



# Autumn 2023

## Greetings

**It has been a peculiar old summer this year hasn't it?** Through most of May and June we had continuous hot sunshine and the plants in my garden were beginning to wilt with the lack of rain. But then more or less as we moved from June to July it started to rain and it hardly stopped for three months. After it had rained pretty much every day for six weeks I was on the verge of ordering I some gopher wood to start building an ark.

But just as we turned into September we had a few outbreaks of sunshine and if the temperatures didn't quite get to where they should have been, at least it stopped raining now and again.

It feels like we'd been living somewhere between the two stories in the Bible where on the one hand Elijah had lived through a pe-

riod when there had been no rain for several years and on the other, where Noah of course had to endure the great flood after that terrifying downpour.

I'm happy to say that we don't have to cope with either of those extremes (most of the time!)

We live in a beautiful world, a wonderful creation but we must be mindful of the fact that it is a world that is liable to 'groan and labour' as Paul describes it in Romans 8. And he compares the painful changes of the world to our own pains in our physical bodies. The world and our bodies are slowly falling apart (as if we needed reminding!). But Paul gives us great hope: "You, however, are not in

the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you... then... the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you".

Wow! That's quite the contrast - from a world and a body that is in decline to a Spirit that gives new life. We sing occasionally

*Breathe on me,  
Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew*

The Spirit of God is waiting and willing to meet with us, to speak to us, to empower us and make us fruitful. And more than anything else, to make us more like our Saviour. The question and the challenge for all of us is simply this: are we willing to take up the invitation?

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### Special points of Interest:

- *The importance of being earnest*
- *Harvest pictures*
- *Christmas Fayre date*
- *Something fishy*

I trust that you will be encouraged to do just that. As we meet together and share in fellowship in all of our various meetings over the next few weeks and months I hope that you will feel closer

to Him and that you will be filled with that newness of life,

On behalf of our church I hope you had an enjoyable summer, and wish you a

blessed autumn—whatever you're doing, don't let the weather get you down! May God bless you

*James*

## Visiting Preachers

**We alternate our morning and evening services from one week to the next, the schedule for our Sunday services for the next few months is listed below. The only exceptions on the 12th November when we will have an extra morning service for Remembrance and 17th December when we will have our carol services.**

**Please note there is also a service on Christmas Day.**

**As always, morning services will start at 10:45**

**and evenings will commence at 6:00.**

### October

**22nd am—Ray Peers  
29th pm—Lester Atherton**

### November

**5th am—Frank Pemberton  
12th am—Chris Mayes  
12th pm—Christine Ormerod \*  
19th am—Ian Hunter \*  
26th pm—David Okell**

### December

**3rd am—Denise Helsby**

**10th pm—Phil McDermott \***

**17th am—Family Carol Service - Chris Mayes**

**17th pm—Candlelit Carol Service—James Tobiasen**

**24th pm - Chris Mayes**

**25th 10:00 am—Christmas Praise**

**31st 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 has now resumed. The study course is called 'Grow

**Your Life With Christ'.** The meeting is on a Tuesday evening at 7:30pm, The study course follow a guide book so if you are unable to attend the meeting but would still like to follow the course, please speak to Lester as there may be spare course books available.

**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 the 22nd October, 5th, 12th and 19th of November, 3rd and 17th December.

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

## Focus

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**When our Connexional President** Dorothy Kendrick came to lead us in worship earlier this summer she mentioned something that is often heard but perhaps rarely understood. So I thought it was worth spending a short amount of time here to share my own thoughts on the matter and, hopefully, encourage you along the way.

The thing that Dorothy mentioned was to “pray earnestly”. But it was not simply something that was mentioned in passing by a visiting preachers, this same things cropped up in our Bible Study course round about the same time.

It is interesting how many times the idea of doing something with earnest or earnestly crops up in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. So what does it mean?

Well I think if you asked most people what they thought was meant if something was described as earnest they would probably think of something that was sincere, worthy and perhaps a little bit dull. “He’s a very earnest sort of chap” is a

back-handed compliment if ever there was one.

And indeed if you look up the dictionary definition of earnest it will provide an explanation that says things like sincere, and with conviction and so on.

So when scripture encourages us to pray earnestly it is of course asking us to pray with sincerity and with conviction. But that is only part of the story because an earnest is also a kind of financial commitment.

In financial terms it is a deposit made as a sign of a commitment to pay a greater amount in the future. And not only that but an earnest is also usually made in order to secure a greater reward in exchange for that financial commitment. It is like a commitment made with the promise of greater reward to come.

So if we think about our prayers in this way, it puts them in a different light. If we pray in earnest, yes we should pray with sincerity and conviction, but we should also pray knowing that we have a greater reward, an increase due to us

for that prayerful commitment.

But the interesting thing about this, I think, is that it puts a whole different perspective on prayer—especially when we think that God is not answering our prayers. Or that perhaps they go unheard. Of course we believe that God hears all of our prayers, both the spoken and silent, but many times when there is no apparent or clear answer, it is easy to think that God has simply ignored them. That he is not interested or perhaps that what we prayed was not part of His will. But if we know that we pray in earnest—with the knowledge that there is a greater reward to be given for that prayer—then perhaps we can be greatly encouraged.

Just consider: we can no longer think that our prayers go unheeded, but instead we can be happy in the knowledge that perhaps God is answering them, rewarding them in a way that is unseen to us, but is perhaps helping someone else, somewhere else. Or perhaps our prayer is contributing to the growth of His kingdom in

ways that we will never hear about. And there is also the possibility that as we pray in earnest, God is accumulating a reward for us in heaven.

We need to be careful here because we cannot earn our salvation, we cannot earn eternal life, we cannot earn God's favour—we became His ONLY because of the death and resurrection of His Son, our Lord Jesus. But if we pray in earnest, in the spirit, then Paul's words sug-

gest - and indeed those of other New Testament writers tell us - that there is a reward for those that love Him. Timothy writes: *there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Our loving God wants to shower us with blessings and gifts and perhaps the

reward for spending time in prayer is the earnest that Paul shares with us, perhaps it is one of those gifts.

It is easy to be happy in our prayer life when we see answers to those prayers, but rather than being despondent or disheartened by prayers that seem to be unanswered, perhaps we should be encouraged and joyful that the prayers that we offer bring their own reward, by God's wonderful grace towards us..

## Special Events

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**Christmas Fayre**—after the great success of last year's event, we will hold a Christmas Fayre on Saturday 25th November. There will be gifts and cakes for sale as well as refreshments so please come along and get into the festive spirit.

**Carol Services**— it might seem a long way away but it's not so far off... on Sunday 17th December we will have our usual two Christmas Carol Services—Family Carols in the morning and the Candlelit Carol Service in the evening.

Please get them into your diary and invite neighbours, friends and family to them. Wouldn't it be great to have the church full for these special occasions?

## Foodbank—A Volunteer's Tale

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I started volunteering at Warrington Foodbank at the end of 2012. After 11 years, I am about to hang up my green Foodbank polo shirt in order to be able to prioritise a new role as Nana to our first Grandchild who will be arriving very soon.

As a church, we have supported the Foodbank with regular giving and

some of our congregation have also volunteered over the years. I thought it might be interesting to share with you some of my observations from the past eleven years both in terms of the needs of the people of Warrington and my experience as a volunteer.

James was working away from home a lot in 2012, Caleb and Geor-

gia were away at university and Saskia was in college, and when I heard about the foodbank starting up in Warrington, I felt like it was the right time to do something new on my day off.

Having worked for the NHS (at that point) for 30 years, as a specialist nurse supporting chil-

dren and young people with additional health needs, visiting families at home and working alongside colleagues in social care and education, I thought I had a pretty good idea of the difficulties that some families face. I soon realised I had no idea at all! In those early days, when we maybe dealt with five guests during a two hour session, it became very clear that emergency financial situations could arise for anyone at anytime. Professional people could suddenly come up against ill health but their circumstances didn't necessarily tick the right boxes for them to receive financial assistance – certainly not enough to live on. Teenagers living rough because their parents had had enough and thrown them out. People who had been confused about an appointment at the local benefits office and were "sanctioned" because they didn't attend at the right time. Being sanctioned often meant that a person or family already struggling had some or all of their benefits stopped for a period of months.

Have you ever imagined how you would survive if you had no money in the bank, no access to credit, no family or friends who were able to help you out, but still had to eat, keep warm, keep a roof over your head, get your children to school, travel, prove you were looking for work and applying for jobs ...online! Because job applications and the like need to be handled on computers these days, many of the people who most need them have no access to a computer except by travelling into town, that could mean a sixteen mile round trip depending on where you live. All of that is merely scratching the surface of the issues that some people are facing.

All of this opened my eyes to a whole new Warrington and it was a Warrington I didn't like much, and I wanted to be a part of an organisation trying to help. People often ask if it upsets me hearing about the impossible situations that people find themselves in.

I think truthfully, the cases that had the biggest impact on me were the ones that were closest to my own situation – the young people who were the same age as my own children with no support from their parents, the nurse who was too ill to work but still had a mortgage to pay etc. I would say I was moved rather than upset and I was thankful, firstly, that that person had found their way to the help on offer at the Foodbank and secondly that the amazing generosity of the people of Warrington enabled us to give not only food but a listening ear and maybe be able to point them in the direction of services or charities that could help them in the longer term.

Not long after I started volunteering at the Foodbank, John Dolan, who was the chairman at the time, asked me if I would be a team leader and so from the start I was involved in overseeing the volunteers who worked during the Tuesday session. A couple of years later, I became a trustee and the safeguarding lead.

Fast forward to 2023 where we are living through a cost of living crisis. Many more people are struggling to put food on the table or to pay for fuel, to kit their children out in school uniforms. As well as continuing to provide emergency food packages, Warrington Foodbank now also runs a school uniform shop where used uniforms can be obtained free of charge, every Christmas, toy vouchers are issued so that every Warrington child can have something to unwrap on Christmas morning. During the covid pandemic, a delivery service was implemented to ensure the most vulnerable people in the town received food, even if they were housebound or if they had covid but had no one who could drop off food for them. Last winter, we ran a winter warmers appeal so that those impacted by high fuel bills could keep warm with winter coats, hot water bottles, hats and gloves. We collected torches too but thankfully the threatened power cuts didn't come. We now collect surplus food from the local supermarkets helping to reduce

food waste and enabling our guests to receive fresh fruit, vegetables and bread in addition to the usual non-perishables. With all of this it is quite normal that within a standard two hour session, we can now regularly deal with forty-fifty guests – an increase of 700-900% from when I first started.

The Trussell Trust's vision is for a UK without the need for Foodbanks. They say this because it's not right that anyone cannot afford their own food. That's why we are working towards a just, compassionate future, where no one should have to use a Foodbank to get by. At Warrington foodbank, schemes have been introduced to help guests to access other community grocery charities where food can be purchased at reduced cost and hopefully reduce the need for free food.

The foodbank is reliant on volunteers – lots of them. There is a handful of paid staff now too. Over the past eleven years I have had the opportunity to meet and work alongside many volunteers. Who even knew that there were so many genuinely kind, selfless people in

our town? At first the majority of volunteers were from churches around the town but as the organisation has expanded, the volunteers have diversified. I have met so many lovely people who make time to help others. I think the nature of volunteering somehow attracts people who are already really busy people and are involved in lots of other interesting things and their experiences and interests all help to bring a richness to the organisation.

Although I am writing as this time of volunteering has come to an end for me, I would just like to encourage anybody who is thinking that their life needs a bit of diversity or they feel like they want to make a difference, or be useful in some way, there are countless opportunities to get involved, whether it be Foodbank, coffee mornings, environmental issues, serving the community, even picking litter, if you have a heart for it, give it a go. You have nothing to lose but an awful lot to gain.

# Harvest

As usual our church looked really beautiful for our harvest thanksgiving services so, as we now that have the ability to print our newsletter in colour, it seems like a great reason to share with you some of the lovely displays that we had around the church. A huge thank you to everyone who brought gifts or helped with the decoration.



## Additional Notices

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**Wanted –Bikes for refugees—** do you know anyone who has an old, adult sized bike that is no longer needed? There is a bike refurbishment scheme which ensures that all bikes that are donated are supplied in a roadworthy state to their new owners. So it doesn't matter if it isn't in working order at the moment. Collection can be arranged if necessary.

If you know of any available bikes, or would simply like to know more, contact Lester (phone number 01925-813620) who has all the details and who can help with arrangements for collection.

**Thanks yous—** we have recently had a number of fund-raising or gift-giving events so a big thank you to anyone who bought tickets, baked, supported, attended, contributed to, provided refreshments for... any of the following: The MacMillan Coffee Morning (over £470 raised for MacMillan), The Walking Day Memories evening (over £200 raised for church funds), Harvest (£155 raised for Room At The Inn plus countless lives benefitting from the harvest food gifts). What a brilliant lot you are!

**Your memories—in our last** Newsletter we asked if you could perhaps write a few (or, even better, many) words to describe your memories of our church and its members, of our village and so on so that we could include them in the church website history pages. Please don't be shy—we have two or three entries in there already so your words would be in great company, and it would be great to add some more. Whatever you do, don't think that your story will be any less important than anyone else's— they will all be really valued and valuable. So please get writing! If you have any questions, please speak with James.

**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.

**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 al-

ways worth checking, for the latest news. It can be found at [www.risleyimc.com](http://www.risleyimc.com) . New articles and updates are being added all the time.

**Photocopier—**our new photocopier has already proved itself to be a really useful addition for our church. You are more than welcome to use it but please, if you make any personal use of the new machine, we'd appreciate it if you could 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 donation (in the small collection box next to the copier) 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.

# The Final Word

## ***Not In Front Of The Children***

The Bishop would visit each parish once a year, and it was presumed that the local Vicar would invite the Bishop for Sunday lunch. At one particular church, after the morning service, the Bishop walked back to the Vicarage with the Vicar and his wife when the Vicar had the great idea of asking his young daughter, who was also walking with them, to run on ahead and set the table for the lunch. The child enthusiastically agreed and ran on ahead. Her parents were so proud that she had been so willing to help. And the Bishop was impressed at such a dutiful daughter.

Having arrived at the Vicarage the Vicar and Bishop engaged in some small talk whilst the finishing touches were put to the roast. They were then invited through to the dining room where they saw, to their horror, that the little girl had put down no place setting and no cutlery for the Bishop.

“Why haven’t you set a place for His Grace the Bishop?”

“Because I heard you saying to daddy that whenever he comes here he always eats like a horse”.

## ***Two Heads...***

A famous pastor, in addition to being a great preacher, was also known for his skills as a humorous after-dinner speaker. On one occasion when he was booked in to provide a comic turn at a function for some local dignitaries, he suddenly found that he could not attend because of a family emergency. He called the organiser and apologised profusely for letting them down at such short notice.

“Do you know any other wits who could stand in for you?” the organiser asked.

“No, but I do know plenty of half-wits, so I could send two of those together instead!”

## ***Fins Ain’t What They Used To Be***

I had a very mysterious portion of fish recently. I think it was the piece of cod that passeth all understanding.

***Contributions and donations of articles for the Newsletter are always very welcome. Items sent by email are best (because it makes getting the words into the Newsletter so much easier) but articles copied or cut from other magazines are fine, handwritten pieces are good too. EVERYTHING is very gratefully received so don’t be shy!***

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

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### **Next Newsletter:**

There is no fixed date for the next issue currently but the broad target at this point is to publish sometime before Christmas