

Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street

“Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”

“IN TOUCH” issue 22, 13th January 2021

News and Updates

1. **Condolences** – we extend sympathy to the Ballard family following the death of Richard. He will be much missed by all the church family and throughout the town, where he was a popular figure known to many.

2. **Good Wishes** – to Roy Cook, who has moved to Flat 1, Dorothy Hughes House. His telephone number is unchanged. We hope he settles happily in his new home.

3. **Church Closure** – at a meeting via Zoom of the Circuit Leadership Team on 5th January, chaired by Revd Jacquie, it was agreed that, in view of the current Covid crisis, a recommendation should be issued to all circuit churches that they should close forthwith. Our stewards have agreed closure of our church, both for Sunday worship, for private prayer on Wednesdays, and for any mid week groups meetings. CLT will meet again towards the end of the month to review the situation.

4. **Worship Sheets** – these will continue to be produced and sent out to all on our email, postal and local delivery lists. For those who have paper copies of the Worship Sheets and of “In Touch”, we do offer LARGE PRINT versions of both. If this would be of benefit to you, please let us know – tel. 01938 850514.

5. **2021 Covenant Service** - this was held on 3rd January, conducted by Revd Marian. This year a number of you were unable to attend as you were shielding at home, or because the wintry weather prevented you from venturing out. For the benefit of those unable to be present, here is a reminder of our **Covenant Prayer**:

I am no longer my own but yours.

Your will, not mine, be done in all things,

Wherever you may place me,

In all that I do and in all that I may endure;

When there is work for me and when there is none;

When I am troubled and when I am at peace.

Your will be done

When I am valued and when I am disregarded;

When I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;

When I have all things, and when I have nothing.

I willingly offer

All I have and am

To serve you, as and where you choose.

Glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are mine and I am yours. May it be so for ever.

Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven.

Amen

A New Year Message from the Synod Chair, Revd Dr Stephen Wigley

To Welshpool Methodist Church

Dear Friends

The 12 days of Christmas have now passed and in the Wigley household, as in so many others, the cards have been taken down, the decorations put away and the lights turned off, leaving the manse looking darker and less colourful.

This may reflect something of what we are all feeling as we face the reality of months of restrictions ahead while we await the delivery of the coronavirus vaccine offering some hope for the future.

However, in one of my Zoom meetings, I noted that a colleague still had a crib scene on the shelf behind him, as indeed we do on a bookshelf in the lounge. He, like us, plans to keep that on display until the Feast of Candlemas (or the Presentation in the Temple) on 2nd February, as a reminder that the life of Christ has now entered the world and dwells among us.

Now a crib set is not as colourful or as gaudy as some of the Christmas decorations, but it does point the way to show that the light and life of Christ lives, not necessarily in great celebrations and events, but in small ways in human lives and relationships.

I'm very conscious that this Christmas, Jenny and I have been unable to see or to visit our respective mothers. However, I take comfort from knowing that they have been supported by friends, neighbours and their local church communities through words of encouragement and little acts of kindness.

We are all very conscious of living with the restrictions and I share in the frustration and uncertainty that this can bring. But it seems to me that there are still many little things we can do in other ways to support and encourage one another in these difficult times, and which will show that the life which is revealed in the crib scenes still lives on in our hearts and homes.

With every blessing for the New Year,

Stephen

A Prayer for the Winter Season *(from a Friendship Book - appropriate for our current situation)*

The winter seems a long time, Lord,
A long time until spring,
A long time 'til we see green shoots and hear the small birds sing.
So whilst the days are short and dark,
Please keep us safe and strong,
Let cheerful music lift our souls; place in our hearts a song.

Through wintry winds, through frost and fog,
Let every doubt dispel,
And let your love fill all our lives, and whisper "All is well."
We thank you Lord, for home and food,
The blessings of each day,
Let hope and joy light up our world 'til winter slips away.

Sing Praises! Julia's choice of hymns for weeks beginning 18th and 25th January

"Lord Jesus Christ" StF 594 It was during Patrick Appleford's time as director of Education of the Chelmsford Diocese, after a priesthood in which he had served in Lusaka as Dean, that he found himself repeatedly asked to speak in other churches and conferences about his hymn writing. He came to speak to us in 1980 when we lived in Hampshire before coming back to the family area of the Marches. Patrick Appleford was born in the same year as my father, 1925, and died only 2 years ago, on 9th December 2018. His most famous and best-loved hymn is probably the one I am introducing today. It is one I recall singing as a young girl in my church choir – we sang it first at a Sunday School Festival/Anniversary, but it was sung often at this time of year on Sundays. It's a beautiful hymn to sing at Epiphany because it is about the incarnation and the revelation of Christ. It reminds us that at Advent we prayed 'Emmanuel, come to us'. Now we are overjoyed because he has come to us, as Mary's son, in human flesh, and as God's Son to redeem us, to bring us his body and blood to cleanse us, to go out to die on Calvary's tree. Appleford continues to use the word Command – not asking, or pleading, or requesting. No! We are commanded ('*You have commanded us to do this in remembrance, Lord of you*'). Although this is a lovely flowing and gently moving hymn, it is one in which we are challenged to realise the truth of the gifts and cleansing messages of the ministry of Christ – 'Living Lord'... the phrase is repeated, and finally rises in that glorious ending: "Into our lives your power breaks through, Living Lord!"

Our next hymn I feel complements this first one – **StF 658 "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify"**. If in the previous hymn we have asked to be taught how to pray, here we are asking for help as we watch and pray. We pledge to keep the trust we have been given, to serve the present age, and to do the Master's will. I guess I can tell you nothing more about Charles Wesley than you already know – an 18th century gentleman dying in 1788, aged 81. In Wesley's hymns, we always have rhyming words to help us learn and remember. This was important at the time, as in general hymns were learnt by listening not by reading, as so few of Wesley's hearers would have the opportunity to learn how to read and write. When we learn by rhyme it is so much easier to commit words to memory. I would imagine this enabled Charles Wesley to lead the singing too – he was a prolific hymn writer, with so many hymns to share and continue to use in worship.

As I write, the streaks of pink are now crossing the sky as dusk falls. I have just been visited by Red Legged Partridges crossing the lawn where earlier today the blackbirds were pecking. When we are singing these hymns, it will be the time of the Big Garden Bird Watch. I hope the birds in your garden are giving you joy. Julia.

"Robin"

Hedgerow-hidden bird pipes reveille's call,
Ev'ry cadence heard, hedgerow-hidden bird,
Not a leaf is stirred,
Secret, brown and small,
Hedgerow-hidden bird pipes reveille's call.

From "An Unremarkable Morning", a selection of poems by Andrea Davies

Listen to, look for, and enjoy the robins in your garden!

From Clive: Pooh and Piglet and the Pandemic

Pooh woke up that morning, and, for reasons that he didn't entirely understand, couldn't stop the tears from coming. He sat there in bed, his little body shaking and he cried, and cried, and cried.

Amidst his sobs, the phone rang.

It was Piglet.

"Oh Piglet," said Pooh, between sobs, in response to his friend's gentle enquiry as to how he was doing. "I just feel so Sad - so, so Sad, almost like I might not ever be happy again. And I know that I shouldn't be feeling like this. I know there are so many people who have it worse off than me, and so I really have no right to be crying, with my lovely house, and my lovely garden, and the lovely woods all around me. But oh, Piglet: I am just SO Sad."

Piglet was silent for awhile, as Pooh's ragged sobbing filled the space between them. Then, as the sobs turned to gasps, he said kindly: "You know - it isn't a competition."

"What isn't a competition?" asked a confused sounding Pooh.

"Sadness; fear; grief," said Piglet. "It's a mistake we often make, all of us, to think that, because there are people who are worse off than us that that somehow invalidates how we are feeling. But that simply isn't true. You have as much right to feel unhappy as the next person; and, Pooh, - this is the really important bit - you also have just as much right to get the help that you need."

"Help, what help?" asked Pooh. "I don't need help, Piglet. Do I?"

Pooh and Piglet talked for a long time, and Piglet suggested to Pooh some people that he might be able to call to talk to, because when you are feeling Sad, one of the most important things is not to let all of the Sad become trapped inside you, but instead to make sure that you have someone who can help you, who can talk with you how the Sad is making you feel, and some of the things that might be able to be done to support you with that.

What's more, Piglet reminded Pooh that this support is there for absolutely everyone, that there isn't a minimum level of Sad that you have to be feeling before you qualify to speak to someone.

Finally, Piglet asked Pooh to open the window and look up at the sky, and Pooh did so.

"You see that sky?" Piglet asked his friend. "Do you see the blues and the golds and that big fluffy cloud that looks like a sheep eating a carrot?"

Pooh looked, and he could indeed see the blues and the golds and the big fluffy cloud that looked like a sheep eating a carrot.

"You and I," continued Piglet, "we are both under the same sky. And so, whenever the Sad comes, I want you to look up at that sky, and know that, however far apart we might be physically... we are also, at the same time, together - perhaps, more together than we have ever been before."

"Do you think this pandemic will ever end?" asked Pooh in a small voice.

"This too shall pass," confirmed Piglet. "And I promise you, one day, you and I shall once again sit together, close enough to touch...under that blue gold sky."

We all need a piglet in our lives.

(Published for World Mental Health Day 2020)

A cuppa and a break with the Revd Kate Bottley

(From the latest issue of "Heart and Soul", Methodist Homes for the Aged supporters' magazine)

BBC Radio 2 and 'Songs of Praise' presenter the Revd Kate Bottley spoke about MHA's recent campaign to tackle loneliness and isolation.

As the voice of our recent fundraising TV campaign, why is tackling loneliness and isolation so important?

We have an increasing older population and as a mobile society, loved ones don't always live around the corner any more. We don't always know the people who live around us, and whilst at the start of lockdown there was a real sense of enthusiasm to build connections, we need to ensure there is longevity in supporting people in later life.

How have you had to adapt your work throughout this time?

I've found for BBC Radio 2 and Songs of Praise that more people are listening and watching to bring comfort in very uncertain times. It can't replace a hug from a loved one but we have become more aware of the music we choose and the words we use. Sadly, funerals have seen big changes. Usually, I would visit the family, get to know them and get a picture of who the person was. Instead we've had to use phones, and adapt our services too as unfortunately there can be no hymns or handshaking.

How important is the role of chaplain in these challenging times?

Being a chaplain is incredibly important. It's about nurturing spiritual health and well being, from reading a magazine with someone or chatting about football scores, to talking about death and dying, and supporting end-of-life care. It's about having a supportive person to lean on regardless of faith or position, and as we come out of this crisis, a chaplain's role will be to facilitate a safe space for people to process their grief and come to terms with the heartbreaking losses we are experiencing.

Is there a passage which you'd like to share to bring comfort at this time?

'Sufficient unto the day' - it simply means, do not worry about tomorrow! (Matthew 6:34). At this challenging time it's important to take one step and day at a time. Each day, focus on doing small things which will make a big difference.

What are you most grateful for in lockdown?

There is so much, but mostly it is increased connectedness through technology, my neighbours, and letter writing. It's the way communities have come together and protected each other. I have never had more contact with loved ones through the gift of technology, and opening the door to find a jar of jam on my doorstep is a lovely act of kindness we need more of.

What one thing will you carry on doing that you didn't do before?

Stop saving clothes for 'best'! I have taken to putting on a full length gown, high heels and makeup to go and do my weekly shop at Aldi and I'm definitely going to continue this! It comes back to embracing every day. The wardrobe isn't meant to keep clothes warm!

What lessons do you think we can take?

We need to use our local knowledge to keep communities alive, and if everyone did one kind thing for someone else we can make a difference to peoples' lives.

Snowdrops - *now appearing in our gardens and lanes, signs of better days to come*

Although carpets of snowdrops are a common sight in January the plant is not native to the UK; its native range is mainland Europe and south west Asia, where it is known by various names. In France it is known as the 'perce-neige' because it pierces the snow, whilst the Germans call it 'Schneeglockchen', little snowbell; its Latin name is Galanthus from the Greek for "milk flower". The flower has a long association with the Christian Festival of Candelmas (2nd February) and was often used to decorate churches during the celebration. This earned it the alternative name of Candlemas Bells. When exactly the snowdrop was first introduced to our country is unknown, but it is thought that it may have been grown as an ornamental garden plant as early as the 16th century, although it isn't until the 18th century that it is recorded as growing in the wild. Whatever name it is given and whatever country it is growing in, one thing is certain, the snowdrop reminds us all that when winter comes, spring is not far behind. As a result, the flower has long been viewed as a symbol of hope for better times ahead.

To a Snowdrop

Sweet little trembling thing, each year you come to herald spring,
You brave the last of winter's chill, ahead of nodding daffodil.
Down the lane and in the wood, your pure white stately flowers flood.
Our hearts, I'm sure, would poorer be without your magic tracery.

Pause for Thought 1 – World Statistics: Earth's Population in Perspective

The population of Earth is around 7.8 billion. That's a large figure. However, if 7.8 billion is considered in terms of a manageable 100 persons, then the resulting analysis becomes far simpler to comprehend.

Out of 100:-

11 are in Europe, 5 in North America, 9 in South America, 15 in Africa, 60 in Asia

49 live in the countryside, 51 live in cities

77 have their own houses, 23 have no place to live

12 speak Chinese, 5 speak Spanish, 5 speak English, 3 speak Arabic, 3 speak Hindi, 3 speak Bengali, 3 speak Portuguese, 2 speak Russian, 2 speak Japanese, and 62 speak their own particular language

21 are over-nourished, 63 can eat until full, 15 are under-nourished, 1 will not make it to the next meal

87 have clean drinking water, 13 either lack clean drinking water or have access to a water source which is polluted

75 have mobile phones, 25 do not

30 have internet access, 70 do not have conditions to go online

7 received university education, 93 did not attend college

83 can read; 17 are illiterate

33 are Christians, 22 are Muslims, 14 are Hindus, 7 are Buddhists, 12 are of other religions; 12 have no religious beliefs

26 will live less than 14 years, 66 will die between 15 and 64 years, 8 will be over 65

If you have your own home, eat full meals and drink clean water, have a mobile phone, can surf the internet, and have gone to college, you are in the miniscule privileged less than 7% category.

Amongst 100 persons in the world, only 8 will live to, or exceed, the age of 65. If you are over 65 years old, be content and grateful. Cherish life, grasp the moment. You did not leave this world before the age of 64 like the 92 persons who have gone before you. You are already blessed amongst mankind. Take good care of your own health, and cherish every remaining moment.

Pause for Thought 2 - Slow Down!

A young, successful executive was driving a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars but none appeared. Instead a brick smashed into the Jag's side door. He slammed on the brakes and reversed to where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearby kid and pushed him up against a parked car, shouting, "What was that all about? What the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister... please, I'm sorry, but I didn't know what else to do. I threw the brick because no-one else would stop." With tears running down his face the boy pointed to a spot just behind a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the kerb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back in his wheelchair. He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair then took out his fancy handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him that everything was going to be OK. "Thank you and God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Feeling shaken, the man watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the street towards their home. The damage to his car was very noticeable but he didn't bother to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message, "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!"

Sometimes when we don't have time to listen to God, he throws a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not. He didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow or sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way.

(Dr Emily Blank)

Pause for Thought 3 – The Serenity Prayer (to make you smile!)

Most of us will be familiar with the Serenity Prayer, which goes:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference"

But there's a more pro-active, if slightly tongue-in-cheek version too:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change,
The courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know – it's me!"

Puzzle Time: something different, sent in by Betty, source unknown

Synonyms – these pairs of words have no relation, but move one letter from one word to another to connect them, e.g. OAK and WEST – if you move the S from West and put it in Oak you can make two now related words, SOAK and WET.

Good luck!

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|-----|--------|-------|
| 1. | Boost | Hoe | 2. | Stripe | Bar |
| 3. | Fast | Tout | 4. | Thigh | All |
| 5. | Shard | Tern | 6. | Fiend | Rally |
| 7. | Ban | Shred | 8. | Pawn | Had |
| 9. | Sack | Trick | 10. | Ash | Bleat |
| 11. | Mid | Amiss | 12. | Knee | Blend |
| 13. | Bet | Bland | 15. | Shut | Hack |
| 15. | Unit | Weed | 16. | Boast | Hip |
| 17. | Aunt | Glean | 18. | Singe | Lone |
| 19. | Acorn | Whet | 20. | Kid | Snort |

Answers to Puzzles in Issue 21: All to do with London

1. London Eye
2. Madame Tussauds
3. Kings Cross
4. Regent Street
5. Cockney Rhyming Slang
6. Serpentine
7. Blackfriars
8. Selfridges
9. Globe Theatre
10. Chelsea
11. Eurostar
12. Scotland Yard
13. Hyde Park
14. Soho
15. Mayfair
16. Paddington
17. Pall Mall
18. Marble Arch
19. South Bank
20. Billingsgate Fish Market

Thanks to those who have contributed to this issue of "In Touch". Please send material for issue 23, out on 27th January, to rhodes4144@gmail.com, by phone 01938 850514, or post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, by 23rd. All contributions are welcome - news, comments, thoughts, prayers, poems, interesting information, funny stories, puzzles etc.

Cake orders to Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514