The United Reformed Church

Bank Topics

Issue 8 **March - May**

I LENT

Dear friends;

A favourite liturgical season of mine is lent. There are several reasons for this: Lent comes around the beginning of spring; well, more or less although as I write snow is still falling and there's a likelihood we shall get more. What a contrast from last year! But if you look carefully the days are getting longer and the sun's rays [when we see them!], are getting stronger. All around us nature is getting ready for the drama of rebirth of life that we know as spring. So lent is a time of expectations. I have planted a lot of bulbs around the Manse and most of them are starting to come out and as they start to grow, taking advantage of the longer days and sun, so too should we expect to grow spiritually in the days ahead. During Lent God calls us to carry out a self assessment of ourselves through the lens of the Cross. It is a time for us to ask ourselves how our spiritual journeys will develop in the tough times ahead and to start thinking where God is leading us. So I love this season because it's the one time in a year that I can consciously and deliberately allocate time to reflect deeply through meditation and fasting on my short comings; and Lord do I have many!

Looking again at the story of Christ's Journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem reminds me how our Lord endured his trials with humility and how he had ample opportunity to bypass all his trials and tribulations but he told the devil he was not interested in cheap glory. He had come with a mission of illustrating God's love in a unique and sacrificial way. So even though this liturgical season is a time to remember Jesus' temptations, it's also a time for us to deeply contemplate our own spiritual attacks and temptations. During Lent, we deny ourselves so that we may be more attuned to hearing Gods instructions as well as strengthening our spiritual muscles for the temptations ahead. When we come to this time of rebirth, we do so willingly and with purpose. We know that our Lenten journey will come to an end during Easter when we celebrate the re-birth of our Lord. That new life is a gift from God who in Jesus proclaims: I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full [John 10:10] Lent is a time to die to self and to live for God and for our neighbours locally and abroad.

So as we find ourselves yet again at the beginning of Lent preparing for Easter, the question we should be asking ourselves is: How do we prepare ourselves to receive the Good News brought to the disciples by Mary that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that death had been denied its empty claim of victory? There are many ways again in which we can prepare ourselves but chiefly; through reflections, prayers, meditations and bible study. We meditate and pray through these semi dark-grey days of winter to prepare our souls for the paschal feast. We fast and meditate in order to purify our souls and to gain strength to wage the spiritual warfare with the same forces of darkness that crucified our Lord. And we meditate and fast as an act of intercession for our sisters and brothers all over the earth. We must pray as well ceaselessly in thanks giving for all the gifts God has given us especially the gift of Christ Jesus who came to redeem us. A simple honest prayer can move mountains as Christ hinted in Mat 17:20. Small acts like praying and kindness to neighbours can be a huge blow to the warfare we wage daily with those forces that seek to draw us away from the light and love of God. The Lenten season is also a time of learning. In the early church, it was the time when initiates were instructed in the faith and discipline of discipleship in preparation for their entry into the family of Christ. This year we will run a Lenten course in Bank Top United Reformed Church starting from the 26th of February every Tuesday at 19.45 for four weeks. Together we shall explore; ***Glimpses of God- Hope for Today's world***. Please feel free to join us all the days or some of the days as you are able to and bring a friend or a colleague. All are welcome and there will be plenty of tea, coffee, biscuits and perhaps a cake!May I cordially invite all of you therefore, to journey with our Lord in joy this Lent and his grace will surround us; so much so, that we will be remoulded into ***His*** image and likeness-He who was born into this world in ***Our*** image and likeness. I call upon journey mercies on all of us so that when the final trumpet is sounded in Jerusalem we shall rise with him in His joyous Eastertide.

Lent and Easter Blessings to All:

Rev G.

BANK TOP CHURCH - CONTACTS

Church Telephone Number		593393
Minister	Rev George Mwaura	302540
Church Leader	Mr A Guthrie	591185
Secretary/Treasurer	Mrs V Singleton	305401
Organist – contact	Mrs A Smith	693740
Church Hall Hire	Mrs H Guthrie Mrs V Singleton	591185 305401
Pulpit Supply	Mrs J Skidmore	307130
Flower Secretaries	Mrs M Flitcroft and Mrs C Rideout	
Choir Leader	Mrs A Smith	693740
Newsletter Editor	Mrs J Partington	416007
Serving Elders	Mark Bates, Christine Counsell, Andy Guthrie, Jame Keen, Jill Partington, Maureen Roocroft, Joan Seddon, Sue Seddon, Val Singleton, Julie Skidmore,	
Sunday Worship	10.30am Morning Service and Sunday School Church Parade fourth Sunday of month in Jan, Sept, Nov and the Sermons. Communion during the morning service on the second Sunday each month	
Guides	Monday at 7.30pm (contact Mrs V Constantine)	593034
Bank Top Brownies	Monday at 5.45pm (contact Miss K Grainger)	593692
The Oaks Brownies	Tuesday at 6.00pm (contact Mrs G Brown)	306867
Rainbows	Thursday at 6.00pm (contact E Robinson)	415113
Bank Top Art Group	Monday at 1.00pm (contact Mrs V Singleton)	305401
Mother & Toddlers	Tuesday from 9.30 – 11.00am (contact Barbara Jepson)	384514
Lace & Craft Group	Wednesday 7.00 – 9.00pm (contact: Jean Greer)	594127

For Baptisms, (which are held during the Morning Service), Weddings, Funerals, Sick Visiting or Home Communion, please contact the Rev George Mwaura.
If you would like to join our Direct Offering scheme, through the Envelope system, please contact Mrs Val Singleton, who is also available to give advice to those who want to take advantage of Gift Aid.
We also have a Church Memorial Fund – contributions to the treasurer, Val Singleton
We are a pastorate together with Egerton URC and Red Lane URC
We are a member of Churches Together in Astley Bridge.

Cry with someone.
It's more healing than crying alone

Hello Friends!

February Already! No, need to catch up, March already! (And if you've picked this up very late – it may even be April (but it's probably still threatening to snow at the weekend!))

December saw the closure of Lee Clough Mission, a little church the other side of ASDA. Those actively involved in the Astley Bridge Council of Churches will have known them well but for others it was a building you knew of, but one you just passed by, wondering about, well actually more often wandering, rather than wondering. A small group from Bank Top came to know it better last year as it was the scene of much anguish and visits from the RSPCA. (The RSPCA went quickly when they discovered it was only the Eden Singers at our regular place of practice!) Anyway, we grew very fond of that little church - and its small but stalwart congregation. For them closure was a matter of spiritual re-birth and their seeds are now being planted around other churches in Astley Bridge. For those who may find a home at Bank Top we open our arms and welcome you. Something more concrete we can offer though is a home for their Church Banner, a banner needs a church and a banner needs to be seen as a statement of witness, we're delighted to be able to offer a home to this article of their faith.

We are a diverse faith, us Christians. Last year the most gifted of Archbishops of Canterbury was eventually worn down by in-fighting and threw in the towel to be replaced by a former oil trader. Then, following close on the end of Lee Clough Mission a Pope retires! RETIRES! Interesting that one of personal priests of John Paul II, the last Pope, made an observation along the lines that "he didn't recall Christ climbing down from the cross because he was tired!" So Lee Clough closes and re-seeds and the two largest Christian denominations face new challenges with new leaders.

From their "shining cities on a hill" what will those two leaders see? What changes will they set in place to transform this world? And what difference will it make to us? A strong, confident and vibrant Christian faith will nurture growth for all denominations. A strong, confident and vibrant Christian URC can play its part, a part for a non-conformist faith that puts itself above the state. In the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC we say *"We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head. Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief."*

With all this change in the air I wonder what we in the URC should do to help transform this world – and it surely needs transforming. I know what we <u>should not</u> do – and it's probably my greatest fear. We cannot allow the URC to get wrapped up in some "internal" transition, some introspective review where we re-fight past battles, re-draft irrelevant policies and lock our church in committee whilst God stands behind a closed door - waiting to be invited in. (Credit there goes to the poet, whose name I can't find, who painted that powerful image!)

For the moment though, we have George and we have a congregation that needs ministry, we have tons to do, let us carry out God's ministry to his flock, wherever they may be found.

God bless.

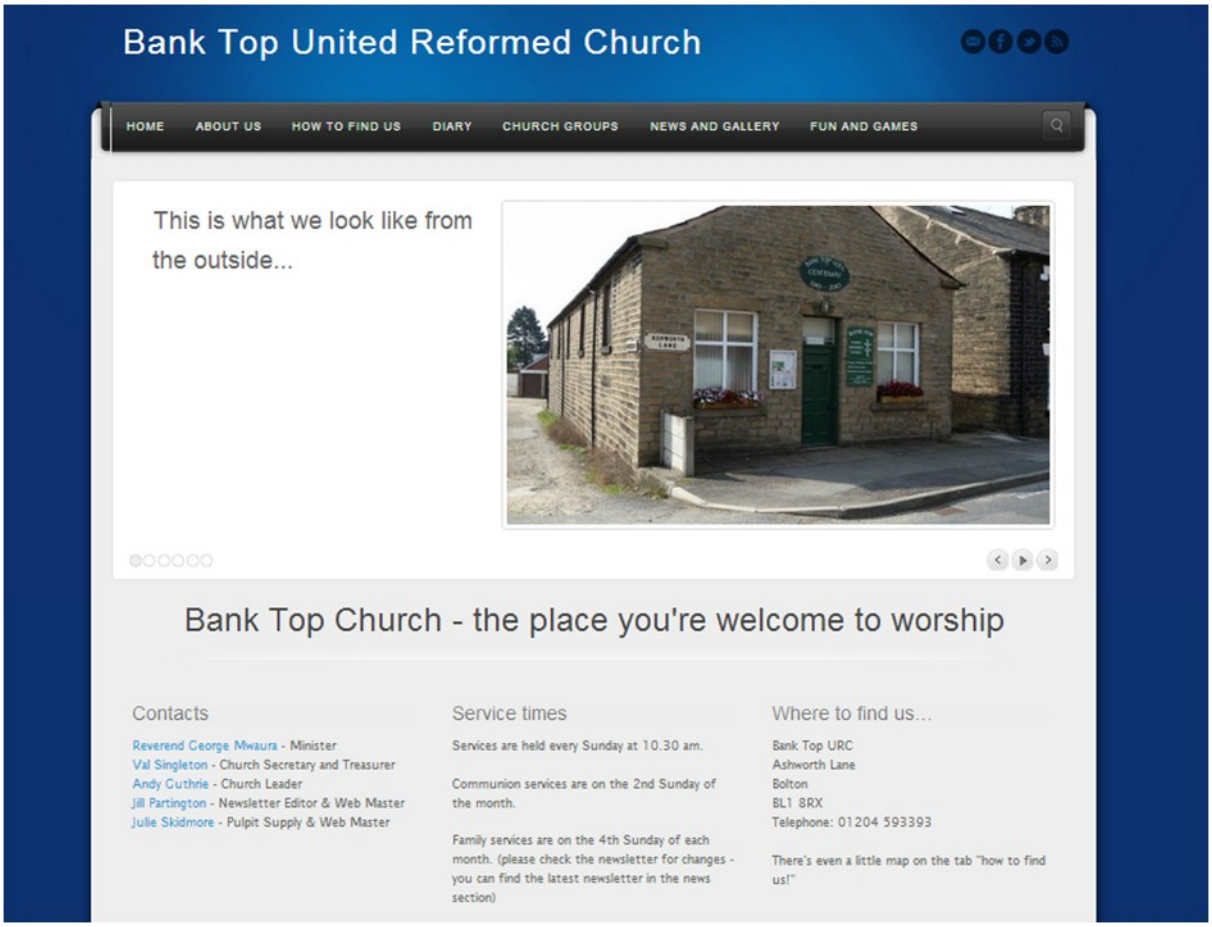
Andy

Church Membership

Church membership classes will be commencing after Easter, dates to be arranged.

If anyone is interested in becoming a member of Bank Top Church or wants further information please contact Val Singleton.

Have you seen our new website?



Our web-mistresses Jill and Julie have works wonders to get our site up and running so it's time that you logged on and had a look. There are plenty of pictures but what we really need is more content!
With at least two "bloggers of the week" in the congregation maybe the time is right for some grown-ups to take up the challenge. If you think you can help out then please see Julie or Jill… and their friend Mr QR!

March
3rd Joan Seddon
10th Vacant
17th Vacant
24th Clarice Bickerstaff
31st Janet & Hollie Rigby

April
7th Vacant
14th Norman Lowe
21st Sue Seddon
28th Christine Catherall

May
5th In memory of Lillian & Alan Tredrea
12th Maureen & Syd Roocroft
19th Guides
26th Joan Seddon

Lord Jesus Christ,

As you rose victorious over death, so may hope, faith and love continue to triumph in our lives over everything that conspires against them.

Amen

Birthday wishes go to:

March

7th	Alex Worthington-Grime
22nd	Noah Juson
25th	Jack Butterworth

April

6th	Thomas Keen
12th	Aimee Sutcliffe
13th	Ethan Swinton
19th	Ella Atkinson
28th	Kallum McDermid

May

9th	Samuel Jedrzejewski
16th	Alfie Lovgreen
19th	Lara Taylor
25th	Katie Davies
28th	Chloe Butterworth

Deepest sympathy to James and family on the sad loss of Hilda Rideout a loving mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, auth and friend.

In your prayers please remember Mark Bates and all our friends that have had a hard winter, especially our senior citizens.

CLEANING ROTA

March

1st	Ann & Richard Smith
8th	The Guthries
15th	L Ridyard & G Brown
22nd	J Dunne & V Constantine
29th	P McNulty & J Seddon

April

5th	C Rideout & A Hardman
12th	A Myers & I Larkin
19th	M Bates & J Keen
26th	V Singleton & A Duxbury

May

3rd	J Kelly & M Batty
10th	C Catherall & M Flitcroft
17th	C Counsell & A Spence
24th	Ann & Richard Smith
31st	The Guthries

Bank Top URC Youth Group

A survival guide for your first year at Secondary School...

- ◊ Make sure you do your homework the same day that you get it
- ◊ Always pack your school bag the night before
- ◊ Check you have got everything you need for the day ahead (if you forget anything you'll get a DT)
- ◊ Make sure you always have a pen - the teachers wont give you one if you forget
- ◊ You need to have your own bible, dictionary and a scientific calculator
- ◊ You are responsible for your belongings, not your parents
- ◊ If you're catching the bus, get an I Go card, and a monthly saver ticket (from Asda or the Petrol Station on Blackburn Road) it will save you money
- ◊ Get to school on time, otherwise you'll get a Late Mark
- ◊ Get a locker so you don't need to carry your PE kit around with you all day, but make sure you have a thick padlock, if its a thin one people can break into your locker
- ◊ Put your name on everything
- ◊ Always stand up when a teacher enters the room
- ◊ Don't let the teachers catch you chewing gum, or else you'll get a DT
- ◊ Keep your school shirt tucked in at all times, otherwise you'll get your Uniform Card signed (if you get it signed 3 times, you'll get a DT)
- ◊ Remember, boys don't wear school jumpers (if you do, you'll get bullied)
- ◊ Don't wear hairspray or hair gel – you're not allowed it
- ◊ In the school corridors, be prepared for lots of pushing and shoving. You'll have to fight your way through the corridor to get to where you want to go
- ◊ If you get lost, only ask another pupil when a teacher is within earshot, otherwise you might be given the wrong directions
- ◊ Don't have a rucksack, people walking behind you will try and open it
- ◊ If there is a fight in the school yard, run away when the teacher comes (otherwise you'll get in trouble for watching it)
- ◊ Finally, if you want a quiet life, keep out of the way of the older kids

Family Bible Readings

March		
3rd	**Luke**	**13:1-9**
10th	**Luke**	**15:1-3, 11b-32**
17th	**John**	**12:1-8**
24th	**Luke**	**22:14-23, 56**
31st	**Luke**	**24:1-12**
April		
7th	**John**	**20:19-31**
14th	**John**	**21:1-19**
21st	**John**	**10:22-30**
28th	**John**	**13:31-35**
May		
5th	**John**	**14:23-29 or 5:1-9**
12th	**John**	**17:20-26**
19th	**John**	**14:8-17, (25-27)**
26th	**John**	**16:12-15**

Churches Together In Astley Bridge
Dates For Your Diary

March 16th	**St Peter's, Belmont, Easter Fair, 2pm**
March 24th	**St Paul's joint Palm Sunday service, 3pm**
May 11th	**Bread and soup lunch for Christian Aid, Baptist Church, Eden St, 12-1:30pm**
May 15th	**AGM, Baptisit Church, Eden St, 7:30pm**
June 8th	**Eagley Bank garden party, 12 noon**
June 8th	**St Paul's garden party**
June 21st	**Quiz night, Astley Bridge Cricket Club, 7:30pm. Tickets £3.50 including supper**
August 4th	**"Praise in the Park", Baptist Church, 4:30pm tea, 6pm hymn singing**

Everyone is welcome to join any or all these events. If you need more information please contact Christine Catherall.

FINANCE REPORT

OFFERTORY

November		
Cash Collection	246.58	
Envelope Collection	373.96	
Standing Orders	735.50	
TOTAL	**1356.04**	
December		
Cash Collection	215.82	
Envelope Collection	542.91	
Standing Orders	795.50	
TOTAL	**1554.23**	
January		
Cash Collection	148.49	
Envelope Collection	342.70	
TOTAL	**491.19**	

BRUNCHES

Advent Brunch	800.00
January	192.51
February	172.40

JARS OF GRACE

November	9.38
January	12.33

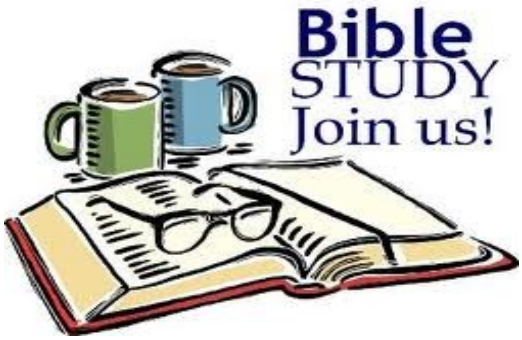
50/50 CLUB

December		
G Singleton	50.00	15
A Johns	30.00	17
J Partington	20.00	77
January		
B Owens	50.00	7
J Seddon	30.00	9
H Guthrie	20.00	4
February		
M Flitcroft	50.00	26
H Guthrie	30.00	8
C Rideout	20.00	49

Christmas collections to Christian Aid 307.41

Letter of thanks has been received from Christian Aid

Thank you to all those people who continue to support any or all of the above

FUTURE EVENTS: MARCH — MAY

March			
Sat	2nd	12:00-1:00	Brunch—The Men
Sun	3rd	10:30	Morning service, Andy Guthrie
Tues	5th	7:45	Lenten Course, Bank Top Church
Wed	6th	7:30	Elders' meeting at Andy's
Sun	10th	10:30	Morning Service, Communion, Mothers Day, George Mwaura
Tues	12th	7:30	Lenten Course, Bank Top Church
Sat	16th	2:00	Easter Fair, St Peter's, Belmont,
Sun	17th	10:30	Morning Service, Richard Smith
Tues	19th	7:30	Lenten Course, Bank Top Church
Sun	24th	10:30	Morning Service, George Mwaura
Sun`	24th	3:00	Joint Palm Sunday Service, St Paul's
Tues	26th	7:45	Housegroup at Val's
Fri	29th	10:30	Good Friday Service, Val, Christine, Jill and Julie
Sun	31st	10:30	Easter Sunday, Family Communion Service, Worship Group
April			
Sat	6th	12:00-1:00	Brunch—Catering Committee
Sun	7th	10:30	Morning Service, Leo Roberts
Tues	9th	7:45	Housegroup at Val's
Sun	14th	10:30	Morning Service, Communion, Andy Guthrie
Sun	21st	10:30	Morning Service, Mark Bates
Sun	21st	11:30	AGM
Tues	23rd	7:45	Housegroup at Val's
Sun	28th	10:30	Morning Service, Exchange Sunday
MAY			
Wed	1st	7:30	Elders meeting at Andy's
Sat	4th	12:00-1:00	Brunch—Sunday School
Sun	5th	10:30	Morning Service, John Cunliffe
Sat	11th	12:00-1:30	Bread & Soup Lunch for Christian Aid, Baptist Church, Eden St
Sun	12th	10:30	Family Communion Service, Church Parade, George Mwaura
Tues	14th	7:45	Housegroup at Val's
Wed	15th	7:30	AGM, Baptist Church, Eden St
Sun	19th	10:30	Morning Service, Communion, Worship Group
Sun	26th	10:30	Family Service, Sermons, George Mwaura
Tues	28th	7:45	Housegroup at Val's