

# *Wesley Memorial magazine*

Autumn 2021



*I was glad when they said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"*

## *Renewal*

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Dear Friends

Evidence suggests that during the global pandemic there has been a surge in online searches for prayer as people turn to religion to cope with feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. At the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the share of Google searches for prayer surged to the highest level ever recorded, surpassing all other major events that call for prayer, including Christmas, Easter and Ramadan. The search engine recorded a more than 50% higher than average increase in people seeking prayer across data from 95 countries. The number of enquiries for 'coronavirus prayer' was a global phenomenon. This was true even for the most secular regions of Northern Europe. It seems that people have been using online prayer and worship to cope with present adversity.

The apocryphal stories from faith groups in the UK, especially churches, following a mass movement to take up an online presence, is that many people have been logging into worship services and other online events offering comfort and hope during the last 18 months. Interest in and attendance at virtual services has boomed, especially on the previously unheard-of Zoom platform. Across all faiths, people's relationship with their concept of God is changing. The prevalence of live-streaming and recorded services has led to a phenomenon not seen in the UK for a hundred years: church has become something that is part of your week, not just your Sunday. Downloads of Bible and prayer apps have grown exponentially as people engage with religions that often have positive things to say about well-being and about how to construct a sustainable identity for yourself in a time of crisis. It is a trend that seems to be holding even as life returns to some semblance of normality.

Of course, it is well-known that during times of crisis people turn to religion for comfort and explanation. In the UK the most significant increases have been among the Christian communities. Religion can offer a way for people to reframe all experiences in life and to see a higher purpose, something that gives reassurance that things are not just random. For many people, faith becomes a kind of spiritual immune system offering a form of existential security in times of crisis. The challenge for all faith communities is to be able to turn this strangest of all 'renewal' experiences into an ongoing journey of faith. If you were to ask people, within and without the church, which of the prayers of the Bible they consider the most well-known, it is certain that in the top three, if not number one, would be the Lord's Prayer. When I think of renewal I think of the Lord's Prayer. Here is a reminder of the version used most at Wesley Memorial.

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
our kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
On earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
But deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Some of you may know that I make bread. I do so in my own home, but most often I make bread in the company of others at Bread Church. The line 'Give us today our daily bread' is a line that speaks to me of renewal. In this one line we pray most earnestly for ourselves. Jesus encourages his followers to pray for their sustenance each day, bread being the (to page 3)

# Editorial

As we approach the exciting moment of re-entering our beloved building and reclaiming it for worship on September 19th, and for our church activities, and the myriad other uses, past and future, that we might recall or envisage, we thought it would be good to reflect on Renewal. We offer you a moment to ponder on matters practical, theological, evangelistic, ecological, and inclusive, hoping that our combined energies will lead us on to the next stages of our spiritual journeys, both as individuals and as a congregation.

This period of 'exile' has proved very hard to bear for so many of us, but we have also learned new skills for

communicating with each other and keeping 'the show on the road' in spite of it all. So many unexpected gifts along the way!

We really hope not to face any more long breaks in publication of our 'magazine', now renamed to distinguish it from the weekly newsletter. So we invite you to share these thoughts and join with us in celebration of all the blessings to come with our Heritage Atrium, our re-opening, and (we hope) the chance once more to make a very 'joyful noise unto the Lord' in song!

With warmest greetings from the  
*Editorial Team*

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(Minister's letter)

staple food of the ancient Mediterranean. God is interested in sustaining our bodies as well as our hearts, giving us food as well as faith. Some have also seen spiritual needs embraced within this prayer for sustenance - the 'bread' of God's presence and grace. Our connectedness with the basic provisions of life is not what it was even a generation ago. Most people can go to the shop and buy what they need. However, one of the other 'social services' that has continued throughout the pandemic is the provision of food banks, reminding us all that not everyone has equal access to their 'daily bread'; that the wealthiest will always be able to obtain food even at the expense of the less well-off.

It reminds me of a film that I was given on a recording 30 years ago, as I left my previous career to enter training as a Methodist Minister. The film is called *Heavens Above* and starred a host of well-known British actors of the day, led by Peter Sellers. I think my colleagues bought it for me because Sellers embodies a well-meaning vicar with a distinct Birmingham accent. Perhaps that was how they saw me! In a case of mistaken identity, John Smallwood (Peter Sellers), an idealistic British clergyman with socialist beliefs, is appointed to a village parish populated by elitist landed gentry. There, his acts of charity quickly become unpopular with the parishioners, who reveal a selfish and un-Christian disdain for the less fortunate folk whom the Revd Smallwood welcomes to the parish. He and the local Lady of the Manor start what is in effect a food bank. However, when Smallwood's actions endanger the village's primary source of income, things go really awry! I watch the film once a year on the date I started Theological College. It grounds me and reminds me that though faith is a gift renewed every day, working it out in our lives is often much more difficult than we imagine.

Every blessing,



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# Open Doors - a project to support renewal?

As the building works of the Open Doors project are drawing to a conclusion, it is worth looking back over the years to see how the project has developed. This has been an exciting journey but as with most long journeys you have to be prepared to adapt your plans as situations change. Legislation has been a key element, meeting conditions laid down by grant making bodies. External events such as the Grenfell Tower disaster that triggered local authorities into being even more cautious about fire precautions within buildings open to the public. We also did not anticipate a pandemic but the impact of this worked in our favour as construction was one business that has been able to continue throughout, and with less inconvenience to us than would otherwise have been the case.

It is hard to believe that the project started with a simple maintenance issue of renewing the uneven John Wesley Room floor, and the estimated cost of renewal exceeding the amount in the Property Reserve at that time. Church Council took the opportunity to look at ways in which it might continue to respond to the challenge laid down in the Vision Report of Advent 2003 that we should be *Open to God and Open to All*.



*Entrance to the premises 2009*

The Open Doors Project Group was appointed in February 2009 and since then it has met on 140 occasions, reporting regularly to Church Council. The monthly meetings provided a stimulus for the project and also enabled plans (and amendments) and fundraising to be dealt with promptly. We stated that in this project the vision is developed by making the premises more welcoming, hospitable and flexible and so better able to serve the needs of the congregation and staff, community and city.

A key part of the project has been to work in partnership with Christian Aid which received 5% of all voluntary donations, and of proceeds from local fundraising events. We were able to contribute £29,247 to Christian Aid with the initial supported projects in Burkina Faso having their funds quadrupled by the European Union, giving a grand total of £104,088 (January 2020).

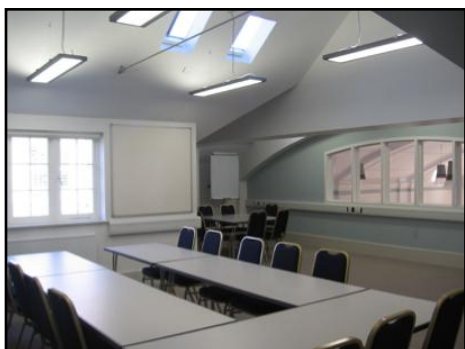
Our initial estimate for the whole project was just over £1m, which we planned to raise over four years, and, with our business plan in place, we set about raising the money. With the generous support from our members, we were able to approach the wider Methodist Church and external trusts and public bodies for support. At September 2021, although the total project cost had increased again we can summarise that support as follows:

Description and Amount £	
Members own giving including special appeals, donations, gift aid refunds and local giving	£377,000
233 local fundraising events	£80,000
Wesley Memorial own endowment funds	£123,000
Oxford Circuit grants	£300,000
Northampton District	£100,000
Methodist Church Fund for Property	£200,000
External Trusts	£984,000
Big Give Christmas Challenge (2015-2019)	£65,000
VAT reclaimed/to be reclaimed	£461,000
<b>Total income received/to be received</b>	<b>£2,690,000</b>

By early 2015, we realised that costs were rising at a faster rate than income from fundraising, and so we took the decision to seek tenders for the whole project. We had already installed the stairlift in February 2015 (Phase 1), following which four competitive tenders were received in June 2015. Even the lowest exceeded the funds available, so we decided to see how best to spend the money we had available. In the autumn of 2015 we started with Phase 2, the extension to the rear of the Main Hall housing an enlarged 'green kitchen' and new meeting room above. We were grateful to the Bradbury Foundation for the generous grant of £40,000 enabling us to complete this phase.

## Open Doors

In Phase 3 we refurbished the John Wesley Room — including the new floor!— and associated kitchen. In Phase 4a, we replaced the single glazed windows in the John Wesley Room and spaces above with double glazed windows; and refurbished the Ladies WCs on the first floor, including the provision of an additional ‘ambulant’ cubicle. However, now we are Phase 4B, the Heritage Atrium, there are no further phases planned, and so it is essential that we complete all the work we have started even though the budget has been exceeded. When we accepted the tender for Phase 4B there were two dynamics that affected our decision: one was the need to show to the Connexional Fund for Property that we would be starting on site during 2020 to secure our remaining £180K grant offer: the other was that the VAT reclaim scheme, vital for our earlier phases,



*The Bradbury room before the installation of the Amazing Love window.*

was due to end in March 2021. To reclaim VAT, paid invoices must be submitted so it was essential to start on site as quickly as possible and this we did in November 2020. We were greatly relieved when we heard in February this year that this VAT scheme had been extended until March 2022.

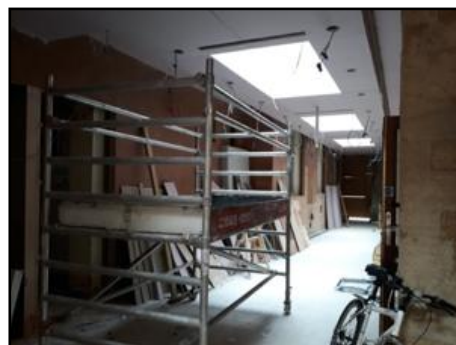
In order to agree a tender within the finance available, we omitted a number of elements and also accepted a contingency of only 5% of the contract sum which, for a contract of this size, was low. We also knew that the full costs of complying with the fire safety regulations had not been fully quantified and that has only become known during 2021. As the contract has proceeded, we have identified several issues that affect the church as well as the Heritage Atrium, particularly in respect of fire precautions, and we also know that the cost of building

supplies has increased over the last 12 months. The total cost of Phases 1-4A was £1.15m and we now expect the final cost for Phase 4B to be in the order of £1.54m, giving a total cost for the project of £2.69m. However, there have been some recent increased costs for this final part of the work. About half of these would have been needed whether or not we had carried out the final part of the Open Doors project. We are confident that the overall funding will be in place soon. We are now starting to make a few applications to external bodies and trusts to ensure that the additional costs will be fully funded. We do not expect our last invoice (the retention under the building contract) from the contractors until September 2022 so have time on our side, if required.

As James writes in his letter: ‘Be doers of the word, not hearers only!’ (James 1 v22) Let us now enjoy our renewal together and share our renewed premises with all comers.

*Derek Rawson*

*Open Doors Project Group*



*Inside the Heritage Atrium June 2021*



*Heritage Atrium entrance development — June 2021*

# The Littlemore Church Nature Reserve

When I learned about the launch of a sustainability project at the Church of St Mary and St Nicholas, Littlemore in 2019, I couldn't wait to get involved. Churchyards are places of huge historic and communal importance, and they can be strongholds for biodiversity. Sometimes they offer the only green spaces

for miles around, like islands of habitat, capable of supporting a fantastic array of species, from centuries-old lichen clinging to the stonework, to wildflowers, invertebrates, hedgehogs, slow worms, toads, and more...

The Littlemore Church Nature Reserve project began in 2019, when Julian Armitstead, the Church Warden, successfully raised £500 to plant bee-friendly flora. Today, it has grown to become a small-scale ecosystem restoration project. We now have two beehives in the churchyard, managed by local beekeeper, Daniel McGuinness, and we maintain a minimal mowing schedule, which helps wildflowers and pollinators to thrive. Recent planting has included five fruit trees, including cherry, plum, pear, and two apples, as well as a range of hedging, including hawthorn, blackthorn, and beech. Many derelict graves have also been dug over and seeded with wild flowers and lavender. This means the reserve is now home to a diverse mosaic of habitats, ranging from wild flower meadows and grasses, to bushes, shrubs, and trees, which can support high levels of biodiversity. We are also creating space for wildlife in other ways, by installing bird boxes, bee hotels, and creating wood piles, which are perfect hiding spots for insects - and a convenient feeding spot for birds, hedgehogs, and other critters!

Two insect surveys in the churchyard, one from 2020 and one from 2021, have yielded exciting results. So far, we have had more than seven species of bee, as well as bee-flies, hoverflies, sawflies, several species of ladybird, and



*St Mary and St Nicholas Church*

more than six species of butterfly, including the small tortoiseshell, whose populations have declined in the UK over the past several decades.

These early results are so encouraging, as insects in Europe have vastly declined, with some studies estimating an 80% loss in flying insects in

the last few decades. Many species have been lost already from the UK, like the short-haired bumblebee and the large copper butterfly. These declines are primarily due to intensive agriculture and pesticide use, and the loss of important habitats, like wild flower rich grasslands. The scale of the loss has been huge, and there is a real risk that future generations will become more and more used to a UK without insects and begin to think this is 'normal', a concept known as shifting baseline syndrome. Insects are, in a way, the heart of ecosystems, and their loss has knock-on impacts on just about everything else. In the UK we are feeling the effects of their decline, as many insect-eating species are struggling, including birds like red-backed shrike, cuckoo, and nightingale.

At the Littlemore Church Nature Reserve, we hope to help flora and fauna both at the local scale and more broadly, by providing much-needed islands of habitat, as well as corridors to other areas. We hope to see more species each year, and we've already had a few newcomers: a scarlet tiger moth caterpillar was seen on the comfrey flowers a few weeks ago, and a colony of buff-tailed bumblebees has recently and spontaneously alighted on one of our bird boxes. They must be happy with the local foraging! We will also be keeping an eye out for more rare or endangered invertebrates - maybe stag beetles making use of the dead wood piles, or other animals which are positively impacted by the increased insect abundance, like slow worms or insectivorous birds.



## The Littlemore Church Nature Reserve

Over the last year of lockdown, the Littlemore Nature Reserve has been a resource for local people, including parents with children, who come to visit the hives, or have a peaceful walk through the reserve. Our minimal mowing schedule can sometimes look like ‘messiness’, and we have to balance this carefully with functionality for community use and communicating that the area is not being neglected - quite the opposite! We mow pathways through the wild flowers, install benches, encourage community planting of derelict graves with flower bulbs or lavender, and put up signs about local wildlife. We hope these will encourage community engagement and excitement about what we’re doing, and we hope that others will see the area as we do - a beautiful, colourful area that is full of life, like our own patch of the Garden of Eden, which probably wasn’t carefully mown every few weeks, either!

We have been joyful and hopeful about the changes we’ve seen just in our own little area, and we hope other churches will consider joining in. One day, with enough interest, we could form a consortium of wildlife-friendly churches, linking up with each other to create corridors, and sharing ideas on how to maximise nature conservation in Oxfordshire.

If your church is interested in getting involved, there are lots of resources available to help you get started: Eco Church (<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>) and Caring for God’s Acre (<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>) have fantastic guides, including action packs on how to sensitively manage burial grounds.

*Emily Neil*

*Ecosystem scientist, PhD candidate at University of Oxford*

To join Wesley Mem’s Eco Group, ask Jo Godfrey in the office for the date of the next meeting :  
email — [officeAToxfordmethodists.org.uk](mailto:officeAToxfordmethodists.org.uk)

*Photos from the project showing plants and insects flourishing in the church yard.*



# Small steps lead to a bigger journey

## How the Methodist Church is seeking renewal in a time of pandemic

In June 2020, during the first season of the pandemic, the Methodist Conference conferred about and enthusiastically embraced God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth. With the official adoption of the new strategy, the Methodist Church took some big steps in the commitment to be a growing, inclusive, evangelistic, and justice-seeking Church.

Amidst our great diversity as Methodists, the God for All strategy affirms a common path we all walk together, so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ, faith deepens for everybody, and churches and communities experience transformation.

We have asked for God's help: to centre us in prayer, to be a church at the margins, to start up New Places for New People, and to practise evangelism and social justice together.

Over the first year of the strategy, God has been so faithful. We've seen how these big, Connexional steps into evangelism and growth are actually made up of thousands of small commitments from people like you and me, from people in every context who've said: "We're not trying to do everything – we're offering this one thing. We're taking this small step. Here we are, Lord, send us." And over time, these small steps lead into a bigger journey together.

For example:

- One district took a step in developing A Methodist Way of Life, and now over 300,000 copies of this discipleship resource, in a dozen different languages, have been shared across the Connexion.
- Another district took a step and challenged the Methodist Church to pray together, and because of that, thousands of people have engaged in a weekly online prayer meeting, asking the Holy Spirit to break through, saying Amen together.

- A few early pioneers took some steps to meet people right where they are, and now all thirty districts are planning to start new Christian communities as part of their mission.

- One sceptical person took a step and said maybe God is asking me to share my faith, and now this year alone more than 300 people are being equipped for evangelism in the Methodist Church's new evangelism pathways.

Such stories are innumerable! People take a step and God does something with it. Thanks be to God! These stories remind us that that the *God for All* strategy is not about quick fixes or magic initiatives. It's about real people and real churches on a journey into Gospel transformation, not just for the next five years, but throughout our life and mission together.

As *God for All* reminds us, this big journey of small steps will require patient soul-searching, courageous decision making, and important cultural change. Left to our own power, we will find it exhausting and impossible. But dependent on the power of God, we might just encounter life and even joy for the Church and world alike.

As churches and circuits discern their calling for such a time as this, a new guidebook is available to help. Take Your Next Steps In Evangelism and Growth is free, and you can find it and many other helpful ideas and resources at [www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism](http://www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism)

So remember: we don't have to do everything, but let's get out there with a group of other folk, try something, and see what God will do with it.



*Trey Hall, Connexional  
Director of Evangelism and Growth*

Article adapted from a report to the 2021 Meth.Conference



# Walking with Micah

Rachel Lampard writes about the new Methodist project, *Walking with Micah*



I have always been stirred by the words of the prophet Micah. When asked how God wants his people to worship, to respond to God's love, Micah replies:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

As Methodists we find this response to God's love through acting justly present in our tradition. John Wesley, one of Methodism's founders, was a vocal opponent of the slave trade. The Tolpuddle Martyrs – many of whom were Methodist lay preachers – were early activists in the trade union movement. A disproportionate number of Methodists have served in Parliament. Sybil Phoenix OBE is one of many community activists and anti-racists. The work of All We Can, Action for Children and MHA speak powerfully of the commitment of Methodists to see justice for all.

What does "challenging injustice" look like in your own life? Methodists are involved in responding to needs in our communities or the world, running debt advice centres, giving to foodbanks, raising money for charities, writing to political prisoners. Sometimes we use our consumer power, by buying fairtrade bananas or avoiding excess plastic wrapping. And through our protesting, writing letters to

MPs or community organising, we try to change problems at their source.

Justice is present in the bible, in our tradition, often in our lives, and yet we sometimes find it hard to see where it fits in our Church.

The Methodist Church has set up 'Walking with Micah: Methodist Principles for Social Justice' - to explore what it means to be a justice-seeking church and people. Over the next two years, we will listen and learn together, focusing on our principles and priorities for justice. Through this, I hope we can increase our practical ability to seek God's justice, as a Church and in our own Christian lives.

I'm looking forward to a big conversation about justice this year. If you're interested in getting involved visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah/>

## How WM Junior Church 'walked with Micah' round the Sea of Galilee



Well, not quite round the Sea of Galilee, but round Farmoor, to raise funds for Twinning our Church Toilets through [Toilettwinning.org](http://Toilettwinning.org)

There is still time to support this pledge to "flush away poverty" with your donations.

PAY your gift into the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church account (Co-op bank details from the office) and add the reference TWIN, or ask a church steward to help you!

# Lessons of renewal from the woman at the well

*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (John 4:7)*



*Christus und die Samariterin am Brunnen -Kauffman*

A woman at a well in the middle of the day on the outskirts of her town, on the edge of her community in more ways than one; a stranger approaches and asks her for water. She is surprised he should even speak to her. The encounter which follows will change her life forever.

This reading is a well-known exchange — the longest conversation we see between Jesus and another person recorded in the Gospels. I encourage you to revisit it in John's Gospel, chapter 4. What can this woman drawing water in the midday heat teach us about renewal? How does her legacy change the way we might step into mission at this time of pandemic?

The encounter between the woman and Jesus is a moment of beautiful, holistic evangelism. Firstly, Jesus shares the faith with her, and then she rushes back to her community and describes her encounter. There is a ripple effect: an ongoing sharing of the Good News.

Evangelism is a word with a lot of baggage: it might make us feel excited, afraid, uncomfortable, fulfilled, inadequate! However you feel about it, we are all asked to 'make disciples' and we're all gifted to do that in different ways. We want to be a church which confidently,

authentically shares the Good News, through our words, our prayers and our lives.

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a 50 per cent surge in online searches for prayer, as research last year found. On top of that, Bible app downloads also shot up in March 2020: the top English-language Bible on Google Play and App Store was installed almost two million times, the highest number ever recorded. Similarly, one of the UK's largest online Christian bookstores, Eden, has seen physical Bible sales rise by 55 per cent since the start of the pandemic. We know people are seeking spiritually. How should we respond? The woman at the well teaches us many things, but let's just focus on two of them.

Firstly, that all we do in mission and evangelism should be rooted in relationship. This encounter shows us two strangers, who, when they meet, are far from equals. She is a woman, a Samaritan, alone at a well at midday — which many have suggested confirms her status as an outsider in her own community. He is a Jew, a man. And yet both are vulnerable in their own way and the encounter begins with mutual need. Jesus needs the water from the well which only she with her jar can provide. She needs the living water which only he can provide. Their mutual need allows them to talk as equals, asking one another questions, listening to each other, and entering into serious conversation about the deepest, most significant aspects of life. Their conversation has all the hallmarks of real relationship — regard, respect, and vulnerability. Like Jesus and the woman at the well, when we connect with one another in a real way, all manner of renewal and transformation is possible.

Secondly, this woman and her story teaches us how, when we share our faith, renewal is possible for even those lives which seem most broken. The Good News is a story of redemption which is big enough for you, for me, and for all of creation.

The woman's story is a painful one: she has had five husbands. Her story is one of brokenness and hurt. At the

## (John chapter 4)

## THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH STRATEGY

end of her conversation with Jesus, she rushes back to her village saying: “I have met a man who has told me everything I had ever done”. The very thing which had made her an outcast — everything she had ever done, her story of brokenness — is now the very thing through which she proclaims the Good News. This is a moment of extraordinary grace and redemption. Her whole life story is reframed by her meeting with Jesus, and becomes something by which to see and share God’s goodness.

In light of the pandemic, in the context of communal grief, trauma and isolation, we should see that an encounter with Jesus offers us — and all people — renewal.

What is it about our encounters with Jesus that send us out, overflowing with the good news? What difference does Jesus make in your life? If you can recognise the ways in which Jesus reaches into your own story and redeems it, as he does with the woman at the well, then you have good news to share. Our task as evangelists is not to be therapists, or theologians, but simply to speak good news gently, lovingly to one another. To speak God’s Good News is much more than simply sharing something pleasant. It’s more than a sticking plaster, it’s a lifeline. It’s a message of real hope, of real peace, of real redemption. It means pouring living water into the driest, most desperate deserts of our hearts.

As with the woman at the well, an encounter with Jesus renews not just our own lives, but the lives of the people around us. When we build relationships with people outside of the church and share the Good News with them, it will be a renewing experience for them and for us. So, as we emerge tentatively from this pandemic, I ask you: how might you renew your commitment to sharing your faith?

*Holly Adams, Evangelism and Contemporary Culture  
Officer, Connexional Evangelism and Growth Team*

To find out more about the ways you can be equipped for evangelism, please visit: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism/>

The 2020 Methodist Conference voted to increase the work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) throughout the Connexion, through the development of the Inclusive Church strategy. It called on Methodists to engage with the issues in their own daily lives, to confront and challenge all racism and other forms of unjust discrimination; and directed every circuit to convene a forum for reflection, conversation and planning. It also voted to incorporate into the Inclusive Church strategy work already started to ensure the inclusion of people who are intersex or transgender.

The Inclusive Methodist Church (draft definition)

1. Welcomes in safety all who wish to be part of the life of the Church whether through worship, learning and caring, service or evangelism.
2. Upholds the discipline of the Methodist Church in the face of discrimination, rejecting and resisting all types of behaviour that are discriminatory or belittling.
3. Celebrates diversity in the variety of God’s creation.
4. Represents the diversity of the Methodist Church throughout its life and structures and affirms that there is no place for discrimination in our processes of selection, discernment and appointment.

Through the Inclusive Church strategy, we are seeking:

- Attitudinal, cultural and systemic change;
- To end discrimination;
- Improved inclusive standards;
- Diversity in leadership roles.

(Summary - read the full text in The Connexion magazine, Summer 2021)

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Wesley Memorial Church Council voted to become a member of inclusive-church.org , an educational charity initiated in 2003, now described as *a network of churches, groups and individuals uniting together around a shared vision.*

[www.inclusive-church.org](http://www.inclusive-church.org)

## Zoomed out or in

One Sunday in July, during coffee, one of our group members asked my British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter about interpreting. This led to an interesting discussion about using interpreters on Zoom / MS Teams. The group asked me to share it as they had no idea of the processes involved.

Whilst Zoom is brilliant for keeping us connected and enabling us to carry on with meetings, I wouldn't say it is BSL interpreter-friendly. I have to work much harder to pick up what is being said – all very tiring!

So what are the difficulties of Zoom?

### 1) Screen size and screen sharing.

The more people in the meeting, the smaller and more numerous the individual screens, and that gets difficult. In gallery view, it can take my interpreter away to a different page. I could 'pin' my interpreter but then I would not see others in the gallery, and take in their reactions.

When a screen share comes up, I lose sight of my interpreter. We overcome this by connecting our laptops to the main meeting Zoom and using a second device like an iPad to connect to a private interpreter Zoom link. This actually works very well!

The only remaining problem is screen share for worship videos or prayer slides, lyrics or spoken text. Then I can't watch an interpreter and look at the screen share at the same time. My interpreters often have to wait for me to look at the slide but carry on listening, then quickly relay to me once I can look at them; and remember the next part as well!

2) Time lag - even at the best of times, my BSL interpreters have first to listen to what is being said, then interpret, and there is an inevitable time lag before I get the information. Apparently this is worse on Zoom or MS teams, as video has a longer time lag, leaving me further behind than I would be in a face to face situation. As a result, contributing to group discussions is very difficult.

By the time I have received the information, people have moved on. If you think I am very quiet in some meetings, that's the reason!

Groups need to be very well controlled for me, and I know that this isn't always possible because of the speed of hearing conversation. I regularly attend our church's Meditation Group and have no problems there. We have one person leading the meditation, I have my interpreter and I have the book the leader uses and reads from. Afterwards, we are asked for our feedback and experiences from the meditation, one at a time. It is very well controlled. BSL is a 3D language: we don't just watch the hands, we also read the face, eyes and body language. Some of this disappears on Zoom / MS Teams and so I have to work harder to compensate for the gaps and get the whole picture.

3) People talking over each other. I am sure this is difficult for all of you at the best of times especially on Zoom or MS Teams; and very difficult for my interpreters, as they have to decide on my behalf which conversation to interpret. I don't have that choice so, it is best if one person speaks at a time after raising a hand. I know this probably feels so unnatural, but it is easier for us.

4) Automatic subtitles on Zoom / MS Teams! – I don't know if any of you have tried this? In my experience, it can't pick up everything and also maybe inaccurate or even nonsensical. Watching them takes you completely away from what is actually being said. They may not pick up everything and sometimes there is a delay. The TV news is a good example. Subtitles are sometimes way behind the announcer; you get one half of a sentence and then you have to wait for the rest.

If you have any questions or want to find out more about BSL and Interpreting, please do get in touch. And warm thanks to my coffee group for asking!

*Anna Herriman*



# Sylvia Kenyon 1936 - 2020

Sylvia was born in Leeds in 1936 but her earliest memories were of Manchester where both sets of grandparents lived. She and her mother moved there during the Second World War. She always kept in touch, and visited her family often.

In 1945 Sylvia's parents, Cyril and Violet, moved to Chandler's Ford in Hampshire. She and her mother started attending the Methodist Chapel, and soon many friendships and social activities centred around the church, which continued throughout her life. She became a Queen's Guide and a leader.

She went to Winchester High School for Girls and on to the London School of Economics. It was quite something in the 1950s for a woman to be there, and Sylvia was certainly a trailblazer. She graduated in sociology, and trained to be an Almoner. Sylvia's first job was in Winchester, then she moved to London 's Royal Free Hospital; and in 1966 she moved to the Churchill Hospital in Oxford.

Sylvia's faith was quiet and deep and central to who she was. For most of her adult life she was in a house group, where Sylvia would mostly listen, but when she spoke, it was with words of wisdom. She read the Bible in services until lockdown, with her strong clear voice. She was our

representative for Methodist Homes, now MHA. For many years Sylvia helped with our Friday lunchbreak, offering well-priced meals for people in the city centre.



Caring was something that seemed to be in Sylvia's DNA. Whenever you met Sylvia, you were greeted by her lovely smile. You might ask how she was, but very quickly she would say 'but how are you' with the emphasis on you. She really wanted to know and would remember what you had told her, often asking about it later.

When she retired, Sylvia carried on looking after people. She was a 'pastoral visitor', often visiting people in her famous white mini! One friend described her as an 'inspirational' pastoral visitor.

Sylvia loved travelling and went on holidays to many parts of the world - including India, China, and several interfaith tours to the Mediterranean. She was always aware of world issues and social justice.

Sylvia had a sharp mind, a large heart and a giant spirit. Many of us will miss Sylvia deeply, but we have been so privileged that our lives have intertwined.

*John Cammack*

## What Makes a Methodist?



**Worship**



**Learning and Caring**



**Service**



**Evangelism**



# Your Church Council

## *FROM the meeting of 20 July 2021*

The Church Council met on Zoom - again! - and made some very useful decisions relevant to our current mission.

The following proposals from the Stewards were approved:

1. That Wesley Memorial should apply to become a member of inclusive-church.org, enabling our name to appear in their list. See [www.inclusive-church.org](http://www.inclusive-church.org)
2. That the Council endorse the Eco-Church group's request to purchase recycled toilet paper and eco-friendly cleaning products when the church re-opens
3. That the Council support the Superintendent's request for £500-£600 to buy essential AV equipment to facilitate 'hybrid' meetings. ( i.e Meetings in person with Zoom participants. This equipment already located!)
4. That the Council grant up to £1000 for professional photos for the church website

On the matter of the Conference vote on the report God in Love Unites us, the Council will vote in the autumn to decide whether Wesley Memorial will be available to solemnise marriages between couples of the same sex. There should be some material to help us sent from the Connexion while we consider the question.

Re the Open Doors report and our reopening, it was agreed:

1. To accept Derek's report on the current situation and the ensuing delays.

2. To agree to postpone the main opening event to Spring 2022, probably in March.
3. To apply to the Circuit Meeting for a further grant in the order of £50,000.
4. To apply to the District Advance Fund by 30 November 2021 for a further grant — amount TBC.

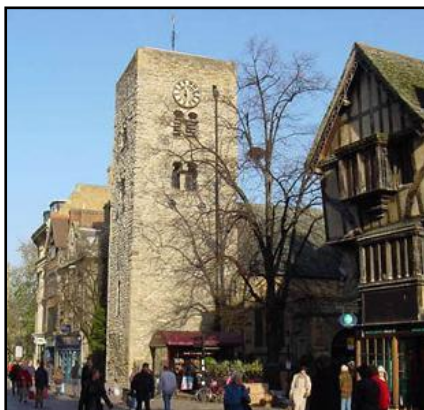
Later in the meeting the date of the formal opening event was set at 12-13 March 2022.

From the Mission Group came requests to appoint a group to take forward our ministry using the programme Leading Your Church into Growth; and to confirm Welcome wording to be displayed when we re-open, plus a concise statement called How Methodism inspires us for use in our publicity. They also proposed the use of a new logo recently devised in several versions. All were approved. The proposed Letterhead logo can be seen on page 3.

Finally a second proposal from the Eco Church group was approved: that the choice of the Church's electricity/gas supplier should be based on the best green energy/carbon footprint option, this taking precedence over the lowest financial cost.

As you can see, we have not been inactive while we cannot access the building!

*Senior stewards*



Thanks to the Revd Anthony Buckley and our friends at the church of St Michael at the North Gate for their Sunday afternoon hospitality. We have valued the opportunity to worship there together, during this period of building works at Wesley Memorial.

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# Wesley Memorial Church

New Inn Hall Street, Oxford OX1 2DH

Minister: The Revd Peter Powers

Children's, families' & outreach worker: Mel McCulloch

Church manager: Nikos Paplomatas

Services: Sunday worship      10.30 am  
                 Wednesday prayers    12.30 pm

Tel: 01865 243216

Web: [www.wesleymem.org.uk](http://www.wesleymem.org.uk)

email: [office@oxfordmethodists.org.uk](mailto:office@oxfordmethodists.org.uk)

Wesley Memorial Magazine editorial and production team: Janet Forsaith, Alan Dobson, Kate Dobson, Esther Ibbotson, Peter Powers

*Cover Cartoon: Jim Godfrey*

*Our email: [magazineATwesleymem.org.uk](mailto:magazineATwesleymem.org.uk)*

Contributions, letters, questions, pictures, book reviews and any other suitable items for publication are always welcome. Please email them to the editorial team, stating if you are also willing for them to appear on the church website. All items may be edited by the team.

Articles express the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Wesley Memorial Church or of the Methodist Church.

*Deadline for the Christmas issue:  
10 October 2021*

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