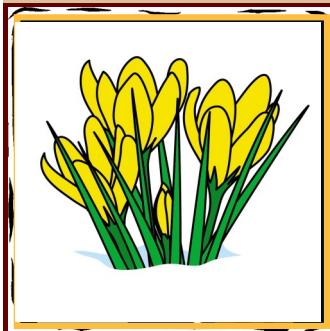


Easter 2023



Greetings

It has been a while since our last Newsletter. This has been partly because we did not have so much news to share. Or so I thought. But when I look back to the date of our last edition, in fact an awful lot of things have happened.

Although our coffee morning started again last May, it has gathered more and more attendees and over the last couple of months we have added a lunch service which has been so popular that we are extending it into future months.

Although our Sunday services have not yet been restored back to two services each week, we have seen the return of many of the parts of those services which we have missed over the last few years: the Boomerang Sunday School is back with us in each morning service. We

have open worship in the morning service again. We are once again having refreshments after our morning service on a monthly basis. Our evening service too has seen some restoration of normality: the choir was able to lead us in worship at our Harvest and Christmas services and will once again grace our service at Easter. And of course for those special Sundays we have reintroduced a 'drink & a scone' after the close of the service.

Whilst our prayer meeting has been taking place each week for some while now, the Bible Study had not restarted. But in December we embarked on a Bible Study course which proved so popular and successful that we are starting a

new course of study in April.

Now of course, Springtime and Easter is all about renewal and whilst it has been a real blessing to reintroduce so many of the elements of our church life that we lost over the past two or three years. However we must be careful not to slip into thinking that 'we must do it like we always did it'.

There is a lot of merit and comfort in tradition but we have already seen God calling us to make some changes (those lunches for example) and because we responded to that call, we have seen many new faces coming into our church. We have great opportunities to share God's love in our community and this is some-

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Special points of Interest:

- *Easter services*
- *The Dash*
- *Garden tidy*
- *A vicar and a lantern*

thing that I think many of us who attended the recent Bible Study course felt that we were being lead towards. It is wonderful to see that as we step out in faith, even with something as simple as offering a meal, that God

honours us to for taking those steps.

I pray that over the forthcoming months we will see more and more people responding to God's calling both for *us* to maybe do things in a different

way, and to those who join us in fellowship for the first time.

Have a happy Easter and may God bless you

James

Visiting Preachers

As we now alternate morning and evening services from one week to the next, the schedule for our Sunday services for the next few months looks like this below. The only exception is Easter Sunday when we will have both a morning and evening service. As always, morning services will start at 10:45 and evenings will commence at 6:00.

April

2nd am — Roger Stone

9th am — Ray Peers*
9th pm—James Tobiasen
16th pm —Christine Ormerod*
23rd am— to be confirmed
30th pm—Phil McDermott

May

7th am—Steve Murphy
14th pm—Denise Helsby*
21st am—Chris Mayes*
28th pm— Dorothy Kendrick

June

4th am—Tracey Reeve
11th pm—Lester Atherton*
18th am— David Okell*
25th am—Lester Atherton

Services marked * indicate sacramental services

What's On

Our current schedule of mid-week meetings and other activities is listed below. Although this is the view at the time of writing, please pay attention to the weekly notices for any changes or further updates:

Bible Study—this will resume in April, soon after Easter and will be on a Tuesday evening, The course of open study will

be based on a series called 'Discipleship Explored'.

The first study will be on Tuesday 18th April at 7:30pm. If you would like to join the Bible Study group or even just follow the course at home in your own time, please let us know because we would like to order a handbook for each person who will follow the studies. There is a list on the

noticeboard in the porch of the church building, simply add your name to that list by Friday 7th April. We can then guarantee that you will get your own study guide.

Coffee morning & lunch -club— The coffee morning runs on Thursdays from 10am—12noon and is followed by a light lunch from noon until 1:30. It is completely

free though donations are gratefully accepted.

Boomerang (for school-age kids) & crèche (for little ones)—Runs as part of the Sunday

morning service from 10.45 onwards till approximately 12 noon.

This means that the next few occurrences will be on 2nd April, 23rd April, 7th May, 21st May,

4th June and 18th June.

Prayer Meeting—this takes place on a Wednesday evening from 7.30 onwards.

Focus

At this time of year it doesn't take much for us to notice that new life is appearing all around us. Each daffodil, hyacinth or tulip that bursts into flower, each leaf bud or catkin that breaks out into the warming air, each hatchling, each newborn life, older creatures emerging from hibernation... All of them were hidden. Buried as if they were dead in the earth, retreated into the protection of branch and bark to escape Winter's icy grip, entombed in layers of leaves, moss and mud. But now they're springing up, erupting in fresh, green, bold, new life.

They are all a reminder of the resurrection that we celebrate at Easter. The evidence of the resurrection is all around us at this time of year. But as Christians we are interested in THE Resurrection.

Why? Because without the Resurrection, Jesus died on the cross and was buried and that would be the end of the story. Yes, he might have taken on the sins of the world but the sinless perfec-

tion of his life may not have been enough to pay the price for the sins of the world. As a result he could not triumph over that death, the death that is punishment for sin.

But... and it is a glorious caveat... he *was* perfect, and so his life of sinless perfection did not merit death. So on the third day he was able to rise again, to glorious new life. As we sing in one of our favourite hymns, *He triumphed o'er the grave*.

So what does that mean for us?

The Christian writer Anthony De Mello told a story. A woman went into a shop that she had never visited before. Once inside she was astonished to find that God himself was the only person there, behind the counter.

“How may I help you?” asked God.

“Well, said the woman, I’ve never been in here, what do you sell?”

“Almost everything, and it is all free” He replied.

“In that case can I have as much peace, love, for-

giveness and kindness as possible please”

“Ah”, said God, “I must be clear... I only sell the seeds, the rest is up to you...”

It's an interesting story and I think it contains some truth but it is wrong in one key aspect. The rest is most definitely *not* up to us. Jesus, before he departed this earth promised us the Holy Spirit to be our strength and our guide and indeed, Paul tells us that any fruit that we bear is *the Fruit of the Spirit*.

When we seek forgiveness for own sins and accept Him as our Saviour, then we come into newness of life. It is that resurrection life that lay dead and buried in sin. It springs up, nurtured and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The seeds are planted, but by the grace of God, by the love of Jesus, by the indwelling inspiration of the Spirit, we can bring forth that fruit.

This Easter may we all share in that glorious hope of the resurrection, of that experience of the newness of life and the fruit of the Spirit which is the evidence of that new life.

Special Events

Easter—we will have two Easter services. On Good Friday (7th April) Chris Mayes will lead us in worship, with the service starting at 11am.

On Easter Sunday we will have two services—Ray Peers will take the service at 10:45am and James Tobiasen will lead us in worship in the evening at 6:00pm and the choir will also be singing in this service. We will serve refreshments after the evening service.

Garden Tidy-Up—on the morning of Saturday 22nd April, we will have a tidy up of the church grounds. If you can help in anyway - a bit of weeding, pruning, or even just making a brew - you'd be very welcome. Please bring secateurs, trowels, gloves etc.

Drinkies! — tea and coffee will be served (with a few biscuits!) after some of our Sunday morning

services—this is currently scheduled for the services on 2nd April, 7th May, 4th June and 2nd July

Padgate House—we have been invited to lead a short Easter service at Padgate House on Tuesday 4th April. This will be no more than forty-five but is a great opportunity to renew our friendship with the staff and residents there who so enjoyed our visit at Christmas. If you can join us please do so. Meet there at 6:30pm.

Additional Notices

Bags To Church— we will be having our annual collection of unwanted clothes, accessories, curtains, bedding etc. to raise money for church funds. The bags will be available to fill soon . When they are filled simply bring them along to the Sunday School room. The collection date will be June 16th.

Foodbank—our collection currently is for the Warrington Foodbank—pretty much any foodstuff that is still in date and has a long shelf-life will be very welcome—but just in case you need some ideas... tinned fruit, tinned puddings tinned beans, soup, pasta, cream crackers, biscuits, long-life

juice, will all be appreciated.

Congratulations— since our last newsletter we have had an engagement (Stan & Dot), Dot has also been welcomed into full membership of the church. Janet has become a grandmother, Chris and Liz have another grandchild and Ron has another great grandchild. Many congratulations to all of you!

Website—a reminder that our church website is packed with useful information and has an extensive photo gallery. It also has full details on all upcoming events and services so it is always worth checking, for the latest news. It can be found at

www.risleyimc.com

Photocopier—by the time you read this we may have our new photocopier installed in church. This is a much more compact machine than the old one and will 'live' in the vestry. Of course it is for church use but if you make any personal use of the new machine, please do the right thing and pay for your usage—normally print shop copying is done at about 5p per sheet for black and white and 20p for colour. So if you do use it, a simple extra donation to the offering in the Sunday service would be

gratefully received.

Facebook—we now have a facebook group for our church. If you are a facebook user, please follow the group (Risley IM Church), invite your friends to join, and look out for updates of upcoming events.

Walking Day—after last year's reintroduction, Padgate Walking Day is expected to go ahead again this year. This year's walk will be on Saturday 23rd June. The exact details are

not yet confirmed but we will provide those in due course.

Psst! Now.. please don't take this the wrong way but as we get older, some of us get a little more deaf, and as we get a little more deaf we perhaps overcompensate by "whispering" a little louder. Well... the thing is that in our Sunday services, a lot of those "whispers" are becoming so loud that we can hear them as plain as day all over the church. What you might think is a quiet, private little word in

the ear of the person sat next to you is very often being broadcast to the whole congregation. You never know who's listening!

Now it has to be said that sometimes it can be pretty amusing to hear what is being shared but of course for the poor preacher, it can be quite off-putting. So, next time you feel the need to have a quiet word, please consider if it could maybe wait until after the service. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Poetry Corner

The Dash Poem by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on the tombstone
From the beginning...to the end

He noted that first came the date of birth
And the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years

For that dash represents all the time
That they spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved

them
Know what that little line is worth

For it matters not, how much we own,
The cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand

The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
And more often wear a smile,
Remembering this special dash
Might only last a little while

So, when your eulogy is being read
With your life's actions to rehash...
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you spent YOUR dash?

The Final Word

A Lamp Unto Our Path

A country vicar received an invitation to dinner at the grand home of the local squire. The evening went splendidly and the vicar had perhaps a little too much claret but not enough to prevent him walking home. Anticipating that he might be leaving late in the evening, he had taken with him a lantern and when he left he was able to make his way along the dark country lanes safely and securely to get home.

The next morning the vicar was awoken by a knock at the front door. He went to answer the knock only to find a message sent from the squire's house. "Good morning, Reverend, the squire would like to enquire if you would kindly return the parrot and cage in exchange for your lantern".

A Bird in Hand

Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus said "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing" but in Luke's gospel, he is quoted as saying "are not five sparrow sold for two farthings". Some people think that this is an inconsistency but the reality is that even back in Bible

times, buying in bulk got you a cheaper unit price.

Hairy moments

Did you know that Moses wore a wig? Sometimes he went around with Aaron and sometimes he didn't.

Heavenly Bodies

The vicar died and went to heaven. But when he arrived he was told that because he had not always been as faithful and obedient as he should have been that he would have to do a penance for a few weeks.

To his great disappointment he was shackled to an old, toothless hag and was forced to go everywhere with her.

As they wandered around the vicar then saw a recently-deceased bishop that he knew, but he was shackled to an astonishingly attractive young woman.

The vicar immediately stormed over to St.Peter and demanded an explanation: "How come I get chained to this old crone whilst he gets that beauty?"

St.Peter replied curtly: "Mind your own business."

You get on with your punishment and let that poor young woman get on with hers".

Body Talk

When old people say "enjoy them whilst they're young". They're not talking about your children, they're talking about your hips and knees.

All contribution and donations of articles for the Newsletter are very gratefully received

CONTACT DETAILS

RISLEY INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH

Fearnhead Lane
Fearnhead
Warrington
Cheshire
WA2 0BY

Telephone 01925 825956
E-mail risleyimchurch@yahoo.co.uk

Newsletter Contact Details

Editor: James Tobiasen
Telephone 0775 281 0092
E-mail postcardcat@gmail.com

Next Newsletter:

There is no fixed date for the next issue currently but the broad target at this point is to publish sometime during the summer.

Extra! Extra!

I was quite amazed when I checked recently on the statistics relating to our church website. Since it was built and published around two years ago, over seven hundred people have visited the site and between them they have viewed almost two and half thousand different articles, pages etc. I must be clear that these numbers will undoubtedly include some people who have visited on multiple occasions, and many of those thousands of views will be of the same information, but nonetheless this is a really exciting and pleasing result. We have even had people from as far away as South Africa, the U.S.A., Argentina, China and Canada looking at the website. A number of people have also downloaded the online version of our Newsletter which is available on the website too. If someone had told me before I built it that we would have so many people using it, I would probably not have believed them.

Anyway, I'm sharing all of that with you because I wanted to highlight something in particular: one of the most popular pages to view on there is the section called 'Our History' which, perhaps unsurprisingly, relates the story of Risley chapel from its humble beginnings in the farming community around Risley, through the acquisition of the old chapel to the building of our current church in 1910 and then down to more recent times.

I have been thinking for some time now that it would be brilliant if YOU the members and friends of Risley I.M. Church could contribute to this too. I am sure many of you, especially those that have been associated with the church over many decades, will have many great memories of, and unique insights into, what the church (and surrounding area) was like, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years ago. Would you be happy to record that for us? Could you contribute to our history page?

You don't need to be a great writer, you don't need to have been an officer of the church, you don't need to have done anything significant. All we need is your memories – of the Sunday School and Church Services. Of those people who are no longer with us. Of the events of the past. Of what church life was like perhaps during WWII, or even further back. Of how Fearnhead and the surrounding area has changed – what is gone and what has been added. Of the annual church events... May Sermons, Easter, Harvest, Christmas. Of the fellowship groups... Christian Endeavour, IMTAKS and so on. And what of the concerts, the Risley Revellers, the harvest auctions... There are so many things that you will know about which will one day be lost forever if we do not capture them.

So please, if you're able and willing it would be brilliant to have your memories recorded in some way so that we can include them on the website. No matter how short or long it would be fantastic to include them. If you'd like any guidance on how best to this please ask James, but really, all you need to do is write it down. If you would prefer. We can record your story in conversation, again just ask James.

The 'Our History' page is the really the story of the church, but we so often hear it said that the church is not the building, it is the people in it. As interesting as the story of our church organisation is, it is nothing compared to the stories of the people who attend the church. They are YOUR stories Please share them.

If you would like to make a start here are some questions that might help you to get going:

What is your earliest memory of the church?

Who did you come with?

Which people do you remember from that time?

What activities do you remember from then?

Did you come to Sunday School church services or other events or meetings?

Did you take part in or enjoy any particular activities?

Which characters made an impression on you?

Did you have links with any other churches in the area?

Good luck – we will all look forward to reading your story.