powerful
Christ as a light
Christ as a shield
Christ beside me
On my left and my right.
Amen

Rev Andy will be saying this prayer every morning whilst he is staying in the Northumbrian community as it is part of their morning devotions.

A WEEKEND AWAY

Recently a group from Broken Cross and a few from Prestbury enjoyed a weekend away at Abbot Hall Hotel, Grange-over-Sands This was obviously a great success . Here are some of the comments from those who attended:-

A wonderful balance of fun, food and fellowship, time to be thoughtful, time to be quiet and time to talk together.

A great break from the constant routine of life and work with lots of laughs and great times of worship. The theme was pretty awesome too.

A wonderful weekend off with friends. Plenty of fellowship and food. Thoroughly enjoyable. Feel renewed and recharged.

So it's happening again

A date for your diary Abbot Hall 2012

23rd - 25th March Approx £130 for 2 nights

accommodation, 7 substantial meals, morning and afternoon tea and coffee, swimming pool. Transport can be arranged.

I'm sure more will go from Prestbury next year!



~~~~~

God still speaks to those  
who take time to listen

## The Bible in our Community

I saw a Bible in a charity shop the other day. It was a thick-as-a-brick Family Bible, a bargain at only £4.50. It was in immaculate condition with each page corner still as chiselled and gold-edged as the day it was printed. No sticky fingers had sullied these pages. No disrespectful hand had broken its spine.

But oh dear, it was a tragic sight.

That book had never had verses highlighted, Post-it notes stuck in its margins or dates pencilled alongside passages in it. It hadn't been opened. It hadn't been read! It was a parable in miniature: was that Bible better kept safe as a collector's item, or brought into the hurly-burly of life to risk being creased or battered?

Is God's word supposed to be kept untouched by the grubbiness of daily life or, like the Word himself, should it be part of our everyday existence, working in our communities like yeast in dough? Jesus wasn't afraid to risk mixing with people with infectious diseases and infectious lifestyles; he knew he could bring only healing and wholeness. His word, surely, is also meant to bring healing and wholeness, not kept on a shelf? *CNS*

### **Scripture is inspired and equips us**

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3 v16-18



## Sharing God's Love Week- end



The Planning group has continued to meet since the Lay Witness Week-End at the beginning of April, and here is an update of what has been going on as a result of our time together with the visiting team.

You will remember that during the week-end people were asked about their hopes and expectations ~ both on a personal level, and for the Church, and that there was also a response form at the end of the week-end. You will have seen the many comments in last month's Contact ~ and how so very deeply many people were touched by the events of the week-end. We pray that, as a Christian community, we will be able to build on this as we progress together on our Christian journeys.

A number of ideas and wishes emerged from people's feed-back. These included ~ youth club ~ a prayer group ~ more outreach ~ house/fellowship groups ~ men's group ~ youth Alpha ~ more modern music ~ more 'attractive' services ~ a singing group ~ young people more involved in services ~ more times like this (ie time spend together - worship/meals/social events/quizzes).....

The planning group will continue to meet....and plan....but has decided to focus initially on three activities, which are a Prayer Group, House Groups, and a Youth Alpha Group.

Here are the details for you...

**Prayer Group** ~ this has already started and meets on alternate Tuesdays. Details are earlier in this edition of Contact.

**House Groups** ~ A follow-up questionnaire was done to discover the extent of interest; about twenty people have shown interest. The responses indicated that there should be two groups; a daytime one and an evening one. Whilst this has been developing, this year's daytime Alpha Course has come to an end and that group is very keen to continue to meet during the day. The daytime group is being planned - probably to meet on Thursdays, initially fortnightly. Tentatively we are proposing to start properly on Thursday June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:30. Before then we need to consult with those who have expressed interest as to their exact preference for timing and also about venue (in people's houses or at chapel). The idea we have is that it might be possible for any member who wishes to bring some sandwiches to share lunch say at 12:30. Similarly there is interest in an evening group meeting on a fortnightly basis. Plans are still being made, but we anticipate will be based on material provided by the Lay Witness Movement. This is an exciting new chapter for our church, thanks to the Weekend and to Alpha. There is something very different about meeting in small groups as well as worshipping all together in chapel; it allows us to learn ways of talking about our faith and being able to ask "stupid questions" that we rapidly discover everyone else wanted to ask but aren't. When the groups begin to meet they will doubtless adjust their frequency and arrangements to suit those who are involved. The most important thing is that we begin to meet.

**Youth Alpha** ~ Andy is leading the planning, and it is extended to the circuit. The course will start in September, and invitations are already going out.

*Please check with Pews News as plans develop, or speak to any of the planning team if you have any comments*

A little lad asked his Sunday School teacher if the Eastern shepherds had dogs. His teacher said she would try to find out for the next Sunday. She was forestalled by the little fellow, who met his teacher later and said! " I know they had dogs, for the shepherd who wrote 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm had two and I even know their names, Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" .



**Directions:** The Rev Billy Graham tells the story of the time when he arrived in a small town to preach. Wanting to post a letter, he asked a small boy where the Post Office was. When the boy told him ,Graham thanked him and said "I f you come to Church this evening, you can hear me telling how to get to heaven". The boy replied "I don't think I'll bother, you don't even know your way to the Post Office"

~~~~~

Political Correctness for Youth

Your bedroom isn't cluttered, it's just "Passage restrictive".

These days, a student isn't lazy. They're "energetically declined".

You don't talk a lot. You're just "abundantly verbal".

You weren't passing notes in class. You were "participating in the discreet exchange of penned meditations".

It's not called gossip anymore. It's "the speedy transmission of near-factual information".

From A Barrel of Fun, J John and Mark Stibbe,

God's Whisper to me

God whispered in my ear one day
And said how could it be
I shrugged and turned away and said
"No way, you can't mean me!"

Next time it wasn't a whisper
He spoke quite loud and clear
He had a job for me to do
He said "Have faith, don't fear".

So I took the challenge offered
But how should I begin?
This task was much too big for me
I had to trust in Him.

When the problems overwhelmed me
And I couldn't see my way
I'd put my faith and hope in Him
Fall on my knees and pray.

And my God, he never failed me
Through good days and through bad
He filled me with a courage
I never knew I had.

So if you feel God calling you
Don't doubt and answer "no"
He knows the plans he has for you
Step out in faith.....and go!

By Mollie Sharpe, Parish Pump

COFFEE MORNING & BRING and BUY



10.00am-12.00noon in the Village Hall

Saturday, 28th May

for the work of the Leprosy Mission

. There will be the usual stalls ~ home made cakes, greeting cards, raffle, bric-a-brac, books etc.

COME & BRING YOUR FRIENDS

Coffee Morning on 26th March raised £450.72 for Overseas Missions. Thanks to all who helped and supported.

The Methodist Church in Britain has sent a solidarity grant of £20,000 from the World Mission Fund to the Methodist Church New Zealand.

Social Events

Faith Lunch, we meet at 12.30 on Monday 9th May

Trips to-

National Memorial Arboretum - 16th May Meet at 8.00am at Church. - £27.50

Lunch at Buxton - 20th June

Oops. My mouth doesn't have a backspace key.

SHOPPING LIST

I've got a shopping list of some items all of us need.

The first thing I'd like to do is exchange some 'self righteousness'. I picked up the other day for some 'humility', which they say is a lot less expensive and wears much better.



I saw that one store was advertising 'thank you' sale. After looking into it, I realized that my 'thank you' supply was very inadequate. Someone showed me some pretty samples of 'peace' the other day they picked up right before Christmas last year. Hey, we're in uncertain times, I'm sure that we could all use more 'peace'. I don't know about you, but my inventory of 'peace' is dangerously low.

I'd also like to try to match some 'patience' that my neighbour wears. He seems to always have it on, and he looks fantastic. I'm thinking it might look good on me. I have worn 'patience' before, and worn it well but it always seems to wear out; this time I'll get a big supply.

Maybe I'll try on that little garment 'long suffering', I never thought I wanted to wear. You know, I feel myself coming to it.

And while I'm out, I must not forget to pick up a little 'sense of appreciation', it's been used up, and I don't feel right when I don't have an adequate supply.

Finally, I'll be looking around for some good old-fashioned 'everyday goodness'. It's surprising how quickly one's stock of 'goodness' is depleted.

How about it? Would you like to go shopping with me?

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"
Galatians 5 v22

What is God calling you to do? Now's the time to find out.... Vocations Sunday 15 May

What is your vocation? You may think that you don't have one, that vocations are the sort of thing that only clergy have. But if you think that, you're wrong. God calls each one of us. The question, though, is to what?, *writes Stephen Ferns*

First and foremost, God calls us to change: to become more Christ-like. We are called to live out our lives in response to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of the constant themes in the New Testament is that lives touched by Christ were changed. What is true for the characters of the New Testament is true for us. As we encounter and respond to Christ we cannot help but be changed.

But while we are called to change, we are also called to be more deeply ourselves. God never calls us to be something or someone we're not. God always calls us to what we are capable of becoming. It may be that there are parts of us which are underdeveloped or which rarely see the light of day which need to be allowed to flourish so we can be our true selves.

It may be that we have hidden gifts which need to be discovered or it may be that there is something that we have secretly always wanted to do but have not had the courage or the time to try. Whatever it may be we need to find an outlet which will allow us to feel more excited about life or indeed to feel more alive.

St Irenaeus wrote that 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive'. Through the dual process of becoming more fully ourselves and of becoming more fully Christ-like, the will of God is fulfilled and the glory of God seen. That is what Vocations Sunday is about. You have one life. For God's sake and for your own, live it.

CNS



A HAND FROM THE PAST

The world's oldest surviving complete manuscript of the whole Bible is a book which was made in Northumberland around the year 700. Three copies were made of the Latin Bible, one of which, the Codex Amiatinus, survives today in Florence, Italy.

Imagine all the work with every single word written out with a pen made from a bird's feather sharpened into a quill, written in ink made from oak or holly gall on sheets of vellum. Vellum is made from animal skins and this one book was made from the skin of 500 animals and took seven scribes several thousands of hours to write and decorate. They could only copy manuscripts when the light was good and in winter with no heating the ink might freeze.

If we want a new Bible, or any book, we can just go and buy one for a few pounds. Handwritten, illuminated books by monks were so precious that each book lived in its own special be-jewelled box. Each book was a work of art with brightly coloured pictures and decorated letters.

To give you some idea of just how long it took, why not try copying out one page of the Bible in your best handwriting? See how long it takes you and how many mistakes you make.



And to make it extra special, all the capital letters should be specially decorated with paint and real gold. Here are some to practice on....



Boy: Can you write in the dark?

Dad: Yes, I should think so. Why?

Boy: Would you sign my school report?

Happy 400th Birthday, King James Bible!

On 2nd May it will be exactly 400 years since the King James Version of the Bible was first published. The Authorised Version, as it is also known, has sold more than one billion copies since it was first published in 1611. It is arguable that there has been no more important single publication, as its impact on culture and language over the last 400 years has been huge around the world. Not only has it inspired great art, music and literature, but it has changed lives and shaped whole societies.

God's Word endures forever

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"

Mark 13 v 31

"You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down, and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature". Mahatma Ghandi

Scripture is inspired and thoroughly equips us

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work".

2 Timothy 3 v16-17

Thought For The Month

**Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"
Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me?
How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"**

(John Ch.20 v 28 &29)