

CONTACT

introduces and welcomes
YOU
to

PENWORTHAM

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

The LORD gives strength to his
people; the LORD blesses his
people with peace.
Psalm 29:11 (NIV)



FEBRUARY 2024

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FELLOWSHIP FOREWORD

With Christmas now a fading memory, we move into February and the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. We are no longer in the darkest part of the year and slowly we will begin to enjoy lighter mornings and evenings.

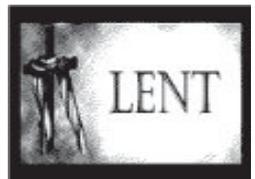
Lent used to be a time when the cupboards were stripped of goods to make pancakes; a last sweet treat before we avoided fatty and sweet foods until Easter. Although many of us are not as strict as that anymore, Lent is still an important season for us as Christians.

Lent is a time where we prepare ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually for Easter. To hear again the news of the risen Lord and restoration of All Things. Many people still choose to give up chocolate or some indulgence (but that is normally more about getting healthy than getting closer to Jesus).

For the last few years, instead of trying to *give* something up, I've tried to *take* something up. Something that might bring me closer to God during this season. Whether that's using a new prayer app or personal bible study or choosing to walk each day whilst listening to an audio reading of the Bible, I've tried to take up a habit that will intentionally help me get closer to God. It doesn't always take the shape of something so 'spiritual'. It may instead mean intentionally giving more of my time or money to those in need. But I tend to find it easier to take something up than give something up but maybe that's just me.

So, what about you? What could you do this Lent season to get closer to God, whether that means giving something up or taking something up? I'd encourage to take these first couple of weeks in February to consider what you might do and then to share that idea and journey with those you feel comfortable with. Let's encourage each other on our own journeys of faith this Lent as we head towards the cross and empty tomb.

Steven



FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Happy New Year to all our Church Family.

It was lovely to see the Church so full over Christmas and thanks to Robert and his helpers for decorating the church.

It was with great sadness we learned of the passing of Ken Rickard and Nigel Lemon; Robert, Gillian A and myself were privileged to share communion with Nigel on the Sunday after the Church Service on the 31st December. We shared communion sang a hymn and said a prayer. Very special time.

Please keep Ken and Nigel's families in your prayers.

Doreen B is still waiting to get a date for her operation, hope she hears something soon, then she can be free of pain.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all the people who could not join us over Christmas through ill health and we wish you all our good wishes for 2024.
(Anne H)



FELLOWSHIP

Proposed Church Youth Worker.

At the last Church Meeting on 12th November 2023, Members agreed that the Elders would proceed further with the proposed appointment of a part-time Children and Youth Worker.

The next stage was apply to the North West Synod for a grant towards the costs which would apply over the next three years. I can confirm that a submission was duly made following the meeting; the grant application being made in the sum of £40,000.

By way of an update, I regret to inform you that the Committee which assesses grant applications is not due to meet until 10th March 2024.

This delay is disappointing, but we shall of course update you as to the outcome in due course.

Kind regards, Robert

IN MEMORIAM

Ken Rickard.

The service in Celebration of Ken's life was held on morning of 18th January at Preston crematorium.

You will remember Ken as a very friendly, polite and interesting man, and this came across very strongly in the tributes paid to him by members of his family about his sense of humour, his devotion to his loved ones, and his many interests. Ken's long career with Post Office communications took him to many places, including Africa where he carried out training for some years. There were several amusing stories, include from Ken's brother about a working holiday they shared in the former Yugoslavia. By mistake, they ventured over the border into Albania and were arrested by the military. However, Ken managed to charm them and spent the night showing them card tricks!

We remember Ken in our prayers and again extend our condolences to his friends and family, including his niece Gillian A, one of our elders.

Rev'd Nigel Lemon.

The service in Celebration of Nigel's life was held in church on the afternoon of 18th January.

Nigel's contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church is immeasurable. In addition to his life as a teacher for over 30 years, Nigel became a local preacher in the Methodist Church in 1958; Commissioned as a Pastor in 1975, and Ordained as a Minister in 1978. Before his retirement in 2002, Nigel held various posts within the URC including Mersey Synod's Director of Training for Non-Stipendiary Ministry and associate Minister at Hoole, Chester. Nigel and Ann moved to Penwortham in 2002, where Nigel was always supportive of our church, and to many others in the district, and was happy to contribute not only by leading worship, but by giving his time and experience, together with his pastoral care - generously provided to so many of us.

Nigel's three children gave moving tributes to his love of all the family, happy times, and also covered Nigel's famous passion for photography and transport, together with his many other interests. We remember Nigel in our prayers and again extend our condolences to Ann, his family and friends.

Robert

COMMUNITY SOCIAL EVENT - FEBRUARY

Anne has arranged for our next Community Social Event in February - details below - thanks to Anne and all her helpers.

COMMUNITY SOCIAL AFTERNOON *at*

PENWORTHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Liverpool Road, Penwortham, PR1 0QB

Monday 26th February 2024 at 2.00pm

*Enjoy a Special presentation
from*

ERIC NEWTON L.T.C.L.

as He with his Clarinet present:

“Life and Times of a Busker”
*an amusing and uplifting tale with
musical accompaniment*



All are Welcome to this Event



*The event will be followed by
Tea, Coffee and Biscuits*

The cost will be £4.00



Do come along and bring a friend

GENERAL NOTICES

**A Concert by the South Ribble Concert Band:
'A Rainbow of Hope for Children of Africa'
Friday February 2nd 7.30pm
Hutton Village Hall, Moor Lane, Hutton PR4 5SE**

With popular light music
Proceeds include donations to
Christian Aid and FOMO
Tickets £8 from Cath Greenlees 01772-613500

**A Recycling and Coffee Morning:
Saturday February 3rd 10am - 12 noon
St Andrew's Church Hall, Longton PR4 5AA.**

Items needed, please:
used stamps - British and foreign;
Currency - foreign and old British;
Jewellery, watches, spectacles;
Sandals, trainers and shoes; Picture postcards;
Used inhalers, clean bras;
Sewing and knitting machines;
Sewing cottons, knitting wool, craft items.
Enquiries: Cath Greenlees 01772-613500

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - 2024



**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER SERVICE - 1st MARCH 2024
Penwortham venue to be advised
(A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)**

The Christian Women of Palestine are calling us to connect with the land from where Jesus came; where he was born, ministered and died – and from where our faith began and is rooted. Despite living in an area of the world where there is ongoing conflict and the future is uncertain, the women of Palestine are sharing with love a reminder that they are there, and they want to give hope to everyone. The theme of the service 2024 'bear with one another in love' seems very appropriate for these women who will not give up witnessing the love of Jesus Christ.

(Anne H)

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

UNICEF MITES SCHEME



Your **Mites (5p/10p)** donations have realised **£ 30.85** for the period 1 Oct to 31 Dec 2023 which will purchase a further **385 Oral Rehydration Sachets** which cost circa 8p each. Just 5 sachets have the potential to save the life of a child suffering from dehydration, a common killer in children who are malnourished or suffering from diseases like cholera or dysentery. Such essential support continues to be vital.

The value of your Mites is sent quarterly to the Mites Scheme at the end of Mar, Jun, Sep and Dec each year and acknowledgement is sent to the Elders by coordinator Keith Garner.

Containers (Green x2) for receipt of your Mites (5p/10p) are located on the front end of the “stage” at the rear of the Worship area.

WATER AID

Also on the stage is a **Glass Jar** for your **“pennies / copper coins”** in support of **Water Aid**.



ST. CATHERINE'S HOSPICE



The **Eco Team** advise that there is now a **white oblong box** on the stage to take any **unwanted “foreign currency (notes and coins can be accepted)”** and it will be taken to **St Catherine's Hospice**.

LOCAL CHARITIES

In the **Foyer** there is a **Wooden Box** for your **UK and International postage stamps**. These are used to generate revenue for local charities



INTERNATIONAL AID TRUST



Do you have any **knitted items or other items for donation** to **International Aid Trust** If so Rita and Joyce would be grateful if these could be brought to church by Sunday 4 February following which they will be transported to the warehouse for loading and onward distribution.

Thank you for all your donations to these worthy causes. They are much appreciated

(Ed.)
(Gillian A)
(Joyce)
(Rita)

ISRAEL & THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The United Reformed Church Moderator, the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, is one of 69 international church leaders who have signed a **powerful and moving letter** to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Debt Justice

Debt Justice is a campaigning organisation dedicated to ending unjust debt and building a fair economy for all, here in the UK and across the world. During November, Debt Justice held an art exhibition titled 'It's the debt that you owe: colonialism, debt and resistance' in Peckham Levels. The artwork explored the impact of debt on countries in the global South, including through the artists' own lived experience of colonial and neo-colonial oppression and debt. For further information about the work of Debt Justice click here: <https://debtjustice.org.uk/>

Prayer in a Time of Conflict

Peaceful God,
We are inundated with distressing news of conflict and war.
We are told to choose sides;
that the good side's violence is justifiable, because the bad side is wrong or evil.

Help us only ever to choose the side of peace. When faced with his own arrest and violent crucifixion, Jesus refused to yield to fear or hatred or violence. Jesus chose the side of peace.

We know from scripture that true peace grows in the fertile soil of justice, mercy, humility, and the equal sharing of your free gifts. Help us set aside the misguided attempt to choose whose violence is better.

God of love, may your true peace be planted anew in us. May your love fall gently upon our communities like morning dew on thirsting crops as we remember that nothing in creation, neither heights nor depths, nor powers, nor principalities, can separate us from the indescribable love of the God.

Amen.



Photo: by Hosny Salah (Gazan Photographer), *Elxabay*

It is unacceptable that millions of people are in desperate need of clean water, adequate food, fuel for electricity, and urgently needed medical supplies... We weep with broken hearts as we hear of hospitals, mosques, churches, and schools damaged and destroyed by this war. In Gaza, there is no safe place. There is no refuge. There is no escape.

Commitment for Life supporters agree that the current violence cannot be decontextualised. Gazans have little hope in the face of seven decades of relentless disenfranchisement. Three-quarters of Gazans are refugees dating back to 1948. Gaza has become an open-air prison, according to *Human Rights Watch*. Illegal settlements expand every day in the West Bank. Illegal Israeli settlers act with impunity, attack Palestinians, and force the indigenous people from their ancestral lands. Nevertheless, none of this should be used to justify the violence used by either Hamas or Israel in pursuit of political objectives.

Commitment for Life has been supporting Christian Aid partners in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory for well over 30 years. It is precisely these kinds of long-term, sustained partnerships that provide concrete examples of how to break out of vicious cycles of violence and retribution. Please continue to pray. Let's not give up hope but continue in faithfulness to trust in God for justice for all.

WORLD PRAYER NEWS

There are many local issues, as well as widely publicised issues in the media, which we are called to pray for. Sometimes it is good to focus also on lesser known issues in our world and on Christian endeavours that we can bring before God too. This page focuses on just a few of the world prayer items on the website of [Global Connections](https://globalconnections.org.uk/)

UK – [Al Massira](#) : Pray for the United Kingdom, and for Al Massira, as many AM groups continue to grow. Friends on a journey to meet the Messiah are gathering in various places across the UK, including people from the Middle East. Some are new to the Family of God and others are pursuing the truth. May they find Him, love Him, and follow Him! Praise God for the AM resources available - currently in 38+ languages. Praise God for the wide-spread use of the AM App being used across the world - and is of great help!

Macedonia-[World Share](#) : Pray for the Evangelical Church in Soulkraft, as they transition to a better location, following the opening of their new premises, with increased capacity for mission workers, and a larger space for church use. Pray also for the Evangelical Church in North Macedonia as their churches work with Muslims, a challenging mission field. Pray for protection and strength in the face of spiritual opposition

Guinea Bissau-[Reach Beyond](#) Radio is popular in Guinea Bissau but their infrastructure is very poor. One month after a radio partner in Guinea Bissau started to pray about increasing the broadcast coverage of their Christian station, a 'Kingdom investor' came out of the blue and asked if they had considered broadcasting into more of the country! Pray as we help the partner to investigate a reliable and cost-effective way to send their signal over large distances to the repeater towers that will be required. Pray for the many unreached people who will hear about Jesus

China-[Chinese Church Support Ministries](#) There is an increasing pressure for churches and Christians to demonstrate total allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party and President Xi Jinping, above any commitment to Jesus Christ and the Bible. Pray for church leaders and individual believers that they will hold firm to the truth of God's Word and in obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray also that they will experience God's protection as they do so.

*above with the permission of Global Connections
<https://globalconnections.org.uk/>*

A REFLECTION

AN AMAZING PROMISE

I will...show you...things, which you do not know.'
Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV

Read this: "Call to me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know' (v. 3 NKJV).

Who said that? The God of the universe! What do you think your chances are of getting through on the phone to a president or prime minister? Zero! Yet regardless of your education, sophistication, ethnic background, or financial status, you can talk to God and He will talk back to you. And He doesn't just promise to answer your prayers but to 'show you great and mighty things, which you do not know'.

Sometimes we say, 'It's the not knowing that scares me.' Companies close and workers get laid off. Routine medical checkups reveal life-threatening challenges. Terrorists threaten our safety, and politicians betray our trust. A little boy prayed, 'Lord, bless Mummy, Daddy, baby, and me. And, Lord, take care of Yourself, because if anything happens to You, we're all sunk!' You say, 'But I'm not sure God has ever spoken to me.'

If you're a Christian, He has spoken to you at least once. And if He will speak to you once, He will speak to you twice. But you have to talk to Him and let Him talk to you through His Word and His indwelling Spirit. Sometimes God waits before He answers you because He is working on both ends of the line. He is working on the thing you prayed about, and He is working to get you ready for it. And sometimes the second thing takes longer than the first

'O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

*above with permission United Christian Broadcasters, Westport Road,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST64JF. and taken from UCB 'Word for Today'
-free copies are available for the UK at this address or
online at www.ucb.co.uk/read*

(Margaret E)

THANK YOU

Margaret & Alan are very grateful to **Brenda and Jack** -as are the Elders - for volunteering their services in 2023 in order to release them from some activities for a while. **Brenda** has provided us all with "Contact" over the past year which has been most useful in maintaining communication within the fellowship and beyond; whilst **Jack** has been overseeing upkeep of our buildings and the grounds maintenance during 2023.

So a big **THANK YOU** to **Brenda & Jack** and all those who have supported them in their endeavours.

CARTOON

With permission Tim Walburg



"He's a novice at adult baptism."

"CONTACT" PUBLICATION

The next "CONTACT" will be the March issue.

It is also published on our website, minus any personal or pastoral information when the Editor is advised that it is not for general publication.

See : <https://penworthamurc.org.uk/>

If you have anything you would like to contribute to "Contact", it will be most welcome. Either send it by e-mail to purcmagweb@talktalk.net ; ring Alan Edward on 01772 740129 or deliver to 27 Hazel Close

Thank you for your contributions

Next submission date will be Sunday 18 February 2024.

Next issue date will be Sunday 28 February 2024