


the connexion




Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission

It does this through

- Worship
- Learning and Caring
- Service
- Evangelism

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Inspiring stories from the life of your **Methodist Church**



Deacon
Myrtle Poxon
Guest Editor

Our calling

Looking and looking but not seeing. We all have those times when staring at something, because we are so focused on just one thing, we miss much of what else is there. As a Church following the Conference, our focus was very much drawn to declining numbers and the issues that brings. It seems the challenge we have now is to refocus on what we are truly about and to see what is already happening around us.

I hear that at the last Connexional Leadership Forum there was a true sense of being led by the Spirit. This grew into a consensus about the need to refocus and use the report we had agreed a few years ago of *Our Calling*. There have been various papers offered to spur us on. What it meant to be “the whole people of God”, to be challenged to “Love and Praise” and the priorities that came out of *Our Calling*.

These are but tools to help us focus on God – still calling us as Methodists to fulfil our calling and so be part of a people actively involved in seeing God’s transformational power change lives.

As guest editor for this edition of *the connexion*, I encouraged people in the Church to share some of their many stories of God’s transforming power.

This issue, as with previous ones, contains many exciting stories of how the Church, in familiar and new ways, is making a difference and being an example of the living presence of God in the world.

You will also read about Methodist young people at 3Generate voting in their new President for 2018/2019. Jasmine Yeboah’s challenge to our young people was to be “courageous”. And it is time for us as a Church to be courageous.

Let us refocus and see that God is still moving through the Methodist Church. Let us be aware that it is God’s calling on us that we can work out through offering living worship, enabled by learning and caring, to serve, fulfilling our mission and so enabling others not only to hear the good news but to receive it.

Deacon Myrtle Poxon

The Revd Dr David W Perry is taking a break from editing *the connexion* while he recovers from illness.

Go to www.methodist.org.uk/theconnexion to order more copies of *the connexion*, or to download articles for use in your own church magazine. Images are available at www.flickr.com/methodistmedia

To send us your comments about this issue please email theconnexioneditor@methodistchurch.org.uk

the connexion

Issue 10 • Winter 2018

Published by the Methodist Church in Britain © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) 2018. Registered charity no. 1132208.

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Photo credits

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Thy Kingdom Come

The Methodist Church is contributing to *Thy Kingdom Come*, the global prayer initiative, prompting people to pray that more people might know Jesus. The new resources include Methodist worship materials written by the Revd Catherine Dixon and a collection of prayers and reflections by the Revd Michaela Youngson, President-Designate and one of the Chairs of the London District. These will supplement *Thy Kingdom Come's* materials in a new edition for use between Ascension and Pentecost 10-20 May 2018. District champions are also being appointed and Beacon events will take place around the UK.

www.thykingdomcome.global • www.mph.org.uk



Methodist Church signs Armed Forces Covenant

The Methodist Church has signed the Armed Forces Covenant pledging its commitment to fair treatment and support to the whole armed forces community. Alongside public recognition of the value of the armed forces, the Methodist Church made a number of specific commitments including recruiting veterans and providing them with support.

www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events

Methodist-Catholic dialogue

A delegation of Methodists, including representatives from the World Methodist Council and the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, met with Pope Francis to celebrate 50 years of Methodist-Catholic dialogue. Marking the formation of the Joint International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission in 1967, Pope Francis commented: "True dialogue gives us the courage to encounter one another in humility and sincerity, in an effort to learn from one another, and in a spirit of honesty and integrity."

Train to be named after John Wesley

A new train on the Great Western Railway is to be named after John Wesley. The announcement comes following a competition to find the "100 Greatest Westerners of all Time" by the Bristol Post and the Great Western Railway. David Worthington, manager of The New Room, Bristol, suggested Wesley.



Beginning with God

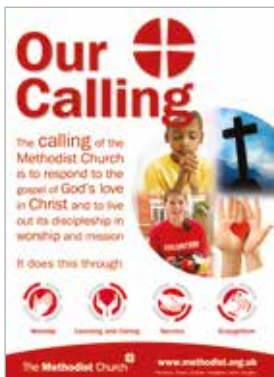
The Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Canon Gareth J Powell, encourages the Church to revisit vital questions that reaffirm our calling

“Who is this?”

Matthew 21:10, NRSV

**“Who are you?”
said the
Caterpillar.”**

Alice's Adventures
in Wonderland



When meeting someone new, you might expect to be asked “What do you do?” Or perhaps, slightly more bluntly, “Who are you?” It is intriguing that initial encounters with strangers are often the setting for two such profound questions. *Called to Love and Praise: The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice*, adopted as a Conference Statement in 1999, begins with similar questions – but addressed to the Body of Christ: “What is the Church and what is it for?” (Section 1.1.1)

Conversations in community
Our Calling and *Called to Love and Praise* represent two of the ways that the Methodist Church has sought to discern and distil the answers to

these vital questions. For Methodists, our understanding of God and ourselves is not a private matter: it emerges from ongoing creative enquiry in community, as stressed in Kenneth Wilson’s *Methodist Theology*. The process of discerning “a vision of what the Church is for and where we are going” that resulted in *Our Calling* and the “Priorities for the Methodist Church” involved discussions at local church, circuit, district and wider connexional levels, and with our ecumenical partners. *Called to Love and Praise*, similarly, was almost ten years in the making.

Our Methodist processes of conferring, which may sometimes seem arduous, mean that both documents have the power to *capture, explain* and *shape* who we are and what we do – our

conversations in community both provide a snapshot of our common life and help to shape us for God's continuing purposes.

In reaffirming *Our Calling*, our current practices are challenged. In light of ongoing and urgent discussions around our triennial statistical returns, *Our Calling* serves as a reminder that *who we are and what we do begins with God* ("The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ..."). We love, because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). We are able to seek to offer the very best we can in our *worship*, our *learning and caring*, our *service* and our *evangelism*, because of all that God has done for us.

Called to Love and Praise affirms this: the Church's "mission and its worship ... are the response to God's undeserved, unstinting love in Christ ... As agent of God's mission, the Church is a sign, foretaste and instrument of the kingdom" (Section 1.4.1). And so it is with confidence in God – not in ourselves, or even in the Methodist Church – that we seek to live out our purpose and our priorities.

Questions for vision

The vision for *Our Calling* endorsed by the 2000 Conference was accompanied by a number of questions for consideration by churches, circuits and districts. Through a process of gathering together to discuss these questions, churches, circuits and districts became better aware of their strengths and weaknesses, found permission to let go of certain activities

***"To serve the present age,
my calling to fulfil;
O may it all my powers
engage
to do my Master's will!"***

Charles Wesley (1707-1788),
Singing the Faith 658, v.2

and begin others, and saw more clearly the areas of their life that were central to the Church's worship and mission and those that were peripheral.

The 2017 Conference encouraged Church Councils to ask searching questions about their plans for the future. As an agent of the mission of a dynamic God, our answer to the questions "who are we, and what are we for?" cannot be allowed to gather dust. We must forever be asking questions – seeking to go deeper – paying attention to our context, so that we might better serve the present age, our calling to fulfil (to borrow from Charles Wesley's hymn).

How might a reaffirmation of the calling that binds us together as a Connexion shape our future – as we continue to answer questions about identity?

The stories in this issue show some of the ways in which our districts, circuits and churches are seeking to answer these questions, and may inspire you to fresh thinking.

***Reaffirming
Our Calling
challenges
our current
practices***





Superintendent Minister the Revd Peter Catford tells how Stockton Circuit is imaginatively embracing record numbers of Baptisms

A Baptism ‘hot-spot’

In the last connexional year Stockton Circuit celebrated 100 Baptisms. Over half of these took place in Thornaby Methodist Church, where, on average, 60 people attend every service. We have had the opportunity to welcome around 6,000 people of all ages to celebrations of the sacrament of Baptism in the circuit.

What a God-given opportunity to take seriously the Great Commission of Jesus!

Overwhelmed

Yet it doesn't always feel that way. We have felt overwhelmed, under-resourced, confused about what we believe and deeply unsettled by the variety of our responses. This year we have taken the opportunity to explore as a circuit, both staff and churches,

what a privilege and responsibility we have been given and how this can be used to nurture the growth of faith in us all.

Statistics show this large number of Baptisms has been a regular feature of Stockton Circuit life over the last 15 years or more. Here in Stockton and in pockets across the Connexion there continue to be large numbers of families requesting infant Baptisms. Families and communities with and without formal church affiliations are publicly joining in the Baptism service. It has led us to ask why.

When I arrived in the circuit a year or so ago there was a strange mix of opinions. While welcoming and enjoying the celebration of baptizing, our churches felt overtaken by the sheer numbers.

The Great Commission of Jesus

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
Matthew 28:19

Listening to families

But as the year has progressed, with the help of the Revd Dr Martin Ramsden, we have begun to listen more to the families who come requesting Baptisms. We have been taking an interest in who they are, the faith they have and how that is expressed.

It has become clear to us that the time to build relationships is between the request for a Baptism and when the service takes place. It is not about hoops to jump through, but simply about being interested in each other. This has led to some surprising results, including a baby shower for Jesus during Advent 2017 and a Quiet Room for prayer and reflection now permanently offered at Thornaby.

In response to the conversations, the Baptism services themselves have begun to change. There is a time in which we remember the special people of faith that each family has. There is a recognition of the responsibility of everyone in the upbringing of a child – friends, family and local church. And the use of media in the service has opened up space for reflection and has led to some families providing their own input at times.

Building relationships

The circuit has recently obtained funding from the Darlington District to employ a Baptismal Support Worker who will be



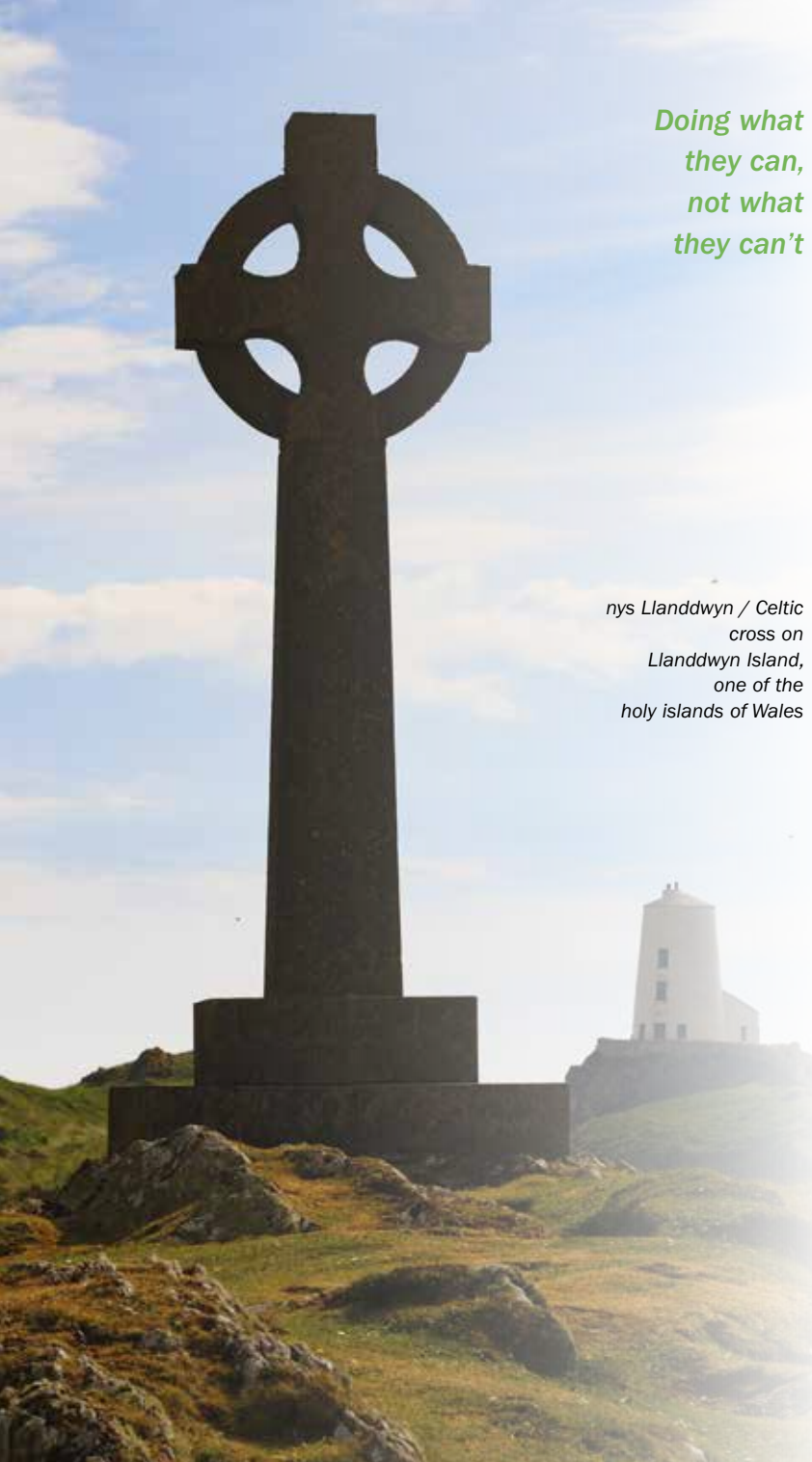
Thornaby Methodist Church prayer room and exterior



BELOW: The River Tees at Stockton-on-Tees

helping to build relationships, continue conversations and do further research. It is hoped that this will enable the circuit and others to explore this mission field as we seek to fulfil Jesus' commission. It is our prayer that this will transform the lives of individuals, communities and churches.





Doing what they can, not what they can't

nys Llanddwyn / Celtic cross on Llanddwyn Island, one of the holy islands of Wales

Do the little things

Unity grows across Welsh-speaking Methodist churches as they do all they can to develop the four priorities of *Our Calling*: the Revd Jennie Hurd explains

Synod Cymru is the British Methodist Church's smallest mainland district numerically speaking. But geographically it literally covers the size of Wales.

For the last three years, church leaders in the single circuit of this Welsh-speaking district have encouraged churches to focus on 'Developing Our Calling' in a four-year project of the same name. In 2014/2015, Learning and Caring was the focal theme, then Worship, followed by Service. No prizes for guessing the theme in this fourth year – it's Evangelism.

O ran niferoedd, Synod Cymru yw talaith leiaf yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd ar dir mawr Prydain. Ond yn ddaeryddol, mae'r dalaith Gymraeg hon, sydd ag un gylchdaith yn unig, yn cwmpasu Cymru gyfan.

Ers tair blynedd bellach bu arweinwyr Synod Cymru yn annog y capeli i ganolbwyntio ar brosiect sy'n para pedair blynedd sef "Datblygu Ein Galwad". Yn 2014-2015, canolbwyntiwyd ar Ddysgu a Gofalu, gan symud ymlaen y flwyddyn wedyn at Addoli, yna Gwasanaethu. Eleni, wrth



Gwnewch y pethau bychain

Gwneud beth fedrwn ni, nid poeni bod pethau'n rhy anodd

Gyda'i gilydd mae capeli Cymraeg yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd wrthi'n gwneud eu gorau i ddatblygu pedair blaenoriaeth *Ein Galwad*: meddai'r Parchg Jennie Hurd

gwrs, fe ddown at y bedwaredd thema sef Efengylu.

In the spirit of Wales' patron saint David, who encouraged his followers to "do the little things", 'Developing Our Calling' has supported Cymru's mainly small, rural congregations to do what they can, not what they can't. One impact of this has been to help churches feel a sense of unity as they've shared a common focus each year. Such togetherness is reinforced as they report to each other through the pages of the Synod Cymru magazine and at meetings.

Some of the 'little' activities have been continued and built on, year by year, including coffee mornings and drop-ins, study groups, church outings, Messy Church sessions and teams undertaking Open the Book in local schools. Other responses included less frequent, but nevertheless significant events, such as holding a Cymanfa Ganu (Singing Festival) or offering hospitality and prayer on the days of community events. If these sound unremarkable, in Cymru they are helping us not only to answer Our Calling, but to develop it, too.

Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'n cynulleidfaoedd yn fach a llawer o'r capeli yng nghanol y wlad, ond fe gofiwn eiriau ein nawddsant a ddywedodd wrthym am "wneud y pethau bychain". Mae'r prosiect yn pwysleisio gwneud beth fedrwn ni ac nid poeni bod pethau'n rhy anodd. Un peth sydd wedi digwydd yn ei sgil yw bod yr eglwysi'n cael ymdeimlad o undod oherwydd fod pawb yn canolbwyntio ar yr un thema yn ystod y flwyddyn. Atgyfnerthir hyn wrth inni rannu ein hanesion ar dudalennau'r Gwlyedydd ac mewn cyfarfodydd.

Mae rhai o'r gweithgareddau "bychain" wedi parhau a chynyddu o flwyddyn i flwyddyn, gan gynnwys boreau coffi a galw-i-mewn, grwpiau astudio, gwibdeithiau, LlanLlanast a thimau "Agor y Llyfr" mewn ysgolion lleol. Rhai o'r digwyddiadau mwy achlysurol, ond llawn cyn bwysiced, yw'r cymanfaoedd canu a gynhaliwyd a'r lletygarwch a'r cyfle i weddio a gynigiwyd yn ystod gwahanol ddigwyddiadau lleol. Pethau digon di-nod, efallai, ond maent yn ein helpu ni yn Synod Cymru i gyflawni ein galwad a'i datblygu.

*BELOW FROM LEFT
Deuwn â diolch o'r newydd / Fellowship Croeso / Welcome
Parod i weini / Ready to serve
Cymanfa / Singing festival
Dathlu / Celebration*



“Chaplains are... the Church that has left the building... We can all be involved in chaplaincy.”

*Martyn Atkins
(past General Secretary
of the Methodist Church
in Britain)*

*Multifaith students’
group at St Paul’s
Cathedral*



University Chaplaincy **Welcome Week**

As Chaplaincy Coordinator at City, University of London, Methodist minister the Revd Ian Worsfold serves students of all faiths and none along with his multifaith team that includes Muslim, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox chaplains

Each autumn up and down the country, young adults embark on a new phase of their life. Some approach university with utter excitement, others with nervousness. There to welcome all students at most, if not all, of our universities are the Chaplaincy Teams. In October 2017 here at City, University of London the multifaith Chaplaincy Team was ready to welcome the new cohort with some gentle and cultural activities.

First up was a session of mug painting: because as a student you can never have too many mugs, so painting your own at the start of your university career will be



TOP LEFT:
On tour at the East London Mosque

TOP RIGHT:
Chaplains at Freshers' Fair. From left: Sister Catherine Cruz, Rabbi Gavin Broder, the Revd Ian Worsfold, Father Gregory Wellington, Sheikh Musa Admani



BOTTOM LEFT:
Visiting Central London Synagogue

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Freshers at multifaith mug painting

unique! Thirty-eight students came and engaged with both the chaplains and each other. Many of them were meeting for the first time, and nervously establishing those all-important early bonds.

Visit to places of worship

After two days of Freshers' Fair – where we chaplains had a chance to meet anywhere up to 5,000 students and hand out copious amounts of chocolates, as well as halal and kosher jelly sweets – we ended the week by taking a small group of students to visit some of London's iconic places of worship.

Beginning in the splendour of St Paul's Cathedral, the group came to understand something of the place of cathedrals in the nation's life, while also braving the 259 steps to the Whispering Gallery. A short hop took us to The East London Mosque, where we heard the story of the mosque's development from the early days of the 20th century, involving the likes of the Aga Khan

(the Ismailis' spiritual leader). Our host taught us about the four pillars of Islam and gave us a tour of the facilities, including the spacious prayer hall. We finished our tour in the Central London Synagogue, where the effervescent Rabbi Gavin Broder (Jewish Chaplain for the London Region and former Chief Rabbi of Ireland) hosted us, fed us and taught us about the worshipping life of the synagogue.

Meaningful differences

The engagement with and between students along the tour and in these places of worship was meaningful and informative. It highlighted both the differences between our faiths and also the common ground we share.

In these turbulent times, chaplains are there to interpret life's events for those they encounter and to build bridges between individuals and communities. Please pray for your chaplains wherever they are serving.

What is Methodist Chaplaincy?

Chaplains serve others by showing God's love as they offer care and support.

As well as in higher education, you'll find chaplains in the armed forces, police, agriculture, hospitals, schools, prisons and shopping centres.

Chaplaincy schemes may be supported and run by the local church, circuit, district or the Connexion, but the chaplain is always 'sent' by the Church.

www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/chaplaincy

Beyond the bricks and mortar of the Church



Minister of the Aldridge and Daw End Methodist Churches, the Revd Bev Boden tells how the Church is meeting local needs in Walsall

Central Hall Methodist Church in the heart of Walsall is home to Ablewell Advice. It was established in 2012, initially to address local needs and overcome poverty by providing “free, independent, confidential and impartial advice about money and benefits”. To date, the church-based initiative has helped over 500 clients dealing with £2.6 million of debt.

Project Manager Keely Flowers explains that being experienced specialists, the debt advisors help with “everything from basic budgeting advice to filling in benefit forms,

insolvency procedures and representing clients in court or at tribunals”. When queries are outside of their expertise, they signpost clients to the relevant local agencies. Ablewell also offers outreach at the ecumenical Bridging the Gap project in Walsall, which operates out of Methodist premises.

Expanded services

Since opening Ablewell Advice, which is a member of Advice UK, has recently expanded its range of services. These

The work of Ablewell Advice is underpinned with prayer





FROM LEFT:
 Carol Rowley, Ablewell
 Food Bank Volunteer
 Keely Flowers, Ablewell
 Project Manager
 Vicki Jones, Ablewell
 Food Bank Volunteer

are made accessible to everybody and anybody. They include a food bank and the Job Club – offering computer skills training and Internet access. Ablewell has developed partnerships with the Changing Lives Chrysalis Project and the Probation Service, who now operate out of Ablewell. The Chrysalis Project offers programmes including *Healthy Relationships* and *Healthy Emotions*, through which women in the criminal justice system can be supported and challenged to turn their lives around.

Giving and receiving

Ex-offender Vicki Jones is testament to the efficacy of the Changing Lives-Ablewell partnership. On completing the *Change Programme*, and accessing the help Ablewell offers, Vicki was given the opportunity to volunteer at the Ablewell Food Bank, which is part of the Black Country Food Bank, that in 2016 helped over 16,000 local people in need. “I wanted to give something back for all the help they give to me. I started in March and I’ve been here ever since. I love it,” Vicki states.

So far this year, Ablewell’s Food Bank volunteers have received, shelved, weighed, packaged, parcelled and restocked all manner of donated food and given it away to over 480 people experiencing temporary difficulties. Chief among food bank volunteers is Carol Rowley, a member of Methodist Central Hall and the daughter of a Methodist minister. While prayerfully seeking God’s guidance for her calling (which she defines as “doing something helpful outside her church”), Carol stumbled across an advertisement for food bank volunteers in the church newsletter. For Carol, the work is not simply about handing out bags of food. Building relationships with those who use the service is vital, as is relinquishing any tendency to judge. According to Keely,

Carol’s key pleasure in volunteering is helping families. “One thing she really enjoys is making sure that she finds out a little bit about the children and picking things that she thinks the family will enjoy eating.”

Dedicated team

Carol and Vicki, two people from very different backgrounds, brought together through Ablewell Advice, are a dedicated team who care deeply about giving to others less fortunate than themselves. Prior to attending Changing Lives, Vicki had no connection to Christianity. As a result of working with Carol and receiving pastoral care from her, Vicki has started attending and participating in church events.

Food Bank Administrator Ian Chilton is also the Job Club Project Worker at Ablewell. Ian ensures that Walsall residents who are looking for work or training can access assistance with job searches, applications and writing CVs. They offer all-round support tailored to a client’s specific needs, working at a pace chosen by the client with no time limits.

A person-centred approach

Ablewell operates on a person-centred approach, which offers each client a dedicated adviser to assist with all the issues they may be facing. The close correlation between debt, financial hardship and the potential need for assistance with obtaining food means that for many of its vulnerable clients Ablewell is a one-stop shop. On any given day, staff members may also be making presentations to delegates from the job centre and informing on referrals, the food bank process or Job Club access. In all of this, the work of Ablewell Advice is underpinned with prayer, coupled with a focus on working out the Calling of the Methodist Church.

Ablewell Advice is an example of extending Church beyond its physical bricks and mortar. For Central Hall Methodist Church this means providing services to meet people’s needs; for church members it means having daily interactions that are a living, breathing testimony to the goodness of a God who cares about the needs of all people, and uses these church members to demonstrate this care and draw people to him.

Watch Keely tell about Ablewell Advice, and Carol and Vicky describe how volunteering at its Foodbank is now their vocation

<http://bit.do/Ablewell>

Creative outreach



Cornwall District Chair and natural evangelist, the Revd Steven Wild, shares good news from the Camelford and Week St Mary Circuit: a large rural area in North Cornwall with tiny Methodist churches

One of the most rural circuits in the Methodist Connexion, Camelford and Week St Mary's 17 churches are served by a great bunch of local preachers, a Circuit Administrator, a Families' and Children's Lay Worker and a Community Outreach Worker, along with a generous Supernumerary Minister who cares for three churches.

This team is headed by the Revd Doreen Sparey-Delacassa as Superintendent. She is ever positive saying: "I am very happy to serve where God sends me and I am blessed to be in this part of Cornwall." Doreen came into the circuit ten years ago to be a Pioneer Minister after serving Cornwall as Evangelism Enabler. She has done sterling work helping the circuit look outwards rather than inwards.

Outward-looking circuit

Most schools have an Open the Book Assembly six or seven times a term, where grandparents love telling Bible stories to their grandchildren and volunteers from ecumenical teams add to the fun by dressing

up as Bible characters. Doreen reports: "We are getting a generation of children who know the Bible better than their parents."

The circuit has half a dozen Messy Churches – another opportunity for ecumenical working. In the summer we had a big outdoor Messy Church for all the circuit at the Manse in its large paddock, from the days when the minister had a horse. This event was billed as Fun, Frogs and Bishops, with dramatised Bible stories and crafts. Special guests included the Bishop of Truro – who had a hilarious race with me ending up on the bouncy castle.

Doreen has a head full of clever – even quirky – outreach ideas. Her hobby of collecting teddy bears means numerous Teddy Bear Picnics as well as tableaux with teddies illustrating Bible stories.

The circuit has a number of Café Church services and a music/drama group. There is outreach to the elderly with luncheon clubs and games afternoons, and Tintagel Coffee Morning is a big weekly event in this community.

continued on page 19 ►

Our children know the bible

Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission



It does this through



Worship



Learning and Caring



Service



Evangelism

The Methodist Church 

Tell all who use your church about its mission. Use the poster included in this issue of the connexion, or to order larger posters, for free, please visit www.mph.org.uk

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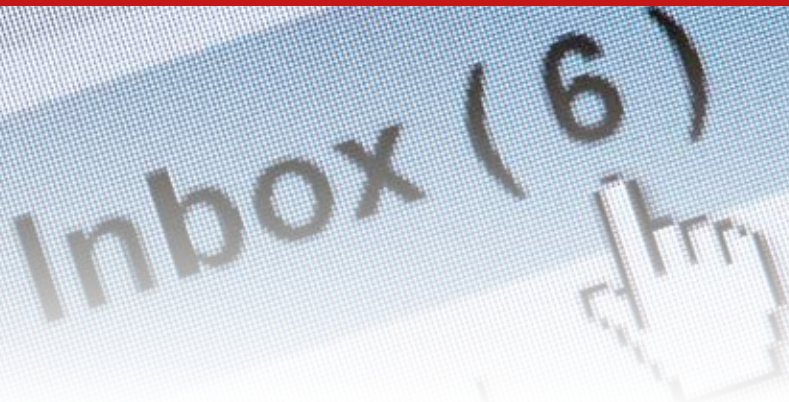
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Local venues become host to seasonal services, such as harvest, carols and rogation at Hallworthy Cattle Market. Our chaplains are also present at the market each week.

At Delabole, famous for its local slate quarry, the Methodists work closely with the Anglicans for outreach to all ages at Delabole Carnival – winning prizes year-on-year. Their community lunch regularly has over 50 local people attending.

A new church

While some of the smaller congregations are challenged to work closer and amalgamate, three recently succeeded to form a new church in the hamlet of Canworthy Water. Called Living Water, people are excited about more effective mission in the area, which began by Living Water Church announcing its new name. Instead of a leaflet, the congregation offered bottles of water to the houses round about labelled with the church's new identity and activities. Its recent bonfire party drew most of the village together, and then there was our special Christmas service in the manse stable, complete with real baby and Boysey the donkey – an informal gathering to which everyone was invited to come dressed as a Biblical character if they wished.

All this means that there are plenty of varied activities in this part of rural Cornwall. To some, everything we do may seem small. But we aim to bring the Word of God and the love of God into the life of our tiny rural communities – in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, as long as ever we can.

We're not Methodists for nothing!



Hallworthy Cattle Market is host to seasonal services, such as harvest, carols and rogation



The Revd Steve Wild with the now former Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Rt Revd Tim Thornton, at Messy Church, summer 2017



Circuit Superintendent, the Revd Doreen Sparey-Delacassa



Moving mountains

Chair of the Cumbria Methodist District, the Revd Richard Teal, is part of a movement helping all in Cumbria to discover more about Jesus



"Imagine if everyone had the opportunity to discover what God wants for their lives."

Over the last few years, churches across Cumbria have been talking, praying and planning together.

The result is **God for All**. By 2020 every person in Cumbria, of all ages and backgrounds, will have had the opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives – so that they will discover more of Jesus and the good news to become followers of Jesus within a Christian community.

To enable this to happen, churches across Cumbria, including the Methodists, the United Reformed Church (URC), Anglican churches and the Salvation Army, have been working together to develop Mission Communities. These will equip the Church to be effective in helping everyone discover more of Jesus, as we share resources (such as ministers and buildings) and look at ways in which we can engage with our local communities.

**Rooted in
an existing
commitment
to outreach**

The Northern Bishops' Mission

As churches in Cumbria were taking this journey, the Archbishop of York and the northern Anglican bishops were working with

local dioceses on the **Northern Bishops' Mission** – weekends of events held across dioceses, with local churches supported by visiting teams, each led by a bishop. It was immediately obvious in Cumbria, given the existing ecumenical commitment to God for All, that other denominations should be invited to take part as well.

The Moving Mountains Mission

Invitations went out to senior leaders in the four partner denominations and the response – from Methodist district chairs, URC moderators and Salvation Army divisional commanders as well as Anglican bishops – was hugely positive. As a result, we are now preparing for our **Moving Mountains Mission** this coming March (8-11) when we will be joined by nine Methodist district chairs, five URC moderators, one Salvation Army divisional commander and twenty-six Anglican bishops!

Some will be working together, so it means that we will have 34 teams working alongside local churches, to resource and equip them in helping others discover more



More than a thousand Christians have already shared their faith stories

of Jesus. Already local churches are planning how they can take some of the activities that they currently engage in, and make them more intentionally evangelistic, with a view to sustaining that focus beyond March.

This mission is not a one-off event, however. It is rooted in an existing commitment to outreach, and aims to contribute to an ongoing movement. On a recent Saturday in Egremont the local Methodist church opened its doors to all those who hire its hall and 150 people turned up, with some of them coming back to church the following Sunday. Across Barrow last September, more than a

thousand people listened to a number of nationally famous people talk about their faith and the difference that made in their lives. Many weekends in the year the **Mountain Pilgrims** initiative sees groups of walkers, some with no other church link, taking to the hills and exploring their faith in the context of God's creation. And every day throughout this last December listeners to all three independent radio stations in Cumbria heard of adverts encouraging them to drop into a church over Christmas to enjoy the carols – and hear the story of Jesus' birth for themselves.



Sharing faith stories

As we continue this journey and prepare for what's ahead, more than a thousand Christians have already shared their faith stories with others this year. And we look forward to the openings that we will have for those stories (and many more) to be told again and again as, together, we make the most of these opportunities to help everyone in Cumbria discover Jesus.

The East of Eden Mission Community launch at Gamblesby Methodist Church

Our Calling lived out in a Methodist School

Elsbeth Brighton is a Circuit Steward and a volunteer gardener at Westleigh Methodist Primary School

Methodist schools have a long history and the life of a Methodist school exemplifies all aspects of Our Calling, but with a natural emphasis on ‘learning and caring’. I will focus on the school I know best – Westleigh Methodist Primary School.

The first historical mention of a Wesleyan day school at Westleigh was in 1853. The issues the school faced in its early days were perhaps not so different to those of today, with the school logbook mentioning behaviour, absence, conditions in the children’s homes and attitude of parents, hunger, visits from inspectors, children falling asleep in class because they’d stayed up too late and academic standards. Thankfully, the methods of tackling the issues have moved on.

Worship and Christian values

Something that has not changed in the last century and a half is the commitment to Christian values in the school. I recall vividly the recent exposition of the real Easter story given by ten-year-olds to an end-of-term assembly with parents present. It was certainly not the message of fluffy bunnies and chocolate eggs that some might have expected. For many parents events like this will be their main exposure to the Christian message.

This strong commitment to Christian values, Methodist traditions and the development

of the whole child underpins the work of the school.

Learning

A large part of the school’s catchment area lies in the most deprived 20% of the country, and a core of that within the most deprived 5%.

The challenge is daunting – when children start in our nursery class only a quarter of them have skills typical for their age.

Not only do the children progress academically as they move through school (with above national average results in 2017 for the 11-year-olds), but they also grow in self-esteem and confidence to ‘have a go’. They are keen to question and to put forward their own views, willing to think imaginatively without fear of ridicule by their peers.

Caring

The school’s focus on nurture and care leads to high levels of attendance, excellent behaviour and children who feel safe.

The pastoral care delivered by two dedicated staff, as well as extensive input from every member of teaching and non-teaching staff, starts with Breakfast Club in the morning. It carries on with phone calls home on the first day of absence, Early Help meetings and home visits offering bespoke support when absence is persistent, parenting classes, and responses to crises whenever they arise. The extra pupil premium paid in recognition of the additional needs of disadvantaged children helps fund this work. The whole school rallies round when a major crisis envelops a family, demonstrating the family approach of the school.

Westleigh Wesleyan Old Chapel and School



• 1852 •

17 October, building work for the school and chapel completed.

• 1853 •

The first mention of a Wesleyan day school.

• 1870 •

Church pews removed to fit in more children.



Behaviour and discipline

Nineteenth-century punishments included standing on one leg or holding a heavy bucket of coal with one hand.

Pupils nowadays usually behave well. But a great deal of effort goes into ensuring this, with patient discussion to encourage children to see the error of their ways and the impact that has on other members of the community, and the need to care for one another.

Taking on responsibility

Nineteenth-century schools often had pupil teachers, like my great-grandfather who went on to become a Sunday school superintendent. Nowadays we have 'peer tutoring' where an older learner takes the



Westleigh Methodist Primary School as it is today

tutoring role and is paired with a younger tutee to the benefit of both.

Less formally, seven-year-olds from the Gardening Club confidently explain to younger children how to pull and scrub carrots and shell the peas they have helped to grow.

Service and social justice

There is great emphasis on tackling discrimination of any kind, and plenty of chances for pupils to celebrate and appreciate differences in culture and traditions. As one child put it, "No matter who we are, where we come from, or what we believe in, treat someone how you want to be treated."

Staff commitment

Another thing that hasn't changed in 150 years is the commitment of the staff. A century ago a retiring head wrote, "In my long experience here only one thing filled my mind – deep gratitude that enabled me to continue in the work I have loved with strength, enthusiasm and zeal to the very end."

Staff feel valued and appreciated. Pupils have highly positive and trusting relationships with staff. Parents regard staff as "approachable" and "non-judgmental" so they aren't afraid to seek advice and support. Everyone feels as if they are known and valued as an individual who will be listened to. Together these create a circle of caring, respectful relationships within which the school's Christian values take root and flourish.

At Westleigh Methodist Primary School, the following Christian values have been made explicit: love, teamwork, thankfulness, generosity, peace, forgiveness, equality and justice. They have been embodied with the help of visiting artist Wendy Moore in the illustrations for this article (above left). The values are discussed and lived daily, with each class having one value as its focus for the whole year.

• 1877 •

Building of new chapel, new infant school with extension to day school.

• 1878 •

Trinity Wesleyan Chapel opened.

• 1911 •

Two new large classrooms and a cloakroom built.

• 1928 •

Merging of infant school and junior school.

• 1932 •

School renamed Westleigh Methodist Primary School.

Community Healthcare Chaplaincy: **the story so far**

As a GP, the Medical Director for NHS North Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and an ordinand with the Church of England, Dr Robert M Jaggs-Fowler has a vision for chaplains in GP surgeries



The idea of providing chaplaincy volunteers to GP surgeries started back in 2012 as one of those light-bulb moments – the fusion of thirty or so years of experience as a general medical practitioner and my acceptance on a Spirituality, Theology and Health MA course at Durham University. As part of that course, I read *Medicine, Religion and Health: Where Science and Spirituality Meet* by Harold Koenig, which was packed with fascinating and scientifically supported evidence for the positive impact of religious practice on health (see boxed text).

The problem was, how could a GP make use of such data without falling foul of the

medical profession's regulators?

Over the previous decade there had been several high-profile news stories of doctors disciplined by the General Medical Council for bringing matters of faith into the consulting room. Yet the Royal College of General Practitioners' core curriculum of 2010 stated that "a General Practitioner should adopt a holistic approach" and that this included "the ability to understand and respect the values, culture, family structure and beliefs of your patients".

Quandaries

What, then, was a GP to do when confronted by one of the myriad of quandaries that

A General Practitioner should adopt a holistic approach

According to researchers, having a spiritual or religious life can have the following positive impacts:

- higher levels of social support and greater marital stability
- lower incidence of drug use, alcohol abuse and smoking
- less anxiety and depression and lower suicide rates
- higher uptake of regular exercise and fewer sleep problems
- lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- increased immunity to infections and lower death rates from cancer.



interfaced with a patient's faith? Quandaries such as a teenage Roman Catholic girl with an unplanned pregnancy? A Muslim girl presenting with anxiety and depression because she has a white, Anglo-Saxon boyfriend? A member of an evangelical church, who is suicidal because of financial mistakes that mean he will go to hell because the Bible says so? The widowed, church-attending lady who is fearful that her late husband is still present at night and wishes to move on with her life? That is not forgetting all the routine holistic issues around end-of-life care, bereavement and so on. To me the answer was obvious. Hospitals and hospices have had chaplaincy services since the start of the NHS in 1946. What we needed were chaplains in GP surgeries.

Proof of concept

The Bishop of Lincoln agreed that I could run a pilot scheme in North Lincolnshire which, if successful, could be rolled out across the whole of the diocese. He put me in touch with the ecumenical organisation Lincolnshire Chaplaincy Services (LCS). The LCS director, the Revd Canon Andrew Vaughan, was enthused, though uncertain as to how the idea would be funded. "If this is right, then God will provide" was my response.

Thus, through LCS, the first training course for chaplaincy volunteers was conducted in 2015, out of which we gained our first three chaplaincy volunteers. The year 2016 saw a second training course and approval for three further chaplaincy volunteers, two of whom are currently placed in two GP Practices in North Lincolnshire.

Movement and growth

The stories of how our chaplaincy volunteers in North Lincolnshire have engaged with patients and practice staff are enormously encouraging, not only to the practices, which have seen the value of their services, but also for the significant assistance many patients and staff have received. This has formed the launch pad of the next stage of development.

2017 saw tremendous movement. With the closure of LCS, the project was offered the protective umbrella of the Lincolnshire Methodist District, thus securing the ability to perform Disclosure and Barring Service checks and to provide legal indemnity to our chaplaincy volunteers. For this, we are immensely grateful to the foresight of the Chair of the Methodist District, the Revd Bruce Thompson, along with the subsequent agreement of the Lincolnshire Methodist Synod.

We are also fortunate to have the continuity and expertise of Alison McNish (PA to the Methodist District Chair) in providing administrative support. As Bruce summarises: "In the Lincolnshire District we have now fully embraced Community Healthcare Chaplaincy as a strong and effective ecumenical initiative."

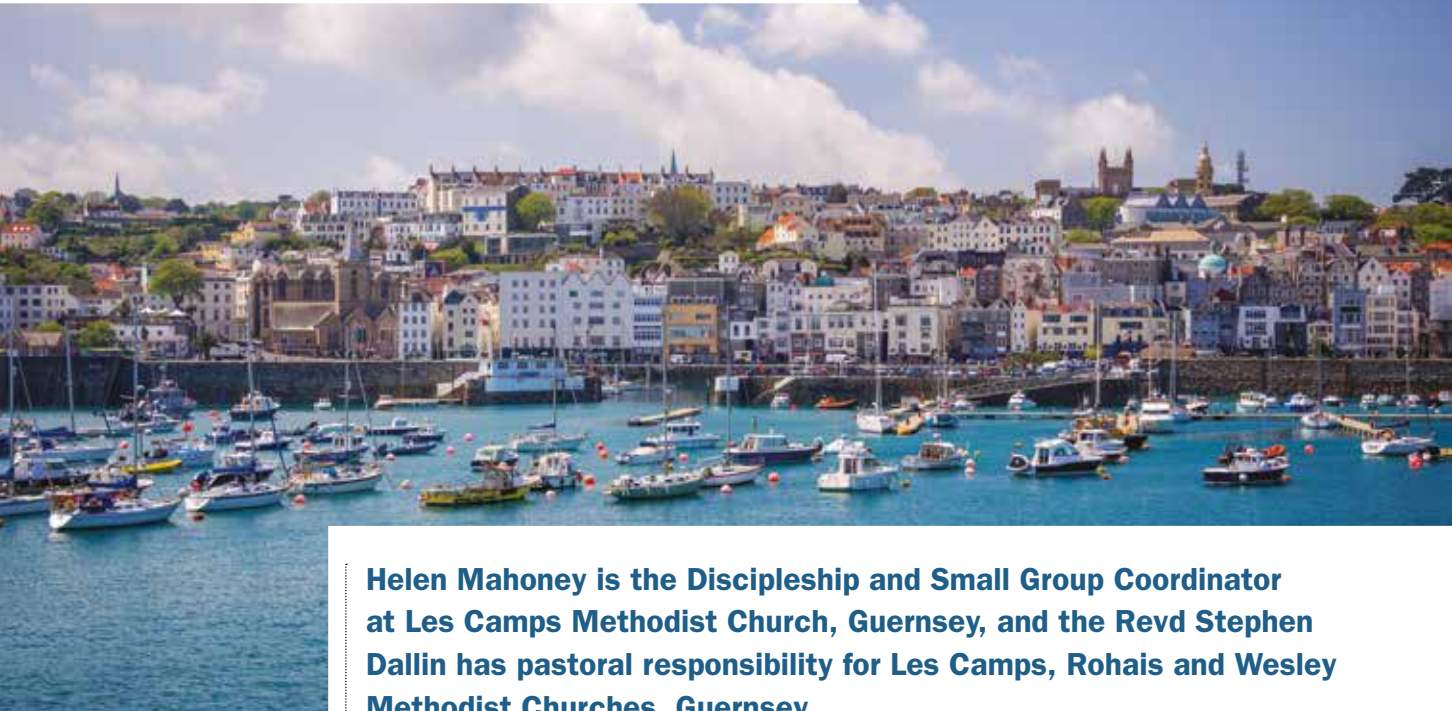
At the same time, the Bishops of Grimsby and Grantham gave their blessing to the project and as a result we have received significant assistance in formulating a new training programme for our healthcare chaplaincy volunteers. NHS England has come on board, and is providing support to roll out the project into the rest of Lincolnshire, possibly to take the idea to a national level after next year's pilot. Finally, a new steering group consists of health, theological and legal expertise, to provide a firm governance structure.

Fresh air and enthusiasm

With sixteen candidates enrolled on the training course that commenced in September 2017, and discussions taking place with interested GP practices from 'the Humber to the Wash', the initial light-bulb vision is taking on a life of its own. Run largely on fresh air, goodwill and the enthusiasm of many ecumenical partners, the Lincolnshire pilot could well be the basis of a transformative change in the history of the NHS, thereby proving that, if an idea is driven by the power of the Holy Spirit, God really does provide.

*What we
needed were
chaplains in
GP surgeries*

From **little** seeds



Helen Mahoney is the Discipleship and Small Group Coordinator at Les Camps Methodist Church, Guernsey, and the Revd Stephen Dallin has pastoral responsibility for Les Camps, Rohais and Wesley Methodist Churches, Guernsey

At Les Camps and Rohais Methodist Churches in Guernsey we are seeing God working in the lives of many people. Our cell groups are developing and growing. We currently have nine adult and three young people's cell groups and have recently launched a group for parents of babies and toddlers.

We heard someone say: "We need to build an extension if we are to fit anyone else in!" This came from a leader who had not so long ago asked for prayer to increase his numbers. Watch out, you might get what you pray for!

The Lord at work

There have been challenges (and some failures) along the way but God is great and helps us. With this in mind, we decided to suspend our cell group programme for three months in order to organise an Alpha course for September of last year. We now have more than 30 adults and 10 young people on the course, many of whom have not previously been part of the church community, eating, enjoying fellowship and talking about faith.

We have people from our church, who would normally not be involved in activities at the organisational level, bringing their friends and families along and cooking

meals for 50 people.

From little seeds, our cell groups, saplings are growing. A young man without any faith is now coming into church and helping us set up for Alpha and also coming to our drop-in on Saturday mornings, eating his bacon sandwich and chatting with everyone around him. People who have never before had the opportunity or confidence are facilitating Alpha, and some groups are socialising and going out for meals. We can feel the Lord at work among us and it feels great!

Prayer and teamwork

Prayer plays a large role in our life with the cells and Alpha. We want to be sure everything we do is as God wants it to be. Teamwork is also important, supported by our circuit vision and leadership. I (Helen), a lay worker, was appointed by the circuit to be the Discipleship and Small Groups Coordinator. I work with the cell leaders and pastors, developing their mission with a mixture of encouragement, training, humour and chocolate biscuits!

These are challenging and exciting times and, if we are to follow Jesus' call for us to be his disciples and to grow as a Church, we need to focus our resources (time, personnel and money) into outreach and making disciples in the love of Jesus.

The cell groups of Les Camps and Rohais Methodist Churches are small groups that espouse the values: **All** involved **Becoming** disciples **Creating** community **Doing** evangelism **Encountering God with Christ** at the centre

Based on *The Challenge of Cell Church: Getting to Grips with Cell Church Values* by Phil Potter

Wonderfully prophetic

Michael Pryke, the Methodist Youth President, reports from 3Generate 2017

Held at Pontins in Southport, from 24 to 26 November, 3Generate had God at its heart and was transformational for many attending.

More than 1,000 children, young people and young adults came together to speak to the Methodist Church about issues that are important to them, to tell the wider Church what they want to talk about and to transform.

In addition, 500 volunteers supported the event with a mix of children and youth leaders, presbyters, deacons, chairs of district and the President and Vice-President of the Conference. Our youngest 'volunteer' was six months old, coming along with her parents who shared a volunteering role!

This year the focus of 3Generate's conversations was based around seven key issues:

- saving the planet and looking after God's world
- mental health and developing well-being
- becoming people of peace, to set the example in an age of terror
- being good neighbours, living alongside people of other faiths
- combating poverty, sharing wealth and meeting needs
- reinventing the Church, being God's people in the future
- thriving in the mess, staying up when knocked down.

"The manifestos are particularly exciting as the children and young people are not just talking about what the Church should be like for them. These manifestos show that circuits and districts can take action to engage with their young people and these issues. It's about young people becoming the decision-makers, not just advising. The points raised address young people's vision of what the Church should be – for everyone. The 3Generate manifestos are a prophetic call to action."

*Roxanne Bainbridge,
3Generate Representative*

These issues came from groups of young people across the Connexion who helped to shape the event.

Children, young people and young adults explored what it means to be an agent of change in their own contexts. They spoke out on issues as part of their continued dialogue with the whole Church.

Discussions took place throughout the event at all age levels. The voice of young people was also captured to form the 3Generate manifestos and resolutions that will be presented at the 2018 Methodist Conference.

"The manifestos are a platform to be built upon in local church settings, encouraging conversations and exploration of the varied subjects close to the hearts of young people. These issues include, but are not limited to, mental health, poverty, injustice, and equipping young people to be effective agents of change."

*Grace McAloon,
3Generate Representative*

Watch videos from the event on YouTube – search for 3GenTV. Turn over for photos of the event.

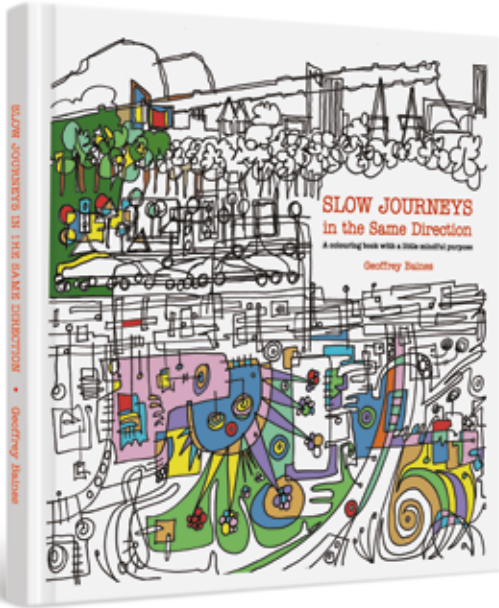




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Why do you go to church?

This question is usually asked spontaneously and we find ourselves on the spot. So what answer should we give? Chair of Plymouth and Exeter District, the Revd Graham Thompson, reflects on worship

We go to church to worship God! We enjoy being with God. We want to celebrate all that Jesus offers, for we are people of the Resurrection – those who die and rise with Jesus and live every moment of every day certain that our risen Lord is in us and with us. We offer praise to God for who God is and all that God means to us. We offer thanks for the many wonderful ways in which God has blessed us; for the privilege of enjoying a relationship with the eternal God.

Worship is the central activity of the Church. Without worship there would be no Church. You can take away Bible studies and prayer meetings, you can lose a Sunday school or youth group, you can ignore social evenings and home groups, but if you have worship, you are still a church – a poor church but still a church.

Self-fulfilling worship?

In his report to the 2011 Conference, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, then General Secretary of the Methodist Church and Secretary of the Methodist Conference, said that having travelled around the country for a few years, he had picked up a prevailing view that Methodist worship “neither reaches the heights nor plumbs the depths”. Is Dr Atkins right? If he is, what has caused this and how might we change things?

I believe we get the worship we deserve. If we go to worship with a wrong frame of mind; without preparing ourselves (including praying for those who will lead worship); if we go with our minds made up as to what it is going to be like and what we will get out of it, questioning the length of sermon or choice of hymns, we then generate a self-fulfilling prophecy. You might find it helpful to think about other stumbling blocks to good experiences of worship, including these typically Methodist tripping hazards:

1. The free availability of the Preaching Plan listing who is taking the next service, along with announcing who is taking next week's act of worship, instead of simply stating when the next service will be and inviting people to attend. We need to move the focus away from the leader of worship to the God whom we worship.
2. Busy office holders going to church with lots to sort out and people they need to talk to – focusing on the busyness of responsibility rather than the One for whom we seek to be useful. The privilege of worshipping the God of love; the God of all creation; the God who was, and is and is to come, means that our primary focus should be God.

Glorifying and enjoying God

Worship is when we come together to meet with God and any encounter with the living God will change us. People leaving worship should be different – changed – by the experience of meeting God. Perhaps imperceptibly at first, but over time we are changed.

The Westminster Catechism states that the chief purpose of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy God forever. Not to go to worship so that we can get something good from God. The principal focus of any worship is God. Graham Kendrick, quoting Lamar Boschman, puts it like this: “Worship is first and foremost for God's benefit, not ours, though it is marvellous to discover that in giving God pleasure, we ourselves enter into what can become our richest and most wholesome experience in life.”

Worship is the central activity of the Church and – perhaps – we could do better?

- **What do you think? Find us on Facebook and tell us your thoughts.**