

## Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street

### “Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”

### “IN TOUCH” issue 8

#### News and Updates

1. **Good Wishes** to all who will be celebrating birthdays in the coming days.

2. **Sunday Worship in our ‘Church without Walls’** - Our Service Sheet for 5<sup>th</sup> July is being prepared by Jenny Thomas and for 12<sup>th</sup> July by Revd Bob Thomas.

3. **Church Open for Individual Prayer** – Mondays and Thursdays 10-12 and 2-4, and Sundays 10-12. We have followed all procedures required, including doing a Risk Assessment and ensuring strict safety measures are in place re: social distancing, sanitising of hands and surfaces etc. We hope to be ready to recommence communal worship, when we are given the go ahead to do so.

*(But note these words, passed on by Graham: “Just to be clear, the Church has not been closed, so it doesn’t need to be reopened. We have simply stopped worshipping in our buildings for a time to protect the health and well-being of our people and communities. The church does not require a building in order to be the Church. What is required, is love, compassion, and the presence of God”.)*

4. **Cancellation of Farewell Service, 12<sup>th</sup> July** – Revd Bob writes:

“In the previous issue I asked for suggestions as to how we might mark the conclusion of our ministry here; I have been pondering the question on my early morning perambulations along the banks of the Severn. I have come up with a number of ideas, all of which feel like finishing the knitting but not casting off the stitches.

Some of my colleagues have embraced technological solutions – meeting by zoom, team or some other video conferencing application – which is okay if you have access and ability to use a computer and not everyone else in Powys is saying goodbye to their friends at the same time. Given the number of us that are of a certain age, or are shielding others with a degree of vulnerability, a face to face meeting would exclude a significant proportion of the Circuit.

I’m assuming that since I haven’t had any suggestions you have faced similar difficulties yourselves. I’m pretty sure that it will feel very strange but I believe we have to defer our Circuit ‘Farewell’ until such a time as the pandemic is more truly under control than at present. We sail for Northern Ireland on 18<sup>th</sup> July, but we will be back and to between Tempo and Wrexham for a few years yet, during the course of one of those visits – hopefully sooner rather than later – we can pop across for a service of thanksgiving.

In the meanwhile, let me say ‘thank-you’ for all that we have enjoyed – and on occasions ‘endured’ – of each other these last five years. Methodist circuits have a great deal in common wherever in the UK they lie. They are also quite unique in any number of ways. There is always more to learn of God in the fellowship of the people however irksome the experience may feel at the time. I am grateful for the opportunities that we have shared together, for the learning of God together.

Love and hugs, Bob”

## 5. Induction of President and Vice-President of Conference, 2020 - 2021

The induction took place at Cliff College on 27th June as part of this year's 'virtual' Conference. President, the Revd Richard Teal, comes from a farming background, having grown up in the Yorkshire dales. He has spent the majority of his ministry in rural areas, including 11 years as Chair of the Cumbria District. In his Conference address, with the theme "Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation" he focused on how the last few months of Covid-19 and lockdown have affected the church: "Whoever would have thought a few months ago we would have had to close our doors and lock them, even at Easter! Many of our congregations are feeling totally disorientated, fearful and cut off from the fellowship we enjoy with each other."

Looking ahead at how we can adapt to the impact of the pandemic, he said:

".... Not a return to the same old church but a church which has a reputation for transformation, for recreation and empowerment of what we are living through in the present in response to a faithful God who redeems history and promises the brightest of futures."

The President has chosen the final words of John Wesley as his theme for this year:

'The best of all is, God is with us'.

Vice-President Carolyn Lawrence, a teacher by profession, was an educational mission partner in Guyana and has worked in a voluntary capacity within the Methodist Church as a preacher and leader. More recently she has worked with the Global Relationships team, helping to engage people with the worldwide network of Partner Churches. She is also part of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. She spoke of her passion for the world church in her address to the Conference:

"One thing that I find awe inspiring about the church is that you can be anywhere in the country or the world and know that you can find family. I have had experience of worshipping with Christians in lots of different places in the world, most recently on my visit to the Methodist Church in Brazil, where the church is growing at an amazing rate. I was blown away by their passion for God's Word, their commitment to prayer, their systematic and strategic approach to evangelism, theological training and pastoral care, and the exuberance and joy of their worship. During the year to come I hope to share some of the key principles of church growth that I have learned from the church in Brazil, as I believe they can be applied to our church here in Britain."

*The full text and video of the addresses of the President and Vice-President can be found on the Methodist website: [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)*

**6. Action for Children Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> July** – Action for Children, the children's charity of the Methodist Church, was founded in 1869 by Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson in response to the poverty and danger faced by vulnerable and destitute children and young people living rough on the streets of London. Today, Action for Children, formerly NCH – National Children's Homes (*do you remember selling Sunny Smiles?!*) has grown to become a leading children's charity running over 500 projects and working with more children and young people affected by poverty, disability and abuse than any other UK charity. We support Action for Children each year through our Christmas carol singing in the street and our 'Coffee and Carols' event.

*For more details, or to make a donation, go to: [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)*

## **From Jenny: Making Connections**

As we plan our move to Northern Ireland on 18<sup>th</sup> July we recognise the connections we have there. Family is important and there are cousins I have not met for a number of years, then there are those we met on the last visit over in January who had connections with the bungalow we move into. The last owner Mary keeps in touch, and a neighbour feeds the feral cat Cleopatra in the byre. Mary's cousin works in the local hardware shop, the plumber who installed the bathroom had dealings with Mary's brother, who was his Priest.

The young man who is cutting the grass at the bungalow lives opposite my cousin's best friend's granny. I get the feeling that whatever the incoming family fresh from Wales do will be known about over the whole County Fermanagh so you can be sure we will be on our best behaviour, at least for a while! I hope we do not see our names in print in the local paper, the Impartial Reporter.

The first question you are asked in County Fermanagh is not what you do for a living but where you are from, the conversation around who you have met that they know. It is essential to make connections. Story telling around local characters is still part of meeting and greeting. The locals want you to feel at home, and relationships are built on similar experiences of life.

We are connected with you, the reader, appreciating sharing with you over the past five years and even if we do not manage to meet up in a farewell you can be sure you will not be forgotten. I have especially appreciated serving with other Local Preachers on The Plan, having opportunity to share worship with you.

The Methodist Connexion offers friendship and hospitality to all, as Charles Wesley wrote "He bids us build each other up, and gathered onto one, to our high calling's glorious hope we hand in hand go on."

I am connected with you through shared time and just want to say thank you; as we go to make new connections I carry your fellowship and friendship with me. You can rest assured the kettle will be on if you find yourselves in our area by chance or by invitation.

God bless, Jenny

*(New address: 21 Ummer Road, Ratoran, Tempo, Co. Fermanagh, BT94 3EB)*

## **From Ruthie** *(Ruthie's father was a Methodist minister)*

In the light of Bob moving on, it reminded me of my father's arrival in a new circuit and church. There was the usual welcome meeting accompanied by a "chapel tea" where the congregation could meet the new minister.

At such an event my father spoke to an old lady who said, "Well, Mr Lockyer, I hope you stay for a long time". My father was rather surprised he seemed to have made a hit on minimal contact, until she followed it up with: "... because every time we have a new minister, he gets worse".

And then, after my father's first service in his new appointment, a woman who had sat behind my mother got hold of her and criticised her saying, "I don't think the wife of the minister should wear red lipstick." My mother, a feisty Yorkshire woman replied, "I'll let you into a secret – I wear it because my husband likes the taste!"

They became instant friends!

## **From Julia: Sing Praises!**

*Julia continues to choose hymns for us to sing on Mondays when Jubilate would usually be meeting*

July 3<sup>rd</sup> is the Feast of St Thomas. The story of Thomas gives comfort when doubts bombard and threaten to overtake us. If Thomas, one of the Twelve, should want proof of the resurrection, then we also can find forgiveness when we have difficulty witnessing to it ourselves. On pointing to his palms, where were the imprints of the nails, Jesus, not chiding but understanding, says to Thomas: "You believe because you have seen me; how blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe."

On the theme of hands, for Monday 6<sup>th</sup> the hymn I have chosen is "Father I place into your hands..." hymn 519 in 'Singing the Faith'. When doubts assail us, we fold our own hands in prayer and offer up to God that which we cannot control or always make right.

Born in 1945, Jenny Hower wrote both words and music for this hymn. In each verse we place our concerns in God's hands – "the things I cannot do"; "the times that I've been through"; "our friends and family"; "the things that trouble me" – and in thinking of the Father we see the Son whose hands were cruelly pierced.

To accompany this, for Monday 13<sup>th</sup> I have chosen hymn 548, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine", reminding us that we can have that wonderful assurance in the Gospel of Christ.

Fanny Crosby worked alongside her husband in the mission field and wrote over 8000 hymns for worship and praise. She sent more than three a week to be published. Moody and Sankey used her hymns on their crusades. As a very young child she was wrongly prescribed with a hot mustard compress across her eyes, and was blinded at just a few weeks of age. Hence another reason for coupling her today with St Thomas: "Blessed are those who believe and yet have not seen."

She couldn't see the wonders of creation with her physical eyes, but not only did she have faith to believe in the promises of the Gospel, she accepted her condition without remorse or bitterness. You can find Fanny Crosby in our hymn books many times. Another popular choice is 'To God be the Glory.'

The chorus to today's choice was used in Eucharistic Prayer H in Common Worship, the response harder to say than to sing: THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG.

*Until we meet again for coffee and singing, we join in prayer and praise in our own kitchens. Please do the same on Monday mornings; in this way you too can join Jubilate by pouring yourself a coffee and singing along with us. Best wishes, Julia.*

## **From Andrew: 'The Watchman'**

*Andrew is our Circuit Archivist and Methodist Heritage expert. We listed in "In Touch" a few weeks ago items in the time capsule built into our church, among them being a copy of The Watchman.*

The Watchman was the first Methodist newspaper, launched to defend Wesleyan Methodism against its critics and would-be reformers at the time of the 'Warrenite' agitation. It appeared weekly from 1835 until 1884 but from 1846 was titled "The Watchman and the Wesleyan Advertiser". It represented the conservative wing of the Connexion but was counterbalanced later by the more liberal "Methodist Recorder" launched in 1861.

Dr Samuel Warren, a Methodist reformer and leader of the Warrenites, had entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1802. In 1833, he was on a committee with Dr Jabez Bunting, planning for the education of young ministers. The committee went beyond its brief by nominating Bunting (who already held too many posts in the Connexion) as President of the Theological Institution. Warren (and others) attacked the scheme by issuing various tracts, and was expelled by Conference. He then set up the breakaway Wesleyan Methodist Association (WMA) but later left, and became an Anglican.

The 'Warrenite Controversy' and the setting up of the WMA following so soon after several other breakaway groups was a last straw which led to the launch of *The Watchman* in 1835 in an attempt to preserve the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and prevent further secessions. The first editor was Humphrey Sandwith, a prominent Wesleyan layman from Bridlington who, in 1825, had made a name for himself by violently opposing a drive to bring Methodism back into the Anglican fold.

Bunting held many posts in Methodism, was four times President of Conference, ten years Secretary of Conference, and among other posts had been the first secretary and mastermind of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Bunting provided much needed leadership at a critical time for the Wesleyans and was a more representative figure than the crude dictator vilified by his opponents.

*(Taken from 'A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland' edited by John A Vickers, Epworth Press, 2000)*

### **From Allan E: Memories** *(Memories of a childhood friend, who was awarded the Military Cross)*

He lay still in the bracken, knowing the slightest movement would reveal his position to the park keeper. Thirty yards separated them and he knew that the old man was unlikely to wade into the thicket. The late afternoon passed slowly but when the hall clock struck five the park keeper would go home. Allowing another twenty minutes to be certain, the boy was swiftly over the park wall, to face the wrath of his schoolmaster father for being late for tea. At least he had a rabbit to add to the wartime rations and he still had his beloved air rifle.

He was among the first out of the landing craft. As the ramp grounded on the Normandy beach, he tripped over the body of his sergeant who had taken the full force of incoming fire. Eventually the 45 Commando grouped and for the next two weeks edged their way into the French countryside. They met a blockage. Three men were picked off by a sniper holed up in a shrubbery across a valley commanding a view of the road where tanks could pass.

He was given the job of removing the sniper. Under good cover he ranged his glasses, searching for any sign of movement. The afternoon stretched on and he needed to use the light. Removing his green beret he attached it to a lanyard and using a stick, raised the hat within the tips of the bracken. He tugged gently from where he lay. Two shots passed over. Sighting his rifle on the tell-tale wisps of smoke fifty yards away, he silenced the sniper.

He survived the campaign. They offered him corporal's stripes to remain in the Royal Marines. He opted for demob, still not yet twenty one, having falsified his age on joining. They told him to forget it, but he could not.

### **From Eileen: Childhood Memories**

I was almost four when it seemed that my life was being turned upside down. At the time I felt everything had changed and in fact much of it had!

By this time local people were accustomed to new things and ways of working. One of these was that when we heard a siren we must take cover. Only when the "All Clear" was heard could we relax again. It wasn't enough just to stay indoors – if there were a direct hit from the Luftwaffe, or "Air Weapon", then our home in a Glasgow Council House could be flattened. So we shared with another family nearby, the McMath family next door. Together we could have an Anderson shelter! This shelter was formed from a bent over piece of corrugated iron. Sometimes the sirens were quiet but on other nights there were interruptions.

On one particular night in late March 1941 there were many sirens and "All Clears". For me there were just too many times to go out and to come in! I was tired and I couldn't take any more of it! All I could say was "I won't come this time, Daddy!" In response, my father said nothing at all. He just picked me up and carried me to the shelter. After that, I can remember nothing more of the night or – to be exact – of the morning.

When the light of day came, we could see that we had been lucky. There was broken glass all around but to this day I have a blue vase, broken then, but now glued together.

My parents were deciding what to do for the best. They decided we could go to Leek, where my grandparents were. After some clearing up we set off, arriving at a small B&B for the night, where it was peaceful and pleasant. The next day we at last arrived at Leek, and we were so happy to be welcomed there.

### **From Helen E: 'The Prayer Stool'** *(by Graham Kings, from 'Growing Hope', Iona Community)*

I leave aside my shoes – my ambitions,  
Undo my watch – my timetable,  
Take off my glasses – my views,  
Unclip my pen – my work,  
Put down my keys – my security,  
To be alone with you, the only true God.

After being with you,  
I take up my shoes to walk in your ways,  
Strap on my watch to live in your time,  
Put on my glasses to look at your world,  
Clip on my pen to write up your thoughts,  
Pick up my keys to open your doors.

### **From Betty H:**

We've all been in a strange place these last three months, and wondering what 'Normal' will mean or even look like when we finally come out of Lockdown. Awareness of everyday life has been in surprising places and situations and I'm reminded of a piece I came across years ago, which I think during this lockdown we've all had glimpses of ...

"It is not simply having material comforts which make life comfortable.

It is preoccupation with something worthwhile, which makes life worthwhile." Anon

## **An Obituary printed in “The London Times”**

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long lost in bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain
- Why the early bird gets the worm
- Life isn't always fair
- Maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place.

Reports of a 6 year old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student, but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted an abortion,

Common Sense lost the will to live as churches became businesses, and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death

- by his parents Truth and Trust
- by his wife, Discretion
- by his daughter, Responsibility
- by his son, Reason

He is survived by his 4 stepbrothers

- I know my rights
- I want it now
- Someone else is to blame
- I'm a victim

Not many attended his funeral because so few realised he was gone.

If you still remember him, pass this on.

If not, join the majority and do nothing.

## Answers to Puzzles in Issue 7: Parts of the human body

1 Iris; 2 Calf; 3 Instep; 4 Humerus; 5 Palette; 6 Eyes; 7 Navel; 8 Colon; 9 Hips; 10 Foot; 11 Sole; 12 Hare; 13 Toe; 14 Chest or Trunk; 15 Vein; 16 Teeth; 17 Pupils; 18 Arm; 19 Tendons; 20 Artery; 21 Temple; 22 Shoulder; 23 Nose; 24 Heel; 25 Heart; 26 Pelvis; 27 Bottom; 28 Palm; 29 Lip; 30 Crown

## Quiz Time: find the Animals

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Wet weather, my love (8)              | 16. Against long bounding stride (8)               |
| 2. Emblem that's initially not left (6)  | 17. Just naked (4)                                 |
| 3. Polish with a circle of light (7)     | 18. Rummage around (6)                             |
| 4. Joins rings together (4)              | 19. Trickster (7)                                  |
| 5. Short hello with E Sharples (5)       | 20. Cooking utensil for short father (5)           |
| 6. Recline upon (4)                      | 21. Imitate (3)                                    |
| 7. Husky voice (5)                       | 22. Post for feline mouser (7)                     |
| 8. Cheerio, my lad (5)                   | 23. Fried potato, for the holy man (8)             |
| 9. US last letter + woman's support (5)  | 24. Rocky hill + playthings ( <i>reptile</i> ) (8) |
| 10. Engraved stamp, mark of office (4)   | 25. <b>British Airways</b> with a blessing (6)     |
| 11. Depart IV (timber used by Noah) (6)  | 26. French 'My' Christmas bird (8)                 |
| 12. With trot it makes a dance (3)       | 27. President George & tiny child (8)              |
| 13. A lady's grey one is not welcome (4) | 28. (Dog) Makes noise then leaves (5)              |
| 14. Getting warmer? (5)                  | 29. Pig meat you long for (9)                      |
| 15. Fence of bushes, for swine (8)       | 30. Bolt one's food (4)                            |

## Laughter – the best medicine!

### From Pat P:

Three boys were once discussing what their fathers did.

The first one said: "My father puts together a few words that rhyme, calls it poetry, and gets £20 for it".

The second one said: "My father puts a few pieces of wood together, calls it a piece of sculpture, and gets £50 for it".

"That's nothing", said the third boy. "My father writes a few notes, calls it a sermon, and it takes four men to carry the money!"

### And finally, two little verses:

#### Longing

I wish I was a little grub  
With whiskers round my tummy  
I'd climb into a honey pot  
And make my tummy gummy

#### Fleet Flight

A flea met a fly in a flue  
Said the flea, let us fly  
Said the fly, let us flea  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue

**Thanks** to all of you who have been 'in touch' with contributions for this issue. Please send your news, messages, thoughts, poems, prayers, quizzes, funny stories etc. for issue 9, which will be out on 15<sup>th</sup> July, to [rhodes4144@gmail.com](mailto:rhodes4144@gmail.com), or by phone 01938 850514, or by post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, by 11<sup>th</sup> July. All contributions welcome. (Cake orders: Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514).