

Wesley Memorial *news*

The magazine from Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford | Christmas 2019



Hearing God differently

The Manse, 26 Upland Park Road, Oxford

Dear Friends,

Twelve months ago rehearsals were in full swing for *Time and Again*, the musical which wove together the stories of six Wesley Memorial productions, spanning more than 30 years, and which found in the adventures of Moses, Ruth, the Holy Family, Francis of Assisi, and the Wesley brothers a narrative of God's extraordinary grace, working miracles with the most unlikely people.

It would be invidious to express a preference for one musical over another (though I really did enjoy being the Voice of God in the *Moses* story!), but reflecting on the approach to Christmas has inevitably brought back the plot line of *Alternativity*, where a committee of patriarchs, prophets and kings tries to ensure that God's plan to put the world right is properly organised. The idea that God might work through an ordinary young woman and a baby fills them with incredulity and dismay.

The Christmas message continues to cause similar reactions. Not just at the level of relegating it to the world of make-believe and presenting it as a pretty story for children – an option that only really works for those who don't read the Gospel narratives of hope, fear, pain and violence too carefully. But also for all of us when we fail to think through what it means for God to become really and truly human.

Classical theology, drawing on the insights and assumptions of Greek philosophy, has understood Divine perfection to mean that God must be above and beyond feelings – 'without parts or passions'. Handled without due care and nuance, this can produce a remote Deity, frozen, sterile and less than human. The incarnation – the coming to birth of God in Jesus of Nazareth – guards against this, by ensuring that there is real humanity at the heart of God. Because of Jesus, and because of Christmas, God knows what it is to be human. God knows our delights, our frustrations, our joys, our pain, our bereavements and our dilemmas.

God's living presence in the messiness of human life can speak to us when we are confronted with difficult decisions and hard choices. Watching the country struggling with Brexit in recent years has felt like trying to disentangle a cat's cradle of threads by pulling on all the loose ends, and only making the knots tighter and more intractable. We have desperately needed a willingness to listen, to understand, to refrain from stigmatizing others, and to disagree without rancour and violence.

Last summer's Methodist Conference agreed a set of recommendations around marriage and relationships, partly in response to legislation enabling same-sex marriage and partly as the latest stage in a long-running conversation about human sexuality. The recommendations are being discussed widely during the current Connexional year, and will either be ratified, or amended, or rejected at the 2020 Conference. We will have an opportunity to explore the issues at a Circuit consultation in the New Year, and this is our chance to show how we handle what may be sharp disagreements on things that matter profoundly to us. The point I want to make here is that God is with us in our thinking and our feeling, in our struggles and our debates, and in the provisionality and untidiness of the outcomes. That too is a consequence of incarnation.

Yours in Christ,

Martin Wellings

Editorial

It's almost Christmas — a time of joy, family and worship. It's bright, brash and noisy. The diary is full with nativity plays, office parties, late-night shopping, visits to friends, festive meals, carol services. And it's a busy time for many in charities, hospitals and businesses racing towards targets for the year's end. It's brilliant and glittering and full and *exhausting*.

With this issue of *Wesley Memorial News* we invite you to pause and take a short time out. To find a moment of peace. And listen.

For this issue we are thinking about what God has to say to us, the ways He reveals

His message and the times when we are challenged to hear His words differently. You'll find plenty of reflections, personal stories, news and meditations that fill out this theme — for us, our church and the world. And what better at a time when we're celebrating a living God revealed to us in the birth of a baby? That's some message for the world to hear.

We hope you find much to feed to mind, soul and spirit in these pages — a great match for any indulgent mince pie this joyful season!

Best wishes for Christmas from
the Wesley Memorial News team.

In this issue...

<i>Hearing God differently</i>	pp4-11
<i>JWS memoir</i>	p12
<i>Oral history project</i>	p13
<i>Open Doors update</i>	p14
<i>Going green</i>	p15
<i>Reviews</i>	pp16-17
<i>Wesley Mem Singers</i>	p17
<i>Obituary</i>	p18
<i>Heard it on the grapevine</i>	p19

Hearing God in creation

Our Celtic Christian ancestors met and heard God in all of creation:

*There is no plant in the ground
But is full of His virtue,
There is no form in the strand
But is full of His blessing...*

*There is no bird on the wing,
There is no star in the sky,
There is nothing beneath the sun,
But proclaims His goodness.*

Carmina Gadelica

They had prayers to invoke the blessing and help of God in every daily task from milking the cow at dawn to banking up the fire and lying down to sleep at night.

And they looked for God in unexpected places, too:

*I saw a stranger yestreen;
I put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place;
And, in the sacred name of the Triune,
He blessed myself and my house,
My cattle and my dear ones.
And the lark said in her song,
Often, often often,
Goes Christ in the stranger's guise:
Often, often, often,
Goes Christ in the stranger's guise.*

The rune of hospitality

David Bull

Sunflowers in Autumn

Wouldn't it be rather nice if God turned out to be a God of grace? You may respond that God is a God of grace and refer me to our Methodist theology, expressed so beautifully in our hymnody. And I might reply, 'I know about grace; the challenge is living it day by day.' I experience two Gods. The old one is demanding, rule-based and never happy with what I do. The new God simply wants to give. Perhaps one reason why we are in France, setting up a small reflection centre, is to try and learn how to live under grace, and to enable others to glimpse a God of grace. I want to give two examples of this new God at work and then finish with a poem.

Since moving to France, I have been involved in the training of ministers in the Methodist church in pastoral supervision. This has involved a lot of to-ing and fro-ing! What we have witnessed, time after time, is hard-pressed ministers coming to a training event with not a little resentment about Conference giving them yet another thing to do, and many questions about how the supervision scheme will work out in practice. And yet, for many ministers these training events have turned into times of blessing. In groups of three they have been able to practise the skills of supervision as supervisors, and reflect truthfully on their vocation and ministry as supervisees. In these honest communications, the God of grace has been palpably present.

I am not the sort of person who asks God for a car-parking space, but a recent incident left me wondering if I could believe in the new God a little more. French systems are different to English ones, and need a little negotiating. In May I filled in a tax form for the first time here. I was in a bit of a panic because when I looked it up I found the closing date for the return was the following day. I completed the form hurriedly, to the best of my ability, knowing that the figures were correct but that I probably hadn't ticked all the right boxes in the right places! As the months went by The Tax Form became a background anxiety: I became convinced that I had filled it in wrongly, or that I hadn't put the right postage on it, or it had got lost in the post and we would be fined, or....

Eventually I decided that if I hadn't heard anything by the end of September, I would gather up my courage and go to the tax

office (preferable to me than trying to explain the situation in French over the phone). By the end of September nothing had

come through the post. The day came when we were going to the tax office in the big city of Niort. I had gathered every possible piece of paper together into a file. That morning the Gospel reading told of Christ advising the people of his day to give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's (TAX) and to give to God the things that are God's! At lunch-time, just before setting out, I checked the post: there was the letter from the tax office, with everything in perfect order. Now, I've worked in a hospice. I know bad things happen in this world to good, bad and middling people. But, the God of grace is a reality too – in a hospice and in our mundane human lives.

So, to the poem. This year, at the top of our road, the fields were full of sunflowers. I spent quite a while looking at them in the various stages of their life and wrote this in early autumn:

Sunflowers

The tournesols no longer turn,
their slow daily dance a memory
now of bright yellow fire. They burn
no more, dried, stayed: soundly*

*defeated, they wait in sombre, ragged lines,
heads bent low. Summer leaves now crack
and scrape in the evening wind, visible signs
of all that's failing, ending - all that's lack*

*and want. And yet. And yet these once flowers
are fixed looking east, locus of the sun's rising:
have you ever searched your heart for all that scours
and scrapes, but found instead harvest and singing?*

**Tournesol is the lovely, descriptive French word for sunflower.*

*Bob Whorton, former chaplain to Sobell House Hospice, now
living in Poitou-Charentes, France*



Hearing God at Christmas

I am looking forward to my first Christmas in Oxford. Christmas in a new context is always interesting, and it is a profound and thought-provoking season.

But also looking back, because previous Christmases in other places were likewise special; this season can bring poignant memories for many of us. And so I remember C. S. Lewis' words: "Humanity does not always pass through phases as a train passes through stations; being alive, it has the privilege of always moving yet never leaving anything behind."

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tell us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever, that God is outside linear time. Perhaps somehow all our Christmases — the excited child, the passionate teenager, the wistful adult — are joined together, held in the love of God. "The hopes and fears of *all the years* are met in thee tonight."

It is a great privilege to live and serve in Oxford. As Vicar of St. Michael at the North Gate and City Rector, I meet a wonderful variety of people, local and visiting, and I am deeply grateful for the welcome and friendship they bring. It is one of the great cities in the world.

I am looking forward to the decorations and the lights, the carols and the church services, the Christmas greetings and magic in the air. I am wondering what Christmas will look like for the poor and the homeless.

I was asked to write about "hearing from God" and to be honest I don't know what I might hear. He often surprises, and it is usually a mistake to second-guess what he will say. Perhaps there will be a particular experience or phrase which catches me afresh, which breathes hope and truth, light and love. Perhaps it will be a conversation or a silence, a song or reading.

Oxford is a powerful and influential city and the Christmas story raises questions about power. The Magi use their power generously, travelling far with costly gifts; they lay down their

status to pay reverence to a baby. Herod uses his power badly because he is insecure; he lacks real royal blood, and this new baby is apparently descended from the great shep-

herd-king David, and is born in David's town — more than enough to trigger a fearful tyrant in Jerusalem to play his normal game of lies and violence. It is interesting how violence, in words or actions, so often comes from fear.

This helpless baby in Bethlehem expresses the power of God and transforms the world. It is a humble birth and it will be a humiliating death thirty-three years later, six miles north in Jerusalem. Perhaps I will hear God in the vulnerable and needy, never underestimating what God may be doing in and through them.

And, as the shepherd-king is remembered, perhaps I will be hearing God in those in our community who kindly shepherd others, protecting and guiding. In those who act like true kings, with justice and mercy at the heart of their leadership. Or perhaps it will be in the elderly like Simeon and Anna, who live their lives patiently and faithfully. Or those like Joseph, who refuse to disgrace others; or Mary, questioning, obedient and reflective. Or the shepherds, prepared to go and find out more.

God will be saying different things to each of us this Christmas, knowing the secrets of our hearts and our deepest needs, but the underlying themes will be constant: The eternal Word becoming flesh, light shining in dark places, the humble lifted up, hope refusing to be crushed, a saviour born, a new king arriving. May it be a blessed Christmas for Oxford and all those on our minds, near and far, full of good hearing, and good responding. As the angels said: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Anthony Buckley, Vicar of St. Michael at the North Gate and City Rector



Hearing God differently: the ministry of supervision in the Methodist Church

In 2015 the Methodist church in Britain made a commitment to introduce a structured system of supervision for those ministering in its name. After a pilot study and the training of some 450 supervisors, by 1 September 2020 most ordained ministers and some lay officers will be regularly meeting with a trained and approved supervisor to reflect on their ministry.

Supervision is designed to reduce isolation in ministry and to support ministerial wellbeing and effectiveness. It is also intended to help ministers reflect on the situations of risk in their work, in order to help ensure the safety and flourishing of individuals and of the communities in their care.

Early research suggests that supervision in the Methodist Church is having a variety of positive effects. In terms of resilience: *I think I would say it has probably improved my mental health and my resilience, given my ability to fester.*

In terms of strategies for moving forward:

I've been always energised at the end of a supervision session even if it's been something really difficult. When we obviously haven't come to a solution but it has felt there are possibilities to explore, that energises me.

And in terms of a sense of shared accountability:

I have really valued supervision but also that everybody knows that I'm having supervision. Trying to model something about not having to come up with instant solutions to things that are very complex. But also that there's another perspective on this because we are all in this together.

Whilst supervision is a required practice in many helping professions, it is important that when it is offered with a church context, it happens within a framework of listening to what God is saying. The model of supervision being offered in the Methodist Church is one where the supervisor and the supervisee work together in a space that the supervisor holds so that both can listen to what God might be saying as the supervisee opens up about the issues arising from their ministry context and their ministry practice.

To help shape this process, we have reflected on Wesley's Sermon 'On visiting the sick.' In this sermon Wesley suggests that when one person makes space for another, invites the presence of God's spirit, asks intentional questions and listens attentively, God reliably visits with blessing and healing, guidance and inspiration as it is needed.

In practice, our research so far suggests that the two most important characteristics of the supervisor are 'being alert to God's spirit' and being 'non-anxious'. In a world that is increasingly anxious and speeding up, and in a church that is anxious about numerical decline and its many consequences, those in ministry are not immune from the anxiety that affects us all. It is instructive to notice, though, that a regular 90 minutes reflecting with someone whose role it is not to try to fix things, but to listen and wonder and notice, can help to re-ground a minister in their faith in God and in themselves and so slow down and listen to the one thing needful.

...there's something really significant about stopping the clock. I'm not sure that space ever really existed before supervision.

I think I want to talk about something spiritual happening... my experience of supervision is that it's about much more than the policy. It's a spiritual thing. It's about engagement with people at the very deepest parts of their self-revelation.

The Methodist Church is the first denomination to adopt supervision as a core part of the ligaments and sinews that hold together the members of the body of Christ. We certainly have much still to learn about how to do that well. The hope is, though, that through the sustained effort of everyone involved we are changing a culture, not only amongst ministers, but in the church as a whole, towards a less anxious and a more deeply faithful way of being God's people in challenging times.

Jane Leach, Connexional Director of Supervision

Find out more about supervision in the Methodist Church in Britain by visiting www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/ministry/supervision

Discerning my call

The first recognition of my calling was when I was at Bristol University in 1996. I had a part-time job at M&S in Bristol city centre. I sensed some vibes whilst I was on my induction in M&S. It was like some magnetic, comforting feeling. Then I discovered The New Room a few doors away!! I went to an evening service one night, and just before the service as I was on my way there, suddenly out of the blue, a vision lasting a minute appeared before me of myself preaching to a large group of people! I felt a calling to go back to the Methodist Church. I commenced and completed my Methodist Church membership course and was accepted into membership on May 3rd 1998.

When I lived in Bristol, I visited important places of Methodist history – Kingswood School, Hanham Mount, New Rooms. I was in the New Room regularly! I even got caught on CCTV camera unawares pretending to be a deaf version of John Wesley but preaching in BSL (British Sign Language) from the pulpit in the New Room, when I had a deaf friend visit.

I was in MethSoc and was Vice President! I remember Lord Leslie Griffiths coming to give a talk. I had job interviews in London in summer 1999, I called by at Wesley's Chapel, City Road and was invited in for a cup of tea with Lord Leslie Griffiths, in his office!!

"It was like some magnetic, comforting feeling."

I joined Wesley Memorial in summer 2007. Events started to accelerate from 2017. I was involved in Deaf Christian Charity committee meetings. God was starting to drop messages and open access in various places.

In Summer 2018, I travelled with Oak Hall, a Christian holiday company, to Greece and Italy. I visited Corinth and Athens. The leaders on both holidays had experience of deaf awareness, knew how Cochlear Implants worked and their limitations, and were experienced in the use of FM transmitter systems. They also knew my communication needs and I knew it would be ok.

Two songs called out to me: *10,000 Reasons*, which is about the joy of being able to worship Jesus and is something we should do 100% of the time, and *My hope is built on nothing less*. This one reminds us of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

Whilst in Italy, *10,000 Reasons* was the first song in worship on the first evening! The key messages from the holiday were: Hebrews 13:5 & Proverbs 3: 5-6 We are Holy people and God never leaves us. We need to put faith and trust in God for He has plans for us.

Hebrews 12:1 We need fix our eyes on Jesus alone and run the race that's marked out for us.

2 Corinthians 5:14 We are ruled by the love of Christ.

Therefore, we should:

- See people differently and encourage others to worship God and see them as God does and not a worldly view. Have love and compassion for the lost, compassion for all the people on earth.
- Be an ambassador for Jesus, called in the light of Jesus.
- Recognise our authority for reconciliation: get the gospel out.

2 Corinthians 3 states we are transformed into his likeness, we are being challenged to be more like Jesus Christ. Fix our eyes on him and live for him.

In late summer 2018, I felt it was now time for me to serve and I began Local Preacher training by reading the "Called to Preach" leaflet. I prayed and asked God to confirm the calling. Within seconds He did. He also reminded me of two significant events in my early life: a traumatic birth that I wasn't expected to survive; and my grandad, a Methodist Local Preacher, who had dragged me to church as a reluctant youngster, and not my sister!

I am now almost half-way through my Local Preacher training and am enjoying it. I continue to receive God's provision along the way and I look forward to continuing my journey to follow God's calling further.

Anna Herriman

Hearing God differently in a world of many faiths

When I first took my Christian faith seriously, I read my Bible every morning, and prayed for family and friends, as well as for those in need around the world. I heard God's answers, and they were often simple ones of guidance, with the occasional rebuke for misdemeanours or my over-enthusiasm which caused me to do something crass. Sometimes God spoke to me through something a friend said, or through something I read, or even, now and then, through a sermon!

Having worked in interfaith engagement for much of the past decade, I have heard God in all sorts of unexpected places. My Christian faith has grown as a result of these encounters, and while I have a great deal of respect for, and friendship with, people of many faiths and no faith, I have never been tempted to stop following Jesus. Rather, I have been challenged to follow him with all my "prayer, passion, intelligence and energy", as Eugene Peterson translates Mark 12:30.

I once took a group of people training to be Church of England vicars to visit a *mandir*, a Hindu Temple. While we were being shown around, several Hindu devotees came in, calmly prostrated themselves in prayer for a few minutes and then went to sit gazing at the *murtis*, the forms of the divine that filled the space we were in. I was struck by the strength of unashamed devotion, and heard God whisper a challenge to me about my public confidence in my Christian faith.

Another time, a Muslim friend of mine, probably trying to provoke me into

embracing Islam, challenged my habit of celebrating Christmas. Why do you do it, he asked, when Jesus did not command you to celebrate Christmas? Again, I could hear Jesus himself asking me whether my celebrations were about glorifying the Son of God come down to earth, or whether they had slipped into consumerism and over-consumption.

Sometimes what you hear from God is painful. I have spent many hours over the past two years reading and reflecting, writing and praying about how Christians have treated Jewish people over the centuries. There are some stories of love and care and affection, but there are many more of prejudice, hatred and exploitation. It has been particularly painful to hear some Jewish friends explain how many Jews they know are fearful or distrustful of Christians. The scars of history remain in the present and we are foolish if we deny the reality of the pain we have caused.

Perhaps the thing I have heard most clearly from God through the past decade is the need to keep a firm hold of the faith once professed before all the saints. When I first started working for a church, the reading at my commissioning included these instructions from Paul to Timothy: "preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. ... But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2, 5).

Over the years I have learnt particularly the need to employ great patience and to keep my head in all situations. Life in a multi-faith, multi-cultural world is complex, and there are often no easy answers to very difficult problems. Returning to my three examples above, I have learnt a great deal about Christian-Jewish relations, but that does not mean my heart is immune to the pain of the Palestinian people. I have no idea how the situation in Israel-Palestine can resolve itself in peace, but I know my role is to listen, to understand, to seek to build bridges of understanding and of trust. I also know that some of my Muslim friends would love me to embrace Islam for myself, and that sometimes their questions are designed with that end in mind. From that I hear God warning me to be aware of my own motivations, and to remove any sawdust from my own eyes before commenting on the log blocking my friend's vision.

But while I recognise the world is complicated, that does not mean I will give up on striving to hear God's voice, nor does it mean I will stop trying to walk in his ways. Rather, it means I am learning more about the richness of the world he has created us to enjoy and to steward. May you hear God's voice in unexpected places as you seek to follow wherever he leads you.

Tom Wilson, Director of the St Philip's Centre in Leicester. The St Philip's Centre is in receipt of Connexional Funding to equip Methodist Churches for interfaith encounters. Visit www.stphilipscentre.co.uk to find out more.

How people hear God differently through Scripture

Twice in the last month I've been asked what I think the Bible says about Brexit. The first time it was clear that the enquirer thought that "a collection of ancient texts" could not shed much light on such a complex contemporary matter. He felt that we should be circumspect in attempting to draw any parallels between our situation and those we read about in Scripture. The second enquirer wanted to know which Bible verses he should look at to help him make up his mind whether he should vote for a 'leave' or 'remain' candidate in the forthcoming election.

What does the Bible say about Brexit? How we understand that question and begin to make any response to it depends on what we think the Bible is and what kind of authority we give it; and Christians have different and deeply held views on this!

When the different Methodist traditions came together in 1932, those holding different convictions wrestled with the question of the nature of the authority of the Bible. Some fundamental principles were agreed and are set out in a very carefully worded statement in the *Deed of Union*:

"The doctrines of the evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice."

It is helpful to notice what this statement does and does not say. It does say that "divine revelation which is recorded in the Holy Scriptures" is the supreme authority for the Church and that our doctrines are "based upon" it; but it does not say that the Bible is the supreme authority nor that Methodist doctrines are taken straight from the Bible. Nor does it define what "the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures" means. For example, it could be interpreted as meaning that the actual words of the Bible form the divine revelation (although, most of us only ever read a translation of the original). Alternatively, it could be understood to mean that the self-revelation of God took place in the great events of the Old and New Testaments,

in the words of the prophets and biblical writers and supremely in Jesus, and that the Bible is the record of that self-revelation.

Within the Methodist Church it has therefore always been acknowledged that we have various approaches to Scripture and that there are various models of biblical interpretation. One method has never been preferred over another. The 1998 Conference report *A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path* identifies seven different perspectives on biblical authority held within the Methodist Church, and confirms that the Church has no single agreed approach to Scripture. The report offers seven examples, representing each perspective (section 7.9 at www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-a-lamp-to-my-feet-1998.pdf). The examples are not precise definitions, and any one of us might feel that our own position is a mixture of two or three of the examples, but they are intended to illustrate briefly the range of views which are held, and the reasons for holding them.

The range of different positions, though, does not imply that there is nothing on which we agree. Scripture matters, and conversations about the nature of biblical authority can be difficult and painful because of the importance of the Bible in the Church's life. It is not surprising that Christian people who experience God's self-revelation in such diversity recognize that God's Word in Scripture is encountered in different ways, but Methodists have always emphasised the importance of shared discernment. Each model of biblical authority emphasizes something individual Christians wish to affirm about Scripture as divine revelation. Together these models remind us that we hear God differently and that we never fully comprehend the divine nature. Thus, listening to each other and sharing our different perspectives is vital, and safeguards us from forming too narrow a view of the God that is beyond our imagining. Our diverse approaches to Scripture enable us to gain new insights into the nature of God, and to be surprised, challenged and inspired by God in ways we cannot foresee.

Nicola Price-Tebbutt, Secretary of the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee

So what's the story?

The Revd Dr Barbara Glasson and Professor Clive Marsh, respectively President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2019/2020, have jointly written 'So What's the Story...?', a resource book for Christian Reflection and Practice. Here is Kate and Martin's 'virtual interview' with Clive on the book, the 'story' and being Vice-President.



How did you and Barbara come to agree to write the book? How did it come together?

We looked at each other when we first got together properly in October last year to start to plan our year, and asked each other 'What is it that we're good at, and might be able to offer the church, to give members something to work with throughout the year?' We acknowledged that we were both already published writers, and so trying to write a small, accessible, usable book (for individuals and groups) might be the thing to do. We contacted DLT, with whom we'd both published in the past, and David Moloney, Editorial Director, was very encouraging and responded well to our basic idea. We did, though, have to get a complete manuscript to him by the end of January 2019 if it was to be out in time for the Methodist Conference in June. So we worked hard for four months, drafting six chapters each, and getting them critically scrutinized by Rachel Starr and Jane Craske from The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, who came back to us with very helpful comments and suggestions. We also tweaked each other's material and joked about (and got irritated by!) each other's writing styles. But we're still friends! Somehow, we got it done.

What are you hoping the book and the theme will achieve? How might the book be used in a local church setting?

We hope that it will get people digging into their own stories, their own church's stories, into Methodism's stories, into the broader stories of Christianity's history and present forms across the world. And then talking...perhaps with people they haven't talked with in much depth before. It would be especially good if people could talk across borders: of social class, ethnicity, geographical origin. How have we all ended up being the kind of Christians we are? What have we got to do to ensure that we can 'hear' the stories of those who are differently Christian,

those who aren't Christian, but may be differently religious, or those who aren't religious at all?

Has there been much reaction so far? What feedback have you had?

The Conference bookstall sold 1300 copies, which was extremely good news, and it seems still to be selling quite well. (I must stress that we don't get the royalties – the Methodist Church does!) It's supposed to be a bit cheaper from Methodist Publishing (that had been the plan!), though the reduced price of £7.99 rather than £9.99 doesn't seem to have taken effect yet. (Keep looking, go through your local bookshop, or head for *Wordery.com* in the meantime.) But at least it's getting into quite a few hands! The comments we have been receiving are that it does work as a 'study book' i.e. to work your way through gradually – either individually or in groups, using the points of connection and reflection we suggest throughout the text. Some have suggested it may not be quite as 'easy' a text as we might have hoped. But most think it's readable. We're both 'academics' in some ways (though of different types), but we're pleased that we seem to have produced an accessible text. We haven't yet had a full report of a local church group that's worked through the whole text as a group programme. But it's still too early for that really. The 12 chapters could, of course, shape an entire year's study.

Is there a connection between *So What's the Story?* and other recent Connexional resources like *Talking Jesus* and *Time to Talk of God*? Or is the approach here a bit different?

There's a connection in the sense that all these resources are meant to *get people talking*, and specifically to get people talking about faith in God. There's also *Talking of God Together*, and *Talking of God with Others* which is due out soon from

Methodist Publishing. I hope we haven't stolen the thunder of this latest publication, which a group has been working on for some time. If these could all dovetail, that would be good – get people reading *So What's the Story...?* as individuals, and then using *Talking of God Together* or *Talking of God with Others* in groups, perhaps. If there's a difference, it's that we're really wanting people to dig a bit more into their own and others' experience than they might usually do in church conversations. And unlike the group resources, we perhaps provide a bit more material (including personal material) for readers to react to.

How much are we aware of our own Methodist story, and do we make enough use of it?

The second part of this question is a bit loaded (implying that *of course* we should use it more!). That's probably true, but we need to be careful how. The 'heritage' emphasis of recent years has been strong and valuable, but we have to ensure that paying attention to Methodism's story, historically speaking, doesn't become an exercise in nostalgia. I must admit to some reserve about the practice of people dressing up in 18th century gear to look like John or Charles Wesley. There's a place for it, but... Beyond that, I am aware that many Methodists locally are very aware of Methodism's local story. The challenge (at every Church Anniversary service, and I'm leading a few of those around the Connexion this year) is to work out what it means in any particular place to continue 'the Methodist tradition/ faithful witness' in *this* place, *here and now*. Sometimes it may be very hard to reach the conclusion that it means keeping the church building in Methodist ownership, but letting it be used for quite a different primary purpose (arts centre, low-cost housing, community centre) whilst retaining an option for one of its rooms to remain a 'sacred space' for that community, but no longer 'a church' in the way that community had been used to. That may be the new form of Methodist discipleship for that community, and provoke a fresh understanding of how Methodist spirituality (or 'piety' – a word I've been trying to get us to rediscover) is to be shaped today. Tough decisions need to be taken sometimes. Here, though, is where the Circuit structure, and Methodism's Connexional understanding of church, are really important. Methodism at its best is a form of Christian communism (in the first-century Church sense). Like all forms of communism, though, we have to take account of our own sinfulness and lack of faith as we try to remain faithful.

And finally, how are you enjoying your year as Vice-President?

It's wonderful. It really is. Admittedly, the hard slog of many District visits has yet to begin fully, so I'm still relatively fit and fresh. By 'hard slog' I simply mean the travel and the hours. Perhaps you should ask me again in February! But it's quite exhilarating to be interacting with people of different ages, in different places, using material and insights which I've gathered together over the years, whilst having new experiences (in Zimbabwe particularly, in the Summer) and being challenged to think about new things, and to think differently myself about biblical texts, and theological themes, as a result of the conversations I am engaged in. Barbara and I are simply hoping that these exchanges we have with people we meet may be of use to churches after we've left.

Kate Dobson and Martin Wellings

The Good News quiz: What does it mean for you?

Fizzy asked members of the congregation about the Good News, what they understood by it and what it meant to them. Here's what they said.

"That God is going to make life better for everybody."

Wendy Spray

"That we are lucky to have it and know about it."

David Matthews

"The Good News is the belief that God loves us and wants to have a relationship

with us. Nothing we can do will ever change that. For me that means I want to spend time with God and I know when I come to God I can be completely myself with God."

Rachel Blainey

"Everyone has the potential to change for the better."

Tom Ibbotson

"We should share it."

Jenny Arnold

By Rowan, John, Ben and Eloise

A John Wesley Society member's memoir

I was at Brasenose College from 1955-58, and very involved in Methodism at the University. The pattern was that we had a John Wesley Society meeting on a Saturday evening. This usually involved a speaker, some discussion and social time. I remember one such evening, though not the speaker's name. He was a prominent Roman Catholic layman, and was speaking on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He agreed to answer questions but not to enter into debate. Of course, one answer led to another question and debate is what it became! I remember someone asking, "But do you believe it?" To which he answered, "No, but I accept it as my Church's teaching." We were somewhat aghast at this!

Then it was morning Sunday service at Wesley Memorial. Most of the services were led by the then chaplain and Wesley Memorial incumbent, the Reverend Donald Lee, who was a powerful preacher and a most delightful and approachable man, later President of Conference. Curiously, he always wore slippers under his preaching gown. I remember him saying (about preaching) that if you were not nervous before taking a service there is something wrong, such is the responsibility of being God's messenger. He had a great influence on me and we remained friends for many years. Donald Cragg was his assistant. It was open house at the manse, then in Lathbury Road, and we often congregated there.

Members of JWS were enrolled in a group of 10 to 12 others who met in each other's rooms on Sunday afternoons. We usually had a subject to study during the time. I was in Group 6 which was assigned to the Methodist chapel in Bladon near Woodstock. We were entertained to tea in someone's house there, then took the evening service. Eventually, by seniority rather than ability, I became leader and consequently it was my turn to preach. We had been discussing the Holy Spirit during the term and as Pentecost was approaching, I took as my theme the Fruits of the Spirit, (Galatians 5 verse 22 which gives a list of nine 'fruits'). I devoted a paragraph to each 'fruit'. I don't think it was very successful – the only comment I got from my colleagues was a "You were 19 minutes". That was in 1957, and my fiancée, Sonja, newly arrived from Germany, thought I was brilliant, but her English had some way to go!

I had only been home a few days when I had a call from our minister. I imagine my Dad had told him "John's been preaching". It was an emergency – a preacher due to take Whitsunday service at New Road, Stourbridge, had fallen ill – could I fill in? I only had the one sermon and it was about the Holy Spirit so I agreed and used Galatians 5 verse 22 again. It seemed to go rather better the second time, or maybe they were being indulgent. At the evening service, (everyone went twice on Sundays back

then) a student from Handsworth College took the same text and his opening sentence was, "Of course, no one in their right mind would attempt to deal with all these 'fruits' in one sermon". Our pew was quite near the front and I tried to make myself as small as possible – not easy being 6'4"!

The only time I have appeared (well, nearly) on TV was at a televised service at Wesley Memorial, when I was in the choir. We sang an anthem. At the rehearsal one could see that the camera moved along a row of singers at appropriate moments. We tenors had a few lines to ourselves and so we were in the camera shot. I told my family back in Amblecote and they told friends, and our sitting room was packed, in front of the small screen. The anthem went well and I was curious to know the reaction back home. Frustration and disappointment! Most of the other tenors were quite short and with my 6'4", all they saw of me was my tie and chin!

I preached occasionally thereafter, but it was not until 1963 that I became an accredited local preacher in North Wales. I preached my last sermon on June 2 2019, 62 years on from Bladon, and my wife of 61 years was with me again.

My years at Brasenose, Wesley Memorial, JWS and Lathbury Road had a profound influence on me for which I remain truly thankful.

I hope Wesley Memorial and University students continue to flourish. Every blessing to you all.

John Rogers

Oral history project

Maybe sometimes you, like me, sitting in church Sunday by Sunday, think about all the different people who have worshipped in this place over the last 140 years. Some we know or have known, but many are no longer in our collective memory. I wonder what those who worshipped here a 100 years ago, in 1919, would have really been like? We know they had just come through World War 1 but know little else except a few names inscribed on our walls, one or two grainy photographs, and a few bits of history picked up along the way. It would be wonderful to hear them talk about their lives, their church and their faith.

Sadly, this is not possible. But we have started recording some of our current congregation's voices so that future generations will be able to hear some of us talking about our lives, our church and our faith – now, and perhaps, in a hundred years' time as well.

"Everyone's story is unique and extraordinary, whether they realise it or not."

Our oral history project has been going for just over a year and, so far, we have completed about 25 interviews. I reckon that works out at about 1600 years of life! A small group of us were trained in April 2018, and since then have been working with individuals to record their stories. We ask about their early memories, their work and life and how faith has influenced their choices, about times of transition in their life, and about what Wesley Memorial means to them. We have heard stories of war, missionary endeavours, heroic adventures and personal struggles. But also, many everyday stories of caring for others, and a quiet faith lived out. Sometimes, we hear a verse from the Bible and sometimes a favourite hymn. We have interviewed people of different ages and from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. Alison Butler, our Mission and Heritage Officer, has done a wonderful job of coordinating us and keeping records of the recordings.

Some, when asked if they could be interviewed, have said, "Well all right, but I'm not sure I have anything interesting to say". This has never been the case! When I was given my person to interview, I went along to the home with our little recording machine, and a lot of trepidation. I set up the machine and started asking questions. I came away about an hour and half later, humbled, encouraged and amazed. I remember thinking to myself, as I was leaving, how fortunate I'd been to be given such a wonderful person with an incredible life story, for my first interview.

However, exactly the same happened with the second person I interviewed. By the end of the third interview, I began to realise that everyone's story is unique and extraordinary, whether they realise it or not. This has been borne out by all of us in the oral history group. It is a great privilege to be trusted, as we are, with someone's story.

There are many advantages of the oral history projects to our church community, including:

1. Telling our story is good in itself, for both the teller and the listener.
2. It deepens our relationships as we discover more about each other.
3. It is building a resource of what it is to be a Christian community in 21st century Britain.
4. People inside and outside the church community, can learn about our faith, our values and our caring from these recordings, and perhaps be encouraged and inspired.

Listen online to some extracts from recordings at:

www.wesleysoxford.org.uk/category/people/personal-stories

John Cammack

Open Doors update

Implementing the Heritage Hub — *where worship and service meet*

As a result of our design team seeking Building Regulations approval for our final phase, the City Council has required changes to comply with the latest fire safety regulations. The main requirement has been to install a retractable fire curtain in the current link porch to allow for people in the Church and the Halls to exit separately and safely in an emergency.

We also have to make alterations to the fire exit from the main hall by providing double doors at the far end, near the serving hatch, and to ensure that the boiler house entrance steps and gate are fire protected. We will also remove the external door to the hall kitchen/Salter Room lobby (as the escape route would be blocked by the open double fire doors in the Hall) and use the current external door to the first floor (Bradbury and Coulson Rooms) as the exit for both ground and first floors.

"The scale and imagination of your work makes for a wholly exceptional church. I was inspired by what I saw and heard and send my best wishes for the continuation of a 'church with impact'."

Visitor from a North Oxfordshire church project

In making these changes, we are also seeking permission for some longer-term plans to change the use of the store by the Choir Vestry to a meeting room with the flower store becoming a WC designed to ambulant standards.

We were pleased to welcome the Conservation Officer of the Methodist Church in September. She met with our architect and ourselves to discuss all the proposed changes.

The net effect of these changes is that our estimated project costs have increased by £200,000 although we are planning to mitigate these extra costs by completing the Heritage Hub first

and dealing with the other works at a later date. Subject to the finance being in place, work will start in March/April 2020.

Despite the delays with completing *Open Doors*, we are being asked to share our experiences with others. We met with members from three churches in the Nene Valley Circuit in Earls Barton in March and in June two members from the Queensgrove Methodist Church in Northampton visited Wesley Memorial. The Oxfordshire Community Foundation also asked us to host a visit from a church in North Oxfordshire.

Funding the Heritage Hub

We are currently debt free and have £660,000 in funds and pledges towards the Heritage Hub. We continue to receive generous donations and pledges from members and friends, amounting to over £50,000 since March 2019. We were pleased to note that the Chancellor, in his autumn statement, extended the Listed Places of Worship (Reclaim of VAT) Scheme until March 2021.

The offer of £180,000 from the Connexional Property Fund has also been extended (March 2021) and the Crossfield Agnew Trust has awarded £50,000 to be spent by May 2021. Fundraising events this year include the JWS Pudding Party and refreshments at the Record and CD Sale in March, 'Yes Minister' talks in May, and Alexander Ardakov's 7th piano recital and the Model Railway Day, both in June.

We were delighted to give Christian Aid a cheque for £1,000 in September as part of our fundraising for *Open Doors*. With the match funding from the European Union added, we have now raised over £95,000 for Christian Aid through *Open Doors*.

Our next fundraising event is the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2019. We need to raise £10,000 through online donations made between noon on Tuesday 3 December and noon on Tuesday 10 December. If successful, it will raise £20,000 plus Gift Aid.

Thank you all for your continued support for the project.

Derek Rawson

Eco Church at Wesley Memorial

In the past six months a group of about 30 people have been considering our application for Eco Church status, to make us a more environmentally-friendly church. The application looks at Lifestyle, Community & Local Engagement, Buildings & Land, Worship & Teaching.

Changes we are making include adding recycling bins along-side the general waste bins at church and considering food waste disposal. We have energy-saving stickers on all the sockets and switches and are looking into reducing our energy consumption. In our worship we are praying regularly for our world and we have held environmental services organised by our holiday club and a house group. We have eco tips in the weekly notice sheet, Laura Ibbotson's poster on display and

the Summer issue of the *Wesley Memorial News* that was dedicated to environmental issues. We are trying to encourage catering events to be as packaging-free, Fair Trade, locally-sourced, organic and animal-friendly as possible.

We will be investigating our carbon footprint and finding ways to off-set this as a church and as individuals. We are organising speakers to come and talk about environmental issues, including Catherine Black and Malcolm McCulloch who recently spoke about environmental action.

We have just been awarded Silver Eco Church status and in the Spring will begin working towards the Gold award.

Jo Godfrey

In the Church garden

In the third week of October it was time to remove the pelargoniums and lobelia that have flowered in the planters in the church garden throughout the summer and replace them with spring-flowering bulbs. This year we have planted natural bulbs (www.naturalbulbs.co.uk)* as opposed to the conventional garden centre bulbs which are typically treated with chemicals harmful to pollinating insects. We also used an organic peat-free bulb-compost mixed with horticultural grit. We topped each planter with conventional garden-centre pansies. (Pity! But maybe we'll do better next time.) It's an experiment, but we live in hopes of a splendid springtime display of crocus, narcissi and tulips.

With this in mind, we're offering two small prizes: one to the first person to spot an emerging bulb in one of the five planters, and one to the first person to see a pollinating insect amongst the blooms – which might take a while.

Anne and David Bull

* *organiccatalogue.com* also sell untreated bulbs.

Messy Church goes green!

We have really enjoyed running holiday clubs at Wesley Memorial in recent years but we always had a niggling feeling that the model didn't quite work in our Church situation. In a gathered church, it can be difficult for our own members to get into town on a weekday, especially if parents are working; and our Rainbow House families have very young children who don't fit into the age-range catered for by traditional holiday clubs.

This year we decided to have a 'Messy Church' Holiday Club. The main difference is that parents/carers stay and are invited to participate in the activities. We were delighted to find that over the three days we welcomed 34 children and

their carers, and over half of these had no Sunday Wesley Memorial links.

Our theme for the week was 'Messy Church goes Green!'. We explored aspects of creation, stewardship and the challenge to listen and change our ways, through bible stories, crafts, songs and games. We set up our own recycled crazy golf course, decorated mugs and cotton bags, made space mobiles, pom-pom sheep, super paper aeroplanes and more! We also ate together, a really important aspect of the Messy Church philosophy.

We had very appreciative feedback from parents, children and helpers and we'll continue this as a model of outreach.

Huge thanks go to the many people who gave their time, energy and creative/story-telling/catering/welcoming/musical expertise to make our Messy Church summer 2019 experience so successful.

Mel McCulloch

Film and book reviews

Luke Turner, *Out of the Woods*, Hachette UK, 2019

Dustin Lance Black, *Mama's Boy*, John Murray, 2019

Boy Erased film, released UK 2 Feb 2019, director: Joel Edgerton

One film, two books. Two American, one British. One Baptist, one Methodist, one Mormon. But all the stories of sons coming to terms with their sexual identity through conflict and struggle, and what unites them is the paradox that all three are set on paths which reject their family and church values, while each decisively honours, respects and loves those same roots. All heart-rending (and recent) stories, uncomfortable but compelling, reflecting positively as well as negatively on Christianity.

Boy Erased tells the story of Jared (Hedges), the son of a Baptist pastor in a small American town, who is outed as gay (by a fellow student who gay-raped him) to his parents (Nicole Kidman and Russell Crowe) at age 19. Jared is faced with an ultimatum: attend a sexuality conversion-therapy program or be permanently exiled and shunned by his family, friends, and faith. Jared is too intelligent and perceptive for the disturbing brain-washing sessions: neither converted nor convinced, he eventually escapes. The final scenes illustrate the rebuilding of his relationship with his parents.

'Based on a true story' can often be a euphemism for a fictionalised drama bearing little relationship to actual people or events. In the case of *Boy Erased*, 'Jared Eamons' is Garrard Conley, an LGBTQ activist who worked closely with the film makers to ensure its authenticity, depicting accurately the horrors of sexuality conversion therapy,

which still exists in the USA (and for whose abolition Conley campaigns).

Also the son of an evangelical minister, in this case a prominent Methodist, Luke Turner is a writer, editor and curator based in London. He co-founded and edits the influential online music publication *The Quietus* and regularly writes on music, culture and place for various magazines, websites and broadcasters. *Out of the Woods* is, if nothing else, some of the most compellingly crafted writing I have ever read. Several friends have said to me 'I just couldn't put it down' — as was my experience. It is enchanting.

Luke weaves the story of his recognition of his bi-sexuality with visits to Epping Forest. 'During a childhood moving around the country, [being a Methodist minister's son] Epping Forest was the one constant. Both my parents had grown up on the edge of the forest...' Now, living and working in the relentless pressure of London, and following the breakup of a relationship, he sought solace there. The trees, the glades, the ancient church in the middle where his ancestors lie buried, the people — 'the man in the forest' who lived rough but was entirely at one with himself and nature; or the men in the clearing furtively cruising — all come together to tell a story of a person in search of himself among the thickets and undergrowth of his own persona and past.

One episode only to mention. Living for a time in a house belonging to Ian, the

friend of a friend, who lived abroad, he awoke one night to see a figure crouching over him. 'Who's this, then?' the figure asked. 'I blinked and he vanished. I was awake. I was fully aware. I was not afraid ... feeling an odd, peaceful atmosphere in the room, I drifted off back into sleep.' Next day he got a message: 'Ian died last night'. In one, simple, lapidary, glimpse, Luke engages the enigma of things which are, but are not.

Dustin Lance Black is now Tom Daley's husband. That comes, tangentially, right at the end of the book. Black was born and raised in Texas, a tough world where his family was on the edge of destitution. A childhood victim of polio, his mother was told she should never attempt to have children. Indomitable, she had three — he is the middle one. The LDS [Mormon] church they attended gave them certainties of life and belief, but also tangible support, belonging to a people and place — and anonymous envelopes of money.

They moved to California, without telling the church, when Black was just in his teens; his mother, against all the odds, establishing a successful career and now, after two abusive husbands, is with the man she needed and loved. They had swapped the American south for the west coast, 'a very different kind of America.' But one which gave Black the opportunities he needed, eventually becoming an Academy-award winning filmmaker and then a social gay activist.

Like so many, he came out gradually, easier in the arty circles of LA, but telling his Southern family, especially his Mom was a different matter. Eventually, visiting them in Virginia, where she now held a senior position in a hospital lab, it tumbled out — one of the most moving scenes in the book. Black and his mother were close — and both stubborn fighters, so ‘Mama’s Boy’ (pejorative slang for gay) acknowledges all she meant to him. The Mormon church, too, he holds dear, and is proud to have headed the first *Gay Pride* through Salt Lake City.

Of the three, paradoxically, the one I find least satisfactory is *Out of the Woods*. Why? The final chapters tell of his new relationship with Mia, discovering the stories he has sought around his ancestors buried at High Beech church, in the forest. The final visit to the forest reads as though it has all been a dream, a fascinating mixed-up kaleidoscope of people and places, now fading with the certainties of day. The mysterious man in the woods has vanished. It’s as if all that wonderful writing has set out a false trail: the doubts and questions, the gnawing rats of self, can be packed away, everything is neatly resolved.

All three are sons of committed church families: their prophetic voices sound from virtual pulpits, voices which the church may find disconcerting but might do well to listen to. They also speak closely to my own journey, but maybe that’s another book?

Dr. Peter Forsaith, Research Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University

Introducing... The Wesley Mem Singers!

I returned from extended maternity leave (which started in 2010!) to the choir conductor position this September, and thought that it would be good to try out an idea to see if we could get more people involved in contributing to music in our Sunday morning worship.

The inspiration came from a service which was organized by Paul Herrington (one of our excellent visiting organists) in June 2019. It was partly a celebration of his own 70th birthday, but was also a reunion of people who had been part of the music group at St Aldate’s church in the 1980’s and 90’s. I joined the choir for the service, and noticed that although many of the singers were not accomplished musicians, they enjoyed returning to a repertoire of pieces which they had known well, and they had obviously made a massive contribution to worship at St Aldate’s during that period.

At Wesley Memorial we value highly our existing choir, who sing a wide range of choral music, from unaccompanied Tudor anthems to jazzy numbers by Anthony Eddy, and almost everything in between! However, I am aware that there are many people in the congregation who enjoy singing, but who don’t feel able to join the choir on Sunday mornings because they are not confident about reading music and would be unlikely to know the piece we’re singing. For example, we have lots of people who enjoy singing in the chorus when we put on one of our fabulous Wesley Memorial

musicals, including many of our children and young people.

So, the plan is to have one Sunday per month where we make the choir more inclusive, with the idea of people being able to join us who enjoy singing but who are not confident about sight-reading music. The emphasis is on having fun and contributing to worship in a more inclusive way. We are also delighted to have Anna and others doing signing — I think this is brilliant, as it adds a visual element as well as allowing more people to get involved.

For practising, we have a bring and share lunch on a Sunday once per month followed by a rehearsal. By introducing the occasional new piece at these practices, the repertoire of the group should expand gradually over time.

If you enjoy singing and would like to join in, please do! Speak to me on a Sunday morning or let Tom Ibbotson know that you would like to be added to the mailing list. We know that lots of people are busy with other things, so there is no obligation to be there every time — just join in whenever you can.

Otherwise, I hope you enjoy listening to the results and that we can continue our tradition of worshipping God in all sorts of musical styles at Wesley Memorial for many years to come.

Kirstie Vreede

Obituary — Christine May Spray (nee Walsham)

1924 — 2019

Christine Spray died peacefully at home in Oxford on September 26th 2019. Christine spent the greater part of her life living in Marlborough with husband Bill, raising a family there and contributing to the local community in many ways. But then in 2006 they moved to Oxford, setting up home in Pegasus Grange and becoming regular attendees at Wesley Memorial.



exchanged for nearly five years in Nigeria supporting Bill in his role as Head of a Methodist Teacher Training College, and home schooling two young sons, Paul and Christopher. She returned to Marlborough in 1958 with the birth of daughter Rachel.

Throughout the next dozen years, Christine continued her love of music, often playing her violin or viola in quartets at home, or with the North Wilts Orchestra. As a housemaster's wife, she was an expert and kindly host to visitors from near and far, and a busy mother looking after three growing children.

Born in Grimsby in May 1924, the youngest of three sisters, Christine grew up surrounded by Methodism, music and, one suspects, much mirth! Her father was the choir master and organist at the local Primitive Methodist Church, and music and chapel were very much at the heart of everything.

Leaving Grimsby's Wintringham Grammar school, Christine attended Bedford College, London, but on the outbreak of war, was evacuated to Cambridge to complete her studies. It was here at Wesley Methodist chapel that she met Bill, then a student at Peterhouse, and where they got married in August 1948. Between 1944 and 1948, Christine worked in the Medical Research Council's Department of Experimental Medicine in Cambridge, becoming a small part of the world-famous team of nutrition scientists led by Professors McCance and Widdowson. Some of the research papers Christine co-authored on digestibility of wheat, on white and brown bread, and on the chemical composition of the human body are still standard texts.

Christine and Bill moved to Marlborough in 1948 when Bill got a job teaching history at Marlborough College. Life in and around Marlborough was the focus of her activities. It was temporarily

In 1970, they moved to Leighton Park in Reading when Bill took over as head of this Quaker school, and again Christine acted not only as host, but as a welcoming figure and friend to other staff wives and partners. More music, more dancing and the occasional party enlivened life, alongside the chance to nip up to London to listen to orchestras and attend plays.

In 1980, Christine and Bill moved back to the edge of the Marlborough Downs and again threw themselves in to local parish and community activities. Since 2006 when they finally left Marlborough, Oxford became their home, living close to eldest son Paul. Regular visits from her eight grandchildren and one great granddaughter were always a highlight for Christine, as was the opportunity to join in activities such as singing at Pegasus Grange, and to participate in worship at Wesley Memorial. She thoroughly enjoyed the cultural and social activities on offer. Bill and Christine celebrated their diamond wedding in 2008, with Bill predeceasing her in 2012.

Christopher Spray

Church Council 4.11.19

- Thanks were expressed to all those who had helped in the 2 local arrangement services and on 14.09.19 for Oxford Open Doors and Ride and Stride.
- The Consultation on Marriage and Relationships was discussed at this year's Methodist Conference. Opportunities to discuss the report, available on the Methodist Church website and in booklet form, will be taking place in the

District, Circuit and at Wesley Memorial (in the form of a housegroup). Details of dates and venues to be announced.

- The Safeguarding Policy was reaffirmed.
- Freda Cammack was appointed as a Pastoral Visitor.
- Malcolm Dodds and Malcolm McCulloch were appointed as 2nd adults for Fizzy.
- The new sound system is now operational — speakers for the relay of services to the Choir Vestry, Hall and John Wesley Room will be installed in December.



Heard it on the grapevine...

Baptisms:

Noah Edward Alec Williams, 18 August 2019

Isobel Grace Ford, 13 October 2019

Deaths:

Christine May Spray, 25 September 2019

Dorothy Elizabeth Lawes, 12 October 2019

Membership transferred to other churches:

Zanna Quarterman, to Long Hanborough Methodist Church

New Members

Andrew van der Spuy and Annarien Adams, from Randburg Reformed Church, South Africa

Oxford Winter Night Shelter

OWNS is going ahead this year again with 20 beds per night. Wesley Memorial are providing 10 beds on Sunday nights beginning on Sunday 5 January and finishing on Sunday 29 March. Volunteers are in the process of being trained. This year we need donations of socks, underwear and washable fleece blankets. We can collect gift aid on any financial contributions. Thank you.

Happy birthday!

The Monday Evening Group meeting wished Joan Appleton a very happy 80th birthday in September.



Second Coffee and Church lunches

We have started a new initiative for students and young-(ish) people. Every Sunday, an informal group is going to a local cafe, after the coffee following the morning service. It's for conversation, and getting to know each other. Any young person, whether in Oxford for a while or visiting, is most welcome to join in.

We are also arranging monthly discussions and lunches for the whole congregation – student or otherwise. One or two people from the congregation will speak about an issue of importance and how their faith relates to it. That will be for about 40 minutes, and then we will have a bring-and-share lunch – but with the very clear understanding that you can come whether you have brought something or not. Again these will be after coffee following the service, and on those days the Second Coffee won't run. Look out for Simon, and others, usually gathering at the end of the coffee table, or email: stewards@wesleymem.org.uk

For this autumn, the theme of talks is *Acting out our faith*:

17 November What can we do about the ecological crisis?

Catherine Black (on Extinction Rebellion)

Prof Malcolm McCulloch (applying research)

1 December Taking action in Oxford

Heather Davies (street pastor) and Alannah Jeune (student welfare)

We look forward to seeing you there.

Dates for the diary

Thursday 19 December	5.30pm	Carols for the City
Sunday 22 December	6.30pm	Service of Lessons and Carols
Wednesday 25 December	10.30am	Christmas Service for All Ages
Sunday 5 January	10.30am	Annual Covenant Service
Sunday 19 January	10.30am	The Revd Gareth Powell at Wesley Memorial
	6.00pm	CTCO United Service (venue tbc)
Saturday 1 February	5.00pm	Church party
Sunday 8 March	10.30am	The Revd Anthony Buckley at Wesley Memorial (City Centre Pulpit Exchange)
Thursday 9 April		Maundy Thursday Communion at New Road Baptist
Friday 10 April		Good Friday Service at St Columba's URC
Sunday 12 April	10.30am	Easter Communion at Wesley Memorial

Wesley Memorial Church

New Inn Hall Street, Oxford OX1 2DH

Minister: *The Revd Dr Martin Wellings*

Children, families & outreach worker: *Mel McCulloch*

Mission & heritage office: *Alison Butler*

Church manager: *Nikos Paplomatas*

Services: Sunday mornings 10.30am
monthly Sunday evenings 6.30pm
Wednesdays 12.30pm

Tel: 01865 243216

Web: www.wesleymem.org.uk

Wesley Memorial News editorial/production team:

Kate Dobson, Janet Forsaith, Esther Ibbotson,

Fiona Macdonald, Jonathan Wood,

Illustrations: *Jim Godfrey, Mel McCulloch.*

Email: newsletter@wesleymem.org.uk

Contributions, letters, questions, pictures, book reviews and any other suitable material for publication are always welcome. Please pass them to the editorial team by hand or by email, stating if you are unwilling for them to appear on the church website. Articles may be edited. Articles express the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of Wesley Memorial or the Methodist Church as a whole.

Deadline for the next issue
15 February 2020

WESLEY MEMBRAN "HEARING GOD DIFFERENTLY"

THE
AUTHORISED
VERSION

16 Verily Verily
I say to y whatso
ever y shall ask



THE
UN-AUTHORISED
VERSION!

So, here's the
thing:—
you are loved!



Jim 11/19