

## A Tribute for Angela Shier-Jones – Stephen Wigley, October 2011

At this point, readers would normally turn to the Editorial for a characteristically incisive introduction to the current volume, in which the Editor outlines first the overall theme, then the distinctive contributions made by the various authors, before going on to indicate just why this subject matters in the life of the Church. Sadly this volume begins somewhat differently; with the news that the Editor of the *Epworth Review*, Angela Shier-Jones died at the Royal Marsden Hospital in the early hours of Sunday 11 September 2011.

Her death is a huge loss for her husband Brian, for her many friends and for her colleagues in the Methodist Church both in Britain and across the wider world. For Angie was a person of incredible energy and intellect whose contribution to the life of the Church was immense. She was a minister, a preacher and pastor who delighted in her congregations in first Beckenham, then New Malden and Kingston, and was proud to be known as one of Mr. Wesley's helpers. She was a theological educator, whose teaching role within the Church began while still a student at Wesley, Bristol and carried on into her work with SEITE (South East Institute of Theological Education). She was an internationally known theologian, the author and editor of various books on Methodist and Ministry studies (from *Methodist Theology: a Work in Progress* to most recently *Methodist Present Potential* and *Pioneer Ministry: Helping to build a Mixed Economy Church*); and she was a great encourager of others to publish through her involvement with the Epworth Press Editorial Committee.

However, while Angie's commitment to theology was deep, it was anything but dry and dusty. She was a person of passionate engagement and interest, as anyone who spent time in discussion with her will testify. Her commitment to the role of theology in the life of the Church was to be found in debates at Conference (and equally in late-night conversations afterwards), at meetings of the Faith and Order Committee, and on a wider stage through her work with the World Methodist Council. She believed that theology mattered, that it was not just a minority interest for the select few but part of our calling as Methodists – and that we should do it properly, with all the energy and enterprise we could muster.

## *A Tribute for Angela Shier-Jones*

This is just what she did, using all the resources and technology available to her right to the end, as evidenced by the last entry on her blog, ‘the Kneeler’ for 24 August. There, with typical honesty and openness, she reflects on her own experience of facing serious illness in hospital and yet still managing to find in the care shown to her by others a message of hope. And this is why she was so committed to the *Epworth Review*, the journal in which she invested so much in recent years. It was part of her commitment to theological inquiry, that journey into the truth and wisdom of God. Yet this was a journey not to be made alone but rather with companions along the way; and Angie’s great hope for the *Epworth Review* was that it would provide a means for Methodists not just to keep up to date with current issues, but also to engage in debate, to speak of God and to do Methodist theology together.

I hope that this volume, made up largely of material commissioned and edited by Angie before she died, will help us to do just that – and that, in reading and responding to it, we shall find we are sharing in that same theological enterprise, travelling together on that same journey into the truth and wisdom of God.