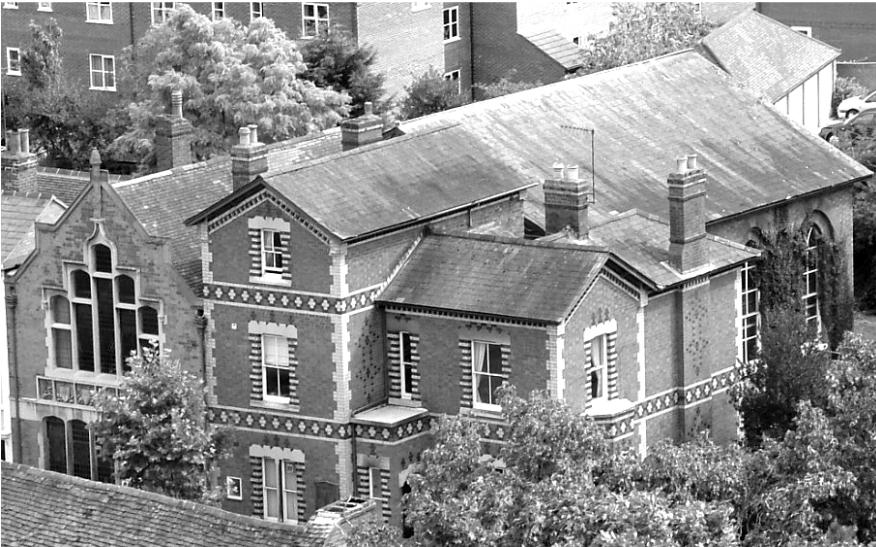


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Pershore Baptist Church



Messenger

Broad Street, Pershore, Worcestershire

March 2009

www.pershorebaptist.org

Dear Friends

Regrettably I failed to make even Mike's graciously extended deadline for this month's Messenger. Yet as I prayerfully lamented my falling short, I believe the Lord brought the following article back to my remembrance. I submit it here trusting you will know something of the Lord's help, encouragement and blessing as you take to heart its thoughtful and timely insights.

Sanctifying our deepest questions
Doubting Thomas is an epithet too easily thrown about by those who live in the comfortable half light of unexamined certainty. Doubting is too often and too quickly interpreted as disloyalty, a lack of faith which implies lack of love. Following the resurrection, and after some had met and seen the risen Lord, Thomas seems to be the one asking the awkward questions, stubbornly refusing to be taken in by the stories told by others. Doubt is often dismissed as a spiritual fault, something to be guilty about; but some forms of doubt, including Thomas's questions, are not guilty betrayal but struggling integrity. Perhaps Thomas wasn't playing the hard wired sceptic, nor the melancholic discourager of the others; a more pastoral view (which in the resurrection encounters is Jesus consistent approach), might see

him as one who needed encouraged but wouldn't be patronised by platitudes and far-fetched stories. Perhaps his doubt and his earlier absence were not lack of loyalty but hurt love; a man disappointed because he hoped for so much.

Sometimes it's the person who believes most who hopes most, who takes disappointment hardest, and for whom faith is hard won. None of us would come to faith if we had no personal encounter with the Risen Lord, and were asked simply to rely on the say so of others. The story of Thomas meeting Jesus, the melting of his questions and hesitations before the personal reality and soul shattering truth of God in that invitation - "Touch my hands...put your hand in my side....don't be afraid". It is one of the most moving and pastorally intense encounters we have, and when John said there were plenty more stories he could tell, and even the world as a library couldn't contain them, he still included this one. In doing that he sanctified the deepest questions we can ask about God and ourselves.

Whatever else Christian assurance is, it can never be the kind of certainty that forever disqualifies questions, or looks down on those for whom faith comes hard. Another Thomas, Thomas Merton, pointed out the dangers of

superficial answers to those disturbing, persistent questions that are not the enemies of faith, but the living context within which faith affirms our trust in God, even if that means some questions are left unanswered. Indeed faith is nearest to the New Testament, when questions are asked, knowing that for now we see through a glass darkly.

But questions cannot go unanswered unless they first be asked. And there is a far worse anxiety, a far worse insecurity, which comes from being afraid to ask the right questions – because

Why dancing dads embarrass you

Teenagers who are mortified when their fathers suddenly do a few dance-steps in the supermarket, or when their mothers sing Abba songs in restaurants, are not being awkward - they are simply using a different part of the brain to grown-ups.

Recent research has found that teenagers' brains are like adults when it comes to processing fear or disgust, but when it comes to embarrassment - they are highly vulnerable. This is because the medial prefrontal cortex part of their brain, which processes social emotions, is more active. So while adults can sing and dance without (much) embarrassment, to have a father dancing and a mother

they might turn out to have no answers. One of the moral diseases of the church comes from huddling together in the pale light of an insufficient answer to a question we are afraid to ask.

The story of Thomas, his unsureness and his honest doubt, tells of the difference between a church huddling in the pale light of an insufficient answer, and a church emboldened by the one answer sufficient to all questions - the crucified, risen Lord in the midst.

<http://hopefulimagination.blogspot.com/search?q=thomas>

singing will very likely trigger the social emotion of great embarrassment in their offspring.

The study appeared in a recent issue of the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.

Are you young and baffled by a baked potato?

Then you are not alone. Four in 10 young adults admit that they cannot cook a jacket potato, according to recent research.

The Potato Council also found that many people under the age of 30 cannot cook slightly more difficult dishes like shepherd's pie or fish cakes. A spokeswoman said: "It is disappointing that a whole generation simply can't make a meal with one of our most loved staple foods."

Belarus

The Convoy

In the first week of the Easter holidays this year I will be travelling with a convoy taking much needed aid to the people of Belarus. The convoy is organised by the charity Chernobyl 2000 and this year they will be joined by myself and 5 of my school friends from Bredon Hill Middle School. We will travel across Europe in a minibus to Belarus. We will be taking aid and supplies to orphanages, hospitals and schools to help them provide a normal up bringing for the many children and young adults growing up, who have been badly affected by radioactivity.

Why are we doing this?

On April 26th 1986 there was an accidental explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant which was described as being worse than any other the world had ever seen. 70% of the radioactive outburst found its way into Belarus contaminating a lot of its produce and landscape. It is more than 20 years since that catastrophic explosion but millions of people are still suffering from the effects of the contamination on a daily basis. By international standards, just 1% of Belarusian land is free from contamination. If this shocks you, then the fact that some areas of Belarusian land are likely to be uninhabitable forever will seem unbelievable to you. The health of many thousands of people is a growing problem as the rise in birth defects, heart conditions, mental health problems and digestive illnesses continues. Cancers are another problem and the increase in cases of thyroid cancer alone is over

800%. As the hospitals struggle to cope with the generation of people directly affected, they now have to cope with the effects on the new generation. Many parents are dying making the number of children in orphanages rise dramatically.

How can you help?

Belarus desperately needs help. This year it is our church's turn to choose which charity should be supported for their Lent Project. I wrote a letter asking if the Chernobyl 2000 charity could be considered and I am very happy that this was the charity that was chosen. As well as supporting the events that are held in church such as the Lent Lunches there are other ways you can help. We will be collecting a number of items to take, including children's clothes, stationary, toiletries and cleaning materials. In particular, this year, the orphanages need nappies as they are rapidly running out of them, the hospitals need medical supplies such as plasters, bandages and disposable gloves and the schools need stationary. Each convoy costs around £20,000 to run so I will also be making some pendants (more details to follow) to sell and raise funds. Finally we would also appreciate your prayers for the people of Belarus and for a safe and successful convoy.

For any more information please speak to myself, my Mum, Tracy Wheeler or my Grandma, Eileen Merry.

Many thanks,

Joshua Wheeler

Wake up to the Bible

There's one in just about every home - on a shelf behind the TV, or up in Grannie's room. It's normally only got out when a crossword clue needs to be solved, or someone's got a question wrong on 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' It may be the world's best-selling book, but if it is, it's the world's least read best-seller. Even regular churchgoers tend to keep it for Sundays, not for the rough and tumble of everyday life.

And that's a pity, because for Christians the Bible is the primary key to understanding ourselves, the world we live in, and our Creator. It is the story of our search for God, and his search for us. Slowly, painfully, and with dawning clarity the picture emerges.

First one tribe, then a nation, record in its pages their experience of God. They don't always get it right, but it's an honest search and God rewards it. Because, while people were searching for God, he was searching for them. That's the Bible's story, which reaches its amazing climax in the coming of

Jesus, the Son of God. As John's Gospel puts it, 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known' (1:18).

See the Bible like that and many of the problems people raise about it are answered. Yes, there's a lot of violence and bloodshed. There are some fairly crazy ideas at times about what men and women thought God wanted them to do. But there is also the thrill of the search and the wonder of discovery - above all, the amazing idea that the One who made us, loves us.

Perhaps the time has come to rescue that copy of the Bible from the bookshelf and take it seriously enough to read it. There are many helps for those who want to start reading the Bible regularly, including daily readings and notes. But the main thing is the intention. Many people will say that they'd like to find out what's in the Bible 'one day'. Well, if it is what it claims to be - the key to the search for truth - then it would be a tragedy to have it in our homes and not even bother to find out what it says. Perhaps 'one day' is *now*?

Why a cat is good for you

Do you own a cat? Then your risk of heart attack or a stroke could be reduced by more than a third.

Apparently, owning a cat lowers your stress and anxiety levels. (Unless of course, kitty scratches the new couch, or flatly refuses to come home in night.) But even so, a recent study at Minnesota University has found that cat

owners tend to outlive non-cat owners.

It is thought that stroking a cat could reduce the level of stress-related hormones in the blood. Reducing stress is known to help protect against heart disease, by lowering blood pressure and reducing the heart rate. Which sounds purr-fect...

What have church magazines in common with wooden spoons?

In the 150 years since the Rev J. Erskine Clarke launched what is thought to be the first 'parish magazine' on the world, they have grown, expanded, and diversified. Nowadays church magazines come in all styles. Some aim at their communities, while others are more specifically church-focused.

Over the years, church magazines have run from one page in length to a whopping 48 - or more - pages. Whereas once stout-hearted parishioners laboured long hours with the stencil duplicator, nowadays many press a few buttons and presto: full colour laserwork.

Church magazines come in all prices. They have ranged from ¼d, to 35p to £1 to totally free. Some have adverts to help towards costs; others eschew such worldly methods. Some are crammed full of information: a glorious jumble of material squeezed in anywhere. Others are meticulously organized, and expansively laid out, with 50% white space.

But amidst all the variety, one thing remains the same: each church magazine is based on a real local church, aiming at its very own local readers. It is (or should be) unpretentious. You could almost call it 'folk literature'.

On *Flog-It* (BBC-2 22 September last) Paul Martin visited a specialist workshop in Tenby and made himself a love spoon in the local

tradition. Contemplating his handiwork, 'It's slightly naïve,' he admitted. 'But there's a lot of heart and soul in it. And that's what it's about in folk art.' That's what the church magazine should be, too.

There's the apocryphal story of the Archdeacon who, when asked what he thought of church magazines, replied: 'If ever I see one,' he replied, 'I burn it before it can do any more harm'. He was obviously missing the point: yes, church magazines may be slightly naïve, but what does it matter? Just so long as they have 'local heart and soul'.

March 27 Rupert (d. c.710)

Rupert is the saint for you if you like The Sound of Music - or salt with your food!

Rupert was bishop of Worms and Salzburg, and it was he who founded the great monastery of St Peter in Salzburg in the eighth century, thus firmly establishing Christianity in that city. True, it would be another 11 centuries before a certain young wanna-be-nun wandered about singing of her Favourite Things and Something Good, but you have start somewhere.

In the meantime, Rupert also helped the people of Salzburg by developing the salt-mines nearby. This was 'something good' as well, because it brought in an income. Though if salt became a too 'favourite thing', it would also have raised the locals' blood pressure.

Rupert's iconographical emblem is a barrel of salt, which makes sense, but is not as romantic as raindrops on roses, or whiskers on kittens.

Carling Sunday

The first Sunday in Lent has no name but the other six are designated by the following couplet:

'Tid, Mid, Miseray, Carling, Palm and Paste Egg Day'

Tid, Mid, and Miseray have been named from the beginning of Psalms and Hymns, viz., Te Deum, Mi Deus and Misereri mei.

The origin of eating fried peas (black peas) or carlings on the fifth Sunday in Lent or, as it is known in Bishop Auckland (that's in the fine county of Durham), Carling Sunday, seems to be wrapped in complete obscurity but local tradition, however, gives a possible origin to this old and still prevailing custom. A famine was raging in Newcastle and a ship laden with food foundered on the north east coast, losing its cargo of peas. This was washed up and greatly appreciated by the communities, so the custom was perpetuated in commemoration of that event. The carlings are soaked overnight in water, boiled well then fried in butter and served with vinegar and bread and butter.

It is the Sunday between Mothering Sunday and Palm Sunday – this year it is on March 29th

Social Events

March 21 – **Games Evening** – Pershore Baptist Church

April 5th – **Palm Sunday Lunch** – Pershore Baptist Church

April 25th – **Skittles Evening** – The New Inn, Cropthorne

June 7th – **Church Walk & Treasure Hunt** – Pershore

September 19th – **Barn Dance** – Peopleton Village Hall

October 17th – **Variety Evening** – Pershore Baptist Church

November 21st – **Quiz & Chips** – Pershore Baptist Church

For details of any of the above see Tracy Wheeler

Badminton 6th and 20th March at Pershore High School – details from Anne Sadler

Summer Time begins on Sunday 29th March.
Clocks go **forward** on hour.
Evening services start at 6pm for the summer

Great Expectations ...

While on holiday recently in California, we travelled from Bakersfield up into the Sierra Nevada mountains for a weekend break. We had been told there was plenty of snow up there and we were going to stay in a cabin – what could be more exciting than that?

We set off from Bakersfield, which is a very flat area on the edge of desert – the promise of mountains, let alone snow was *very* tempting and we packed our bags and set off with great excitement. The scenery in Bakersfield is far from exciting: incredibly flat and dry with acres upon acres of land virtually empty apart from the silhouettes of the 'nodding donkeys' – oil derricks – working monotonously day and night. After about an hour and a half, still looking a million miles away we saw the hazy outline of some mountains – our destination! As we got nearer and actually started climbing, the scenery was definitely improving but there was absolutely no sign of snow. We started joking in the car that people must have got it wrong, or that there had been a miraculous disappearance of any snow that had been there. There was a definite air of disappointment

developing, but at least we had the mountains and the views.

After another long hour of driving along increasingly steep and windy roads, Olly shouted 'There's some!'. 'What?' we said in disbelief. 'Where? I don't believe you!' Then, we all saw a tiny pocket of snow on the roadside, a bit more on the hillside in the distance A few minutes further on it was as though we had entered another world! Snow had fallen, snow on snow!! It was like a real winter wonderland – it must have been at least three or four feet deep in parts, with gloriously blue sky and sunshine to boot! We had arrived! The snow was *very* real! And, to cap it all, it actually started snowing too!

This journey made me think: we know as Christians where we are going – to that winter wonderland or paradise to be with Christ. But the journey there, although full of promise, can be very tiring both physically and emotionally, and we can easily lose sight of our goal and get discouraged along the way. It is definitely there though! It is definitely coming! So let's not get discouraged and give up hope – though times might be tough at the moment, Jesus keeps his promises and we won't be disappointed!

Jacqui John

On the Damascus Road

A look at famous conversions in the history of the Christian Church

Sometime in the summer of 165AD seven Christian men were put to death in Rome. Accused of belonging to an illicit religion, they refused point blank to offer sacrifices to pagan gods. Threatened with torture and execution they replied that suffering and death gave them confidence to appear at the Great Tribunal 'of our Lord and Saviour.' The sentence was pronounced and having been scourged, all seven were beheaded. Their leader was named Justin and we know him in Church History as Justin the Martyr. His conversion to Christianity, although a quiet and low key affair, is a story that should be known.

Justin was born in the year 100AD in Samaria, near the modern town of Nablus. His family was Gentile and pagan and as a young man Justin was drawn to the study of philosophy. Soon he was a recognised pagan philosopher and he began to travel as an itinerant teacher, wearing the distinctive cloak of the philosophers. He tells us that his search for truth led him to study the various schools of Greek philosophy, but in none of them could he find the assurance he was looking for.

Then something happened that radically changed his life. Walking one evening on a sea shore, he fell into conversation with an old man.

Justin listened as the old man told him that the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible had been fulfilled and they could be found in the writings of the Christian Bible. He further told Justin that truth can only be known through the one true God and that his Spirit would enlighten Justin. Justin was deeply moved by the conversation, began to read the New Testament - and was converted to faith in Christ.

Now a Christian believer, Justin continued to travel, still wearing his philosopher's cloak but now preaching and teaching the Christian gospel. He wrote two Apologies explaining and defending the Christian faith. He travelled to Asia Minor and finally to Rome where he taught in a Christian school. His strong defence of Christianity came to the notice of the authorities and he was arrested with six of his friends. Refusing to acknowledge pagan gods, they were executed together. Who was the old man who introduced Justin to Christianity? We don't know and Justin doesn't even tell us his name, if he knew it. Justin's conversion happened because a Christian witnessed to him. We should use every opportunity we have to pass on the Good News!

Too much of the world is run on the theory that you don't need road manners if you are a five ton lorry.

Sign in school hallway:

Free Monday through Friday: knowledge. Bring your own container.

Weekly Church Events

Sundays	
10.30am	Family service with Sunday School Communion 3rd Sundays
5.00pm (6.00pm in summer)	Evening Worship Communion 1st Sundays
Mondays	
1.30pm	Little Fishes playgroup
7.30pm	House Group Middle Lane, Crophorne
7.45pm	Prayer meeting at Church
Wednesdays	
2.00pm	Women's Own – Lower Room
8.00pm	Bible Study 48 Mayfield Road
7.45pm	Prayer and Bible Study 21 Ganderton Court
Thursdays	
10.30am	Baby talk
7.45pm	Deacon's Meeting 1st and 3rd Thursdays

There is a **Monthly Communion service** on a Wednesday at 2.30pm

Impact- A generation Youth Event on 4th Sunday at 7.00pm

The **Thursday Club** meets in the Lower Room at 7.30pm on the 4th Thursday of each month.

Church Badminton is between 8-9pm on 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month in Pershore High School. Details from Anne Sadler.

The **Multiple Sclerosis Group** meet on Monday mornings in the Worship area.

The **St John's Ambulance** use the Upper and Lower Rooms on Tuesday evening.

U3A Choir uses the Church on alternate Wednesdays at 2.15pm.

Thursday Club

On 26th March Rosemary Prosser will give a talk entitled "One egg or two?" The meeting will begin at 7.30pm and be held in the lower schoolroom. All are

Women's Own

March 4	Songs of Praise – Favourite hymns and their background plus AGM
Friday March 13	Day apart at Sansome Walk Baptist Church Rev Sian Murray-Williams
March 18	Communion Service Rev Mark Jennings

AGM – Change of Date

In order to avoid clashing with Mark's award and Graduation Ceremony at Regent's Park College at Oxford, our Church AGM has been brought forward to

Thursday 12th March

The little boy greeted his grandmother at the door with a hug. "I'm so happy to see you Grandma, now Daddy will do the trick he's been promising since your last visit." ... "What trick is that my dear," she asked. The little boy replied, "I heard Daddy telling Mummy that he would climb the wall if you ever came back again."

I have been given a "Prayer Watch" for the Baptist Churches of the Heart of England Baptist Association. They are too long to be included in the Messenger but the relevant churches will be listed. Further details will be on the notice board in the foyer.

The churches for March are

1st	Droitwich Spa	8th	Wythall
15th	Fernhill Heath	22nd	Hope Church, Worcester
29th	Stock Green		



ST DAVID'S DAY 1st March

St David, Saint Dewi in Welsh, is the national saint of Wales. When he is about 30 years old he established a monastery at Glyn Rhosyn, the Vale of Roses. A legend about Glyn Rhosyn says that years before David was born St Patrick came there to settle but an angel sent him on to Ireland, saying that the place was already reserved for David who would be Wales' patron saint. This place is now called St David's (Ty Dewi) where the cathedral now stands.

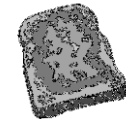
There are lots of legends about St David: one story is that there was very little fresh water near the monastery but when David prayed for water, a spring came up at his feet.

When he was a young man he attended an assembly of bishops where the crowd was so large that people couldn't be heard for the noise. But when David began to speak a hill rose under his feet so that everyone could see and hear him.

MARCH

When we shorten the name of this month we write Mar. ... all the answers to this quiz begin with the letters MAR, so which MAR is.....

1. A breakfast jam made with oranges?
2. A long distance race?
3. Author of one of the Gospels?
4. A small ball of glass?
5. The 4th planet?
6. A wooden puppet?
7. Lazarus' sisters?
8. An alternative to butter?



Answers at the bottom of the page.



How do you get two whales in a car?

Along the A5 and across the Severn Bridge.



Last month I wore white all the time so the traffic could see me.

That must have kept you safe.

No, a snowplough knocked me down.



Answers: 1. marmalade 2. marathon 3. Mark 4. marbles 5. Mars 6. marionette 7. Mary and Martha 8. marmalade

Open Doors organises global youth prayer event for 60m persecuted Christians

International Christian charity Open Doors, founded by Brother Andrew, is organising a global youth prayer event for the estimated 60m young Christians around the world who face persecution every day.

Called *Shockwave*, young believers from more than 50 countries are expected to participate over the weekend of 6-8 March 2009.

Shockwave

(<http://www.odshockwave.org/>)

encourages young Christians to make a particular point of praying for the Persecuted Church - 60% of which is aged under 18 - during those three days. They can take part either singly, or in groups, and for those wanting to pray with large numbers of others, prayer centres have been set up, in Aberdeen, Oxford and Manchester or Bradford, where many hundreds of young people will gather to plead for persecuted Christians worldwide.

Prayers will focus on young persecuted believers such as 16 year old Iraqi girl Asya (Maria) Ahmed Muhammad, who has just been released from prison in Northern Iraq, having spent two years inside for killing her Muslim uncle - in self defence - as he, her grandfather and cousin attacked her after Asya's immediate family converted to Christianity.

Last year, thousands of individuals and groups across the UK took part in *Shockwave* 2008. This year, numbers are expected to swell significantly. Young Christians from 50 nations will be participating in 2009, as opposed to only 30 in 2008.

Shockwave has three aims - to stimulate prayer worldwide, uniting people in seeing God act for his suffering church; to raise awareness of the persecuted church; and to challenge peoples' faith.

Everyone now works for the government, either on the payroll or on the tax roll.

News of the Family

Sadly **Rosemary Faisey** (the daughter of Jim and Grace) has died. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with Jim and Grace.

Also **Marjorie Barber** has died. She attended the church for many years but spent the last few years with her daughter in America. Our prayers are with Arlene and her family.

The following also need our love and prayers to help them through difficult times

Claudine and Alan Mee, Tony Beaton, Lloyd, Mary Pugh, Mary Taylor, Mike and Pat Hooper

Prayer Calendar for March 2009

1	... My grace... all you need	2 Corinthians 12:9
2	Andrew & Ruth Jones & family	
3	Ema & Rob Kirbyson & family	
4	Georgina Klee	
5	Margaret Locker	
6	Jean Lockhart	
7	Marjorie Ludlow	
8	The Son of Man came to serve	Matthew 20:17
9	Tony & Janet Liddington & family	
10	Roz Mackay	
11	David & Diane McBride	
12	Margaret McCully	
13	Colin & Gloria McLellan	
14	Viv McWhirter	
15	He will be our guide even to the end	Psalms 48:14
16	Alan & Claudine Mee	
17	Peter & Eileen Merry	
18	David & Jean Middleton	
19	Florrie Newell	
20	Adrian & Chris Nicholls & family	
21	Joan Orr	
22	Come near to God and He will come near to you	James 4:8
23	Wayne & Carol Palfrey	
24	Roz Palfrey	
25	Kath Parker	
26	Ray & Barbara Pearson	
27	Jayne Pickering	
28	Ken & Jill Porter	
29	Grant pardon and you will be pardoned	Luke 6:36
30	Mike & Wendy Porteus	
31	Ken & Barbara Price	

Editorial

1. Messenger material for the April edition to be in by **noon on Sunday 22nd March**. Please observe this deadline.
2. If there are any serious errors/oversights, please tell me!
3. If you would prefer a larger print version of the Messenger, have a word with me.

Thanks

Mike Taylor