

The Messenger
Ainsdale Village Church
United Reformed/Baptist
Station Road, Ainsdale, PR8 3HW
December 2024/January 2025

Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above

James Chapter 1, verse 17



Minister: **Rev. Hilary Smith** Tel: 01704 792235

hilary.bell@yahoo.com

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/ainsdalevillagechurch>

Website: www.ainsdalevillagechurch.com

Dear friends,

At a recent commissioning service at St Philip and St Paul with Wesley for Rachel Bray it was so heartening to see so many friends and churches represented in the congregation, including the leaders from the mosque and the synagogue. All enjoyed each other's company, the service full of joy and laughter, and the reminder that we worship the same God and we are united in faith and fellowship.

As the nights start to draw in and we anticipate winter and Christmas, this sense of oneness in God is so important during this season which can sometimes be a time of reflection and melancholy, as it feels as if the darkness is overtaking us, and it will be a long time before the spring. This is why Christmas is such an important celebration – a time to celebrate life, Jesus born among us to show us the way to live good lives, to put people first, to stand by our principles, to be brave and confident to challenge injustice, and to take special care of the most vulnerable in our society.

“For God so loved the world that he gave us his one and only son, that those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

I sometimes have an image of God smiling with us at times of happiness, and also mourning with us when we are sad, because if we are at one with God, so is God at one with us, his children, his family, whom he loves very much, even if we sometimes go astray. The end of the year is another time to pause, and think, to take stock, consider the year that has been and look forward to new life; the turning of the page, a time of resolutions and promises, to ourselves and others.

For me, 2024 feels like it's already run its course, I think partly after the awful events of the summer - and we continue to hold all those affected in our hearts, in our prayers. This is a time when we can only “be” alongside each other, as words aren't enough, and so we have to offer the burden to the One who can carry the load. As the hymn says, “Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do. Father, I place into your hands the times that I've been through. Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go, for I know I always can trust you.”

That image of the little baby in the manger, born into a world of oppression, poverty and difficulty, yet surrounded and sustained by a loving family and friends, serves to encourage us all to share our lives with each other, and to embrace the future in a spirit of hope and renewal, hour by hour and day by day.

Yours in the service of our Lord,

Hilary

Minister:
Rev. Hilary Smith
Tel: 01704 792235

Church Secretary
Mrs Imelda Aspinall
Tel: 07955 874814

Church Treasurer:
Mrs Wendy Parry
Tel: 01704 578214

Deacons:
Imelda Aspinall
Joan Green
Lucinda Green
Christine Holford
Wendy Parry

Weekly Church Activities

Sunday: Morning Worship at 10.00 am

Tuesday: Gardening from 9.30 am
Coffee Morning 10.30 am – 12 noon in the Vestry
Last Tuesday in each month, Prayer for our Local Community

Thursday Knitting Group: 10.00 am at the home of Jean Harding,
55 Leamington Road – all welcome

Friday Welcome Café: 11.00 am – 1.00 pm. Connect Youth Group 6.00 – 7.30 pm



Christmas Cards

Just a reminder that there will be a space available on the notice board in the vestibule for us to place our Christmas Cards to all our friends in the church. This means we don't have to give separate cards, unless we particularly want to, and therefore can perhaps put into the church offertory anything we might otherwise have spent on extra cards.

Ladies Group

In November we had a lovely evening of folk singing, given to us by John Hill, husband of Janice. He chose songs with a local flavour and told us some of the history behind them. It was much enjoyed by all. In December, we look forward to hearing from Anne Hanley, MBE, our illustrious gardening leader, on her life and times, hopefully including her visit to the Palace to receive her MBE.

Our January meeting will take the form of a second beading workshop. A lady called Manda first held this workshop in April, and although we were all perfectly happy with it, she herself felt we had not been able, in the time, to make something which we could take home. Therefore she kindly said she would lead another workshop for us. Perhaps we will all be more expert this time!

Jenny



Community Garden

At the Britain in Bloom ceremony in October, the town of Ainsdale was awarded a Silver Gilt Medal which is on show in the window of The Chocolate Box – so very well done to all concerned.

Also at the North West in Bloom awards, Ainsdale Village Community Garden gained another “Outstanding” – the 12th time in succession! We are still gardening for the next couple of weeks and have just planted lots of bulbs which should give us a lovely show in the spring. The hedge adjacent to the wall has been cut to a lower level, mainly by our hedge supremo, David, who did a brilliant job.

We’ve cleared the area in front of the hedge too, and done some planting there. Ian Makins, who originally designed the garden all those years ago, and who now lives mainly in Saudi Arabia, called in to see us a couple of weeks ago.

He was most impressed by the Dry Garden, and offered some help and sponsorship to make changes with the other side small lawn. Of course, we will still keep it as the location for the Village Christmas Tree.

At some time in the new year, we will have discussions and decide what to do with the area. In the meantime, we are planning a Christmas get-together for all the gardeners at The Sparrowhawk where we can enjoy each other’s company with no gardening!

Jenny



What's On at Ainsdale Village Church this Christmas

Saturday 7th December Carols round the Tree in the Community Garden at 4pm

Carol singing in the garden with hot drinks to lubricate the voice!
Please pray the weather is better than last year or we will be in Church...

Saturday 21st December Nativity Trail and Christmas Coffee Morning In the Community Garden/Church 11am - 1pm

Our Annual Nativity Trail exploring the Story of the First Christmas in the garden. There will be a sticker for everyone who completes the trail and finds all of the hidden posters. We will also have Christmas Craft Activities for the children and Christmas Coffee Morning.

Sunday 22nd December CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT At 7pm in Church

We will be decorating Church with fairy lights and candles, singing carols and listening to readings which remind us of the reason for the season - the birth of Jesus.
If you want to, we thought it might be nice to wear your Christmas Jumpers or wear your glitter jumperStarts at 7pm in Church.

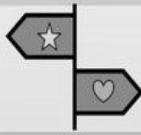
Christmas Eve 24th December CHRISTINGLE in Church at 4pm

People always ask... is that the one with the orange ...
Yes the one with the orange!

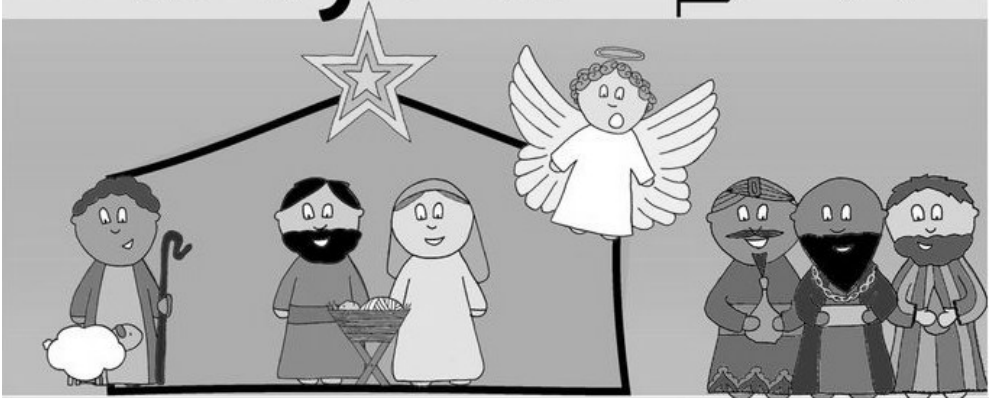
DON'T FORGET TO INVITE A FRIEND TO ONE OR ALL OF THESE EVENTS



Nativity Trail



Can you find all 7 characters from the nativity story?



Ainsdale Village Church Community Garden

Saturday 21st December 11am til 1pm

Free Nativity Trail and Christmas Children Craft Activities Plus Christmas Coffee Morning

Is the word Xmas really a modern invention?

Those who lament the modern commercialisation of Christmas find the abbreviation Xmas particularly irritating, even offensive.

Yet the writing of Christ's name as X or Xp – the first two letters, *cho rho* of *Christos*, his name in Greek – has a long history. The Anglo-Saxon chronicler reported (in Old English) the death of a bishop early on *Xpes maesse* in 1021.

In modern English, abbreviations of Christmas to X'tmasse are attested from the mid-16th century, and by the 18th century Xmas was in colloquial use. John Buxton hoped that a friend would eat roast beef at Xmas in 1721.

In 1827 one of Lady Shelley's correspondents noted that it was "as cold as Xmas, even the butter was frozen". Josiah Wedgwood coined a verb, "xmassing" to denote a seasonal play. Xmas is here to stay; we can't blame it on modern ignorance.

Sarah Foot, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford.



Ainsdale Village
Community Garden
Calendar
2025



Available to Purchase now!
£10 each, in aid of church funds.
To contact Ainsdale Village Church,
please email:
Ainsdalevillagechurch@live.co.uk

Dear Friends,

During Advent, we prepare for four weeks, for Jesus' coming – He who brought Light into the darkness – represented by the four candles around the Advent wreath.

As our winter nights draw longer, leading up to Christmas, we find the TV and other media bringing news of increasing dark and terrible events of war, famine, destruction, poverty and loss from around the world.

We pray for those who are suffering in many ways and we look to the coming of God's Heavenly Kingdom to bring an end to the evil things that take place on earth.

The news that Advent brings is a sign that we can place our faith in Jesus Christ and he will bring peace and redemption.

The circle of the Advent wreath symbolizes God's never-ending love for us.

The first candle on the Advent wreath represents **Hope**.

The second candle on the Advent wreath represents **Peace**.

The third candle of Advent symbolizes **Joy**.

The fourth candle of Advent represents **Love**.

What more could we possibly wish for than the hope, peace, joy and love that Jesus Christ promises us?

I pray that the message of the advent candles reaches all those who suffer this Christmas and we hold firmly to the hope that Christ's coming brings.

Firstly, the Baby in the manger, the promised Messiah, and secondly the coming of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead, who's kingdom will have no end.

This we cling to and hold fast to.

In the name of Christ.

Wishing everyone a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Bev

Silent night, Holy night, all is calm, all is bright....

That well-loved Christmas carol has been prominent in my thoughts recently. Calm and bright is what I and my whole family are aiming for this year. We all love Christmas as did my parents and lights and decorations are a big part of that. I plan to have the tree and decorations up by mid-December though Amy who absolutely loves the anticipation starts around the end of November, if you visit her, you will understand why! I do remember growing up my Dad always kept a lookout for a big Christmas tree outside a shop somewhere that he spotted as he cycled home from work. We lived in the south end of Liverpool, and he, a joiner, worked on different building sites. On Christmas Eve he would go in the chosen shop and ask how much for the tree that had been left, usually a price that he could afford was negotiated. He then wheeled said tree home on his bike and our Christmas Eve was spent decorating the tree with home-made decorations. Not much money, but a lot of love and joy, we never thought of our family as struggling, maybe my Mum and Dad did! Not the pressures though there seem to be today!

Today I know of different families for whom Christmas brings different challenges. Either managing to get a gift for each child for one and for another telling their children to sort through their toys to get rid of some to make room for the new ones that Father Christmas will be bringing!! Christmas may not always be the joyful season we all look forward to as promoted in the shops and those wonderful Christmas movies and songs. If you have lost your job, are on a low income or if memories of lost loved ones are especially painful then it can be a stressful or sad season. A few years ago, we had a 'Blue Christmas' service at our church put together by a small group from CTinA, then the following year at St John's. This year people are busy with work and their own church commitments, but the need is still there! With one person in mind who had come into the Warm Welcome Cafe, very distressed, the 'Longest Night Service' was produced. Led by Hilary and/or Lucinda details are below:

The Longest Night Service

Saturday 21st December at 4pm

At AVC

This is a reflective service for everyone but especially for anyone who may find Christmas difficult.

As I mentioned earlier, we have the 'all is bright' covered, 'all is calm' is a work in progress! The determination to avoid as much stress as possible has led to some 'big decisions' being made. We talk and plan and hopefully as the anticipation and excitement builds, the stress levels won't! I am so blessed to have such a big, loving and supportive family. God's love for me and Him being what binds us all together is my constant prayer for my family and indeed for my church family.

There is a full programme of events coming up to Christmas and with the start of Advent there is the opportunity to reflect on what the start of this season means for us, as we prepare afresh for the birth of the Christ child and the hope that brings.

Now on an entirely different track:

**SANTA CLAUS DID IT!
A CHRISTMAS MURDER MYSTERY**

Saturday 14th December

Doors open 7pm starts 7.30pm

Tickets £5

Festive nibbles £5 per small plate

Licensed bar and a raffle

This is a fundraiser for the church put on by Ghostlight Performers. With tickets limited to 50 there are very few left and unless you have already booked you may be disappointed!

Wishing you all peace and joy, and hoping your Christmas too may be calm and bright,

With love and blessings,

Joan xx



COMING ON SATURDAY 25th JANUARY... THE COMMITTEE: A PLAY

This again is an original play written by Paul, along with Orlando, who is also co-directing. It is one of the aims of Ghostlight Performers to encourage and promote new and young talent. I asked Paul for a short synopsis so as to give you all an idea of what it is about. One of the cast is Val Pedlar, a good friend of Pat Sutcliffe and fellow thespian. So below is an edited version:

GHOSTLIGHT PERFORMERS

Presents.....

THE COMMITTEE: A PLAY

Written and directed by Paul-James Green and Orlando Campolucci-Bordi.

Ever been on a committee? If so, then I don't need to say anymore. If not, then this may sound like the most boring play on earth. It highlights exactly how much drama can go on behind the scenes of a small theatre group, often more drama on the committee than on the stage. This comedy follows the seven committee members as they work their way through one committee meeting.

There is the 'bumbling' chairman, Walter and his power mad vice-chairman Julia, desperate to take over. The treasurer, Esther not as dithery as she seems and fed-up Gwenda just wants the meeting to speed up! The younger members, Arthur, the downtrodden, unappreciated secretary, a slightly cocky yet genuine lad, Harvey, and new arrival Alina try to get through the meeting without killing anyone, whilst also enjoying winding Julia and Walter up.

The two performances will be held on Saturday 25th January

2.30pm Matinee

7.30pm Evening

Tickets £10 can be purchased via the online box office or direct from me.

www.ticketsource.co.uk/ghostlight-performers

There will be a licenced bar and a raffle

Hope to see you there,

Joan

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR SUNDAY 2nd FEBRUARY

This is when we welcome Stuart Radcliffe to lead our service. He is the Synod Missional Discipleship Enabler to give him his official title and has been successful in his role, helping many churches. He was invited to come to us some considerable time ago, but he has been booked up with many commitments until now!

Hopefully he will help us see that mission and growing the church is not to be frightened of but something that we can become involved in and do. I am hoping that following the service we will be able to enjoy a “Faith Brunch” which we can all share, and following that a whole church discussion led by Stuart.

I must talk with Stuart nearer the time to finalise details and it will of course be in the church notices but probably too late to promote in the February Messenger.

This is an exciting opportunity for our church, one which plays a large part in our “Being Church” which you may all remember and hopefully was not just a tick box exercise!

Please put the date in your diary and do your best to come and join us.

Love and blessings

Joan (on behalf of the mission and outreach team.)



Notes from the Archives – Part 13 : 2010

Interim Minister's Report: Peter Lyth reported that although the URC and Cornerstone congregations had joined together as a united church, the legal documents were proceeding rather slowly. The Cornerstone building had been sold and the agreement was now with the North West Baptist Association for 80% of the funds to be released for enhancement of the URC church premises.

In 2009 a financial deficit of nearly £4000 was recorded, so Peter led a TRIO (The Responsibility is Ours) presentation, which led to a substantial increase in giving, which together with various fund raising activities, resulted in a surplus of £1538 in 2010! The funds were certainly helped by the Summer Fair, which raised a remarkable £2470.

URC and Cornerstone Church Secretaries' Report (Jenny and Chris Williams):

In January a formal Uniting Service took place "so that all now feel as if we are one congregation", a new notice board was erected telling everyone we were now Ainsdale Village Church.

Improvements to the building included new carpet tiles in the Small Hall. At the 2010 AGM, Alison Hayhust stepped down as Fabric Steward to be replaced by Peter Aspinall and Brian Williams, who organised replastering and painting in the vestry, followed by a new carpet.

The trellis work was installed in the Community Garden and planting continued. It was stated that the garden was one of our outreach projects, together will regular giving to the Christian Blind Mission, supporting Christian Aid with coffee mornings, and 23 shoe boxes.

In October the church meeting unanimously voted for Peter Lyth to continue for another year as our Interim Minister. We welcomed Lucinda Green, Peter Aspinall, Chris Williams and Jeremy Lister to the Eldership. The Team Ministry for Southport and Formby was taking shape, which developed into the format we know today.

Churches Together in Ainsdale: Throughout the year Lucinda was putting in a lot of hard work organising a Village Green Nativity, involving meetings, discussions and rehearsals with lots of volunteers from different churches. Then it had to be cancelled due to the greatest snowfall since 1962!

Youth Work Report: Joan reported that they were in the unique position of having a youth group of all the same age. A few of them had been coming for several years when they had come along with other siblings. They brought friends and their friends brought friends. This meant that, as they went off to college etc at the same time, none of them would be returning in September. As some of the leaders were also leaving, it was decided not to continue in September. However, the AYP (Ainsdale Young People) provided great entertainment and dinner at Christmas. The Vestry Café continued on Saturday mornings and several young people were able to use this as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award. It was hoped to relaunch the Youth Group after Easter.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

In these notes from the archive, I thought it would be interesting to go back to 1877 when the Ainsdale Congregational Church (this Church) was founded.

When Jenny and Wendy checked the safe, they found the Church Record Book from that time.

It contains lots of information on the founding and development of the church, so I will start with the next Messenger. Later we can come back to the present era.

Alan

Gift Day

Just to let you know that there will be no official Gift Day this year. However as you have probably noticed by now, we have included a brown envelope in your copy of the Messenger. You can insert in it any gift you wish to give to our wonderful church and hand it in with your usual Offertory Collection in the next couple of weeks.

Alternatively you can hand the envelope to either Wendy, our Treasurer, or myself.

If you wish to use bank transfer for your donation, AVC's bank details are available from the Deacons.

Please note that all donations will be automatically added to our Gift Aid Claim to the UK Government under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme

Thank you in advance.

Imelda Aspinall
Church Secretary



Calendar for December

- Sun 1st** Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Janice Hill
- Sat 7th** Carols Round the Tree – in the Community Garden at 4.00 pm.
See item in magazine
- Sun 8th** Morning Worship at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am
- Mon 9th** Ladies Group meeting at 7.00 pm in the vestry – see item in magazine
- Tues 10th** Team Advent Bible Study at Ainsdale Village Church at 2.00 pm
- Tues 10th** Deacons’s Meeting at 7.30 pm in the vestry
- Sat 14th** Ghostlight performance in aid of Church funds – see item in magazine
- Sun 15th** Advent Songs of Praise at 10.00 am -
Mike Smith playing the organ
- Sun 15th** Ainsdale Village Singers Christmas Concert at **Liverpool Rd Methodist Church** at 2.00 pm. See Jenny for tickets.
- Sat 21st** Christmas Coffee Morning and Soup Kitchen Collection
11.00 am – 1.00 pm
- Sat 21st** Nativity Trail in the Garden 11.00 am – 1.00 pm
- Sat 21st** Longest Night Service in the church at 4.00 pm
- Sun 22nd** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith
- Sun 22nd** Carols by Candlelight in the church at 7.00 pm – Janice Hill
- Mon 23rd** Christingle-making Coffee Morning in the vestry at 10.30 am
- Tue 24th** Carols at the Co-op, led by AVC, at 10.00 – 10.30 am
- Tue 24th** Christingle Service at 4.00 pm – Janice Hill
- Tue 24th** Christmas Eve Service at 11.30 pm at
Ainsdale Methodist Church
- Wed 25th** Christmas Day Service at St John’s Ainsdale at 10.00 am
- Sun 29th** Team Service at Ainsdale Village Church at 10.00 am
– Nigel Mawdsley

Calendar for January 2025

- Sun 5th** Holy Communion at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith
- Sun 12th** Morning Worship at Ainsdale Methodist Church at 10.45 am
- Mon 13th** Ladies Group at 7.00 pm in the vestry – see item in magazine
- Tue 14th** Deacons' Meeting in the vestry at 7.30 pm
- Sun 19th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Janice Hill
- Sat 25th** “The Committee” – a play by the Ghostlight performers
– see item in magazine
- Tue 28th** Feasibility Study (in conjunction with Ainsdale Methodist Church
This will take place from 10.00 am – 1.00 pm in our church
and from 1.15 – 7.00 pm in the Methodist Church.
- Sun 26th** Morning Worship at 10.00 am – Hilary Smith and
Ainsdale Methodist congregation



