

Dear Friends,

As I approach a significant change in my life and lifestyle, I find that I am doing a lot of reflecting about the things I have done, the choices I have made and the decisions I have come to. One of the things I have been thinking about recently is these 'Minister's Letter' or 'From the Manse' or whatever it was called by the church/pastorate I was in at the time. All through my ministry I have been expected to contribute my article to the monthly magazine, and most of these magazine productions have followed a common pattern - 10 editions a year with a double in summer and Christmas/New Year. So over the years I have written well over 400 of these 'epistles'!



As some of the magazine editors have known, writing these articles has always been a challenge. I find it so much easier to put together a sermon than write a short item for the magazine. When you are writing a sermon you usually begin with the lectionary readings for the week, then take it from there. When writing this letter, what is the starting point? Sometimes it would be the seasonal nature of the magazine (e.g. Christmas or Easter editions), sometimes it would be a reflection on a certain 'issue' that the church is facing, and often it would just be a short homily on anything that came to mind at the time. So, as you have probably realised, these articles can be quite arbitrary.

Another of the things I have been reflecting on is - has there been any point in writing these things at all? Quite regularly I do have feedback on the sermons I preach and I am very grateful for those comments which, fortunately, tend to be more positive than negative. However when it comes to feedback on the 'minister's letter' I can honestly say that I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of responses to the 400+ pieces I have written! On the basis that 'no news is good news' or 'no response is better than a negative response', I cling to the hope

that perhaps, occasionally, I have been inspired to write something that has been of help to someone at a certain moment in their life.

So where is this going? Well, I am not the only one who is facing major changes in their lives. As a Pastorate there will be significant decisions to be made as to your future within the new Partnership. What is your future relationship together? What are the important parts of the relationship that need to be preserved and built on, and what might need to be discarded? As these discussions happen, you will need to be open with one another, you will need to share your feelings on this matter and responsive to anything that is put forward. One thing you cannot do is do nothing and say nothing. Major changes are happening to our two churches, and not just my departure. If these changes are to be for the good of the members and our communities, then they will have to be made with a lot of prayer and honesty. Whilst a few will be asked to bring forward recommendations, it will be for all to come to any decisions. Hopefully, as you 'seek the mind of Christ' in all of this, a new and better future will be revealed.

That is my hope and prayer for you. I will be watching from the side lines but I know that, from within the two churches you have the God-given gifts and abilities to be confident that, whatever the future may hold, you will continue to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ (Jesus shaped?) here.

From your friend and minister,

Brian

Communion Fund, Sale

February £55 donated to Sandwich Angels.

March collection will be for MS THERAPY CENTRE (NW). This charity has been chosen by Margaret Menzies in memory of her son Kenneth.

Nancy Stringer

SASH Diary – Forthcoming Special Events, Meetings and Services

March

1 st	10.30am	World Day of Prayer (St. Joseph's)
	7.30pm	World Day of Prayer (Sale URC)
2 nd	3.00pm	Messy Church – 'Love Your World!' (AoM)
3 rd	12noon	Christian Aid 'Soup and Sweet' (Sale)
6 th		Ash Wednesday
9 th	10.00am	Gift Day (AoM)
10 th	12noon	Annual General Meeting (AoM)
11 th	2.00pm	Lent Study 1 – 'The Wilderness' (Sale)
1 th	7.30pm	Lent Study 1 – 'The Wilderness' (AoM)
17 th	12noon	Annual General Meeting (Sale)
18 th	2.00pm	Lent Study 2 – 'Fasting' (Sale)
19 th	7.30pm	Lent Study 2 – 'Fasting' (AoM)
25 th	2.00pm	Lent Study 3 – 'Solitude' (Sale)
26 th	7.30pm	Lent Study 3 – 'Solitude' (AoM)
27 th	2.00pm	Church & Society (Sale) – "Cyril Flint Befrienders"
31 st	10.45am	Mothering Sunday – no joint service

April

1 st	2.00pm	Lent Study 4 – 'Temptation' (Sale)
2 nd	7.30pm	Lent Study 4 – 'Temptation' (AoM)
3 rd	7.30pm	Joint Elders' Meeting (Sale)
6 th	3.00pm	Messy Church – New Life in Jesus ~ Easter (AoM)
7 th	6.30pm	Healing Service (Sale)
8 th	2.00pm	Lent Study 5 – 'Preparation' (Sale)
9 th	7.30pm	Lent Study 5 – 'Preparation' (AoM)
13 th	2.00pm	Spring Tea (Sale)
14 th		Palm/Passion Sunday
18 th	7.30pm	Maundy Thursday Communion (Sale)
19 th	6.30pm	Good Friday Service (AoM)
21 st	8.30am	Easter Breakfast Service (AoM)
	10.45am	Easter Communion (Sale)

Congratulations



Congratulations to Kath Renfrew, who has just completed 50 years with the Hallé Choir. She began her career under Sir John Barbirolli, and was presented by Sir Mark Elder with a commemorative badge on 9th February.

In addition to recent 'Gramophone' awards, the Hallé Choir's rendering of 'O Holy Night' featured as Classic FM's no. 1 Christmas Carol in December 2018. Kath has performed with the Hallé at the BBC Proms (including The Last Night of the Proms) in the Royal Albert Hall.

Pleasant Tuesday Afternoon (PTA)

March 5th Revd Brian Acty + Bring & Buy
12th Bingo
19th TBC
26th Revd Valerie Davies

Please join us at 2pm

Flower List

March 3rd Diana McClave
10th Myra Ranson
17th David Hunt
24th Helen Priestman
31st VACANT

Bible Word Search:

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind (John 9)

P K X O H K U D V D V Z X K S
 S A V S Q N O L U E O Y E R A
 G E R H Z N S S E N D N I L B
 Q L L E R E G G E B U Y I S B
 Q J O P N N H S A W L G I C A
 W E Q R I T Q L J S H N N V T
 S S D E Y C S K E T L G D D H
 R U E U M E S E T E Z C N E N
 O S Q E M L S I S S Q B W N M
 B G H I F I F S D B I E H E E
 H V E M R S I L O A M R K P Y
 G N V A H U W I K T G P H O O
 I W H O W M D Z I F S X P C N
 E P U A M M I R A C L E M H O
 N Z P B A R Y I T A M H I G A

BEGGER	BLINDNESS	CHRIST
DISCIPLES	GLORY	JESUS
LIGHT	MIRACLE	MUD
OPENED	NEIGHBORS	PARENTS
PHARISEES	SABBATH	SEEING
SILOAM	SINLESS	WASH

Messy Church AoM: February – “Love your Neighbour”

This month’s theme gave us plenty of opportunity to think about loving others. We encouraged children to talk about acts of kindness they could do and how they could be a good and kind friend, even to people they may not know yet. As always there were many craft and practical activities to choose from for our families and plenty of mess.



Through the crafts children decorated faces and placed them on a world map, as they talked and thought about people they knew, who lived near them. They decided they could smile at people they may not know yet, as they pass them in the street, to cheer them up. We discussed ways they could be a good friend

to children in their school or playgroup too. Furthermore, children made lolly flowers with the motto ‘random acts of kindness’ on, to give to someone to show they cared, friendship chains, decorated ‘friendly’ bandit scarves, and made healthy cheese biscuit faces.

Brian helped children to continue decorating our banner with flags from around the world. You will be able to see the finished article after next month’s session.



We set up a Dolls Hospital, so children could play with and look after dolls as they explored caring for children who are sick. Lots of dolls sported bandages on their 'poorly limbs, to make them better.



Brian led the celebration talking about the Good Samaritan as children enthusiastically acted it out.

The fact that the only man who stopped to help the hurt traveller did not know him gave the children lots to think about.

All in all, it was another fun session with our Messy Church family. The afternoon goes far too quickly for us all.

The next session is Saturday 2nd March. We would love to see you and can assure you that you will be made most welcome. Messy church is for all ages, so come along and join us 3 till 5pm. See more of what we get up to on Facebook: [@Messy Church AonM](https://www.facebook.com/MessyChurchAonM)

Helen Priestman

Daffodil Tea (AoM)

Our Annual Daffodil Tea will be held on Saturday 16th March, from 2 till 4pm. Cost will be £5.00. There will also be daffodils on sale, a raffle and Myra stall. We hope you will be able to join us.

From the Editor

Were you one of those studious readers who spotted my slip-up last month? Only one person wearily agreed when I pointed it out, and I personally received no other comments (echoes of our Minister's letter this time!). It was that I wrote: "Deadline for the **April** edition will be **10th March**, the second Sunday in the month as usual". But it still is!

Keith