

Wesley Memorial *news*

The magazine from Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford | Summer 2017



Reformation

The Manse, 26 Upland Park Road, Oxford

Dear friends,

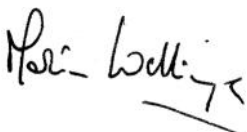
In the University Church there's an evocative memorial to Oxford's martyrs of the Reformation, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Among others, Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, Protestant bishops and perhaps the best-known Oxford martyrs, are named alongside Roman Catholic priests Edmund Campion and Cuthbert Mayne. This twenty-first century memorial speaks of a healing of memories and a quest for understanding across sectarian divisions. Conscious as we are of the destructive potential of all ideologies, and of the way religious commitments have been used and abused in the service of terrorism, power politics and all sorts of oppression, we may approach this Autumn's commemoration of the Protestant Reformation with some reservations, wondering what to make of it all. This edition of Wesley Memorial News helps us by exploring (the) Reformation, reformations, and re-formation with its customary breadth and insight.

Although the Methodist movement came into being more than two centuries after Martin Luther's stand against the sale of indulgences ignited a debate which ultimately fractured Western Christendom, Methodism stands within the Protestant tradition of Christian theology and spirituality. The roots of Methodism are in the Church of England and its reformations, in the struggles of the Puritans (the 'hotter sort of Protestants' who thought that the Established Church was 'but half-reformed') and the vitality of the Pietists (Lutherans who brought an intense experience of Christ to liven up dull orthodoxy) (see page 5). Having said that, John Wesley drew on Roman Catholic spiritual writings and commended holiness of heart and life in people of all traditions. And the international dialogue between the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church is the oldest of all our formal ecumenical conversations, reaching back to the 1960s and to the immediate aftermath of Vatican II. In the British context, Methodists and Catholics often find common ground in the spiritual riches of our respective heritages and in the shared experience of not being part of the Establishment!

Our Deed of Union talks about our loyalty to "the fundamental principles... of the Protestant Reformation", but carefully omits to define them. Perhaps three may be highlighted. First, the Reformers placed an emphasis on the Bible as the source of authority for Christian believing. From this flowed a commitment to make the Bible available to people in a language they could understand, and a high value was placed on expository preaching in the Church's public worship. Second, the Reformers were convinced that we are put right with God by God's grace, apprehended by faith: technical religious language, but expressing a deep belief that God reaches out to us in love, and that our acceptance with God is about grace and not merit. God's love, in other words, is not performance-related, and therefore it is open to everyone. And thirdly, the Reformers understood the Church as a community of people - 'a kingdom of priests' is the biblical phrase - set apart for God's service. 'The priesthood of all believers' is the jargon, and it is sometimes misunderstood to mean that the Church is a random collection of self-sufficient individuals. In fact, as the Reformers taught, and as Wesley insisted, our priesthood is exercised together, as we offer the love, grace and blessing of God to the world, and bring the world to God in worship and prayer.

Let me finish with a couple of Wesleyan glosses on the Reformation anniversary. First of all, although he could be pretty argumentative, John Wesley wasn't principally interested in winning theological debates. What mattered to him was helping women and men connect with the love of God. Many of the things that divided, and still divide, Christians Wesley dismissed as 'opinions', but grace, faith and love were fundamental to him. Secondly, the reformation that Wesley sought most was the re-formation of the image of God in human beings - the healing and transformation of the whole person by the renewing power of God. As we in turn seek that renewal and are ourselves re-formed, we honour the best legacy of the Reformation.

Yours in Christ,



Cover image: Mosaic cross created on Church Day Out, May 2017

Editorial

As 2017 marks 500 years since the start of the Reformation, we have sought articles for this edition of *Wesley Memorial News* that approach the historical events of the Reformation from different angles. We touch on church history, but also music, and we're particularly happy that we've been able to respond to Reformation Christianity's strong emphasis on the Bible in the form of a medley of members' favourite verses.

Reformation also seems to speak of being re-formed, in the sense of being re-made. Summer can be a good time for rest and renewal, a time to

assemble and possibly heal the fragments of our busy lives as we seek out a new whole. Here the image of the cross created on the away day at Dorchester Abbey is powerful. We hope you enjoy exploring these broader connotations of our theme.

There is chance too to look back on recent events at Wesley Memorial, and to hear news of some exciting new initiatives to come.

Thank you to all our contributors for making such an interesting issue possible, and all good wishes from the *Wesley Memorial News team*

In this issue...

<i>Reformation</i>	2-11
<i>Favourite Bible verses</i>	10-11
<i>Reviews</i>	12-13
<i>Obituaries</i>	14
<i>Children's page</i>	15
<i>Church news</i>	16-19
<i>Meet Alison Butler</i>	18
<i>Dates for the diary</i>	20
<i>Wesley Membrain</i>	20

How the mosaic cross was created

A conversation between Martin Wellings and Mary Lines in all-age worship on 11 June.

Martin: When was the cross made?

Mary: We made this on the Church Day Out, on 13 May at Dorchester Abbey. Almost everyone who was there had a hand in it.

Martin: So really a collective product! What's it made of, and how was it made?

Mary: We had a board as a base, and we glued all kinds of different things onto it: broken glass, broken ceramic tiles, and a broken mirror as well. Some things were specially cut for it but a lot of it was just broken already. People chose which bits to glue onto the board and added to it during the day, and now there's grout holding it all together.



Martin: So from some things that were broken and damaged, and you might have thought pretty useless, only fit to be thrown away, people have managed to make something amazing. What is going to happen to it now we've made it?

Mary: Well, we're going to keep it in church, and put it up on the wall between the Hall and the John Wesley Room, as it's a symbol of us all working together and of God's love.

Martin: It's great that it's going to be here where we can see it, and everyone can admire it, and see too how God

can take something that is broken and bring from that something of beauty and something of deep meaning. And that reminds us of the story of Jesus. Jesus who came to show us God's love, who was rejected by people, and broken on the cross, but through whose death and new life we are made new and made whole.

Jeremiah and the potter

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

“Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Jeremiah 18:1-4

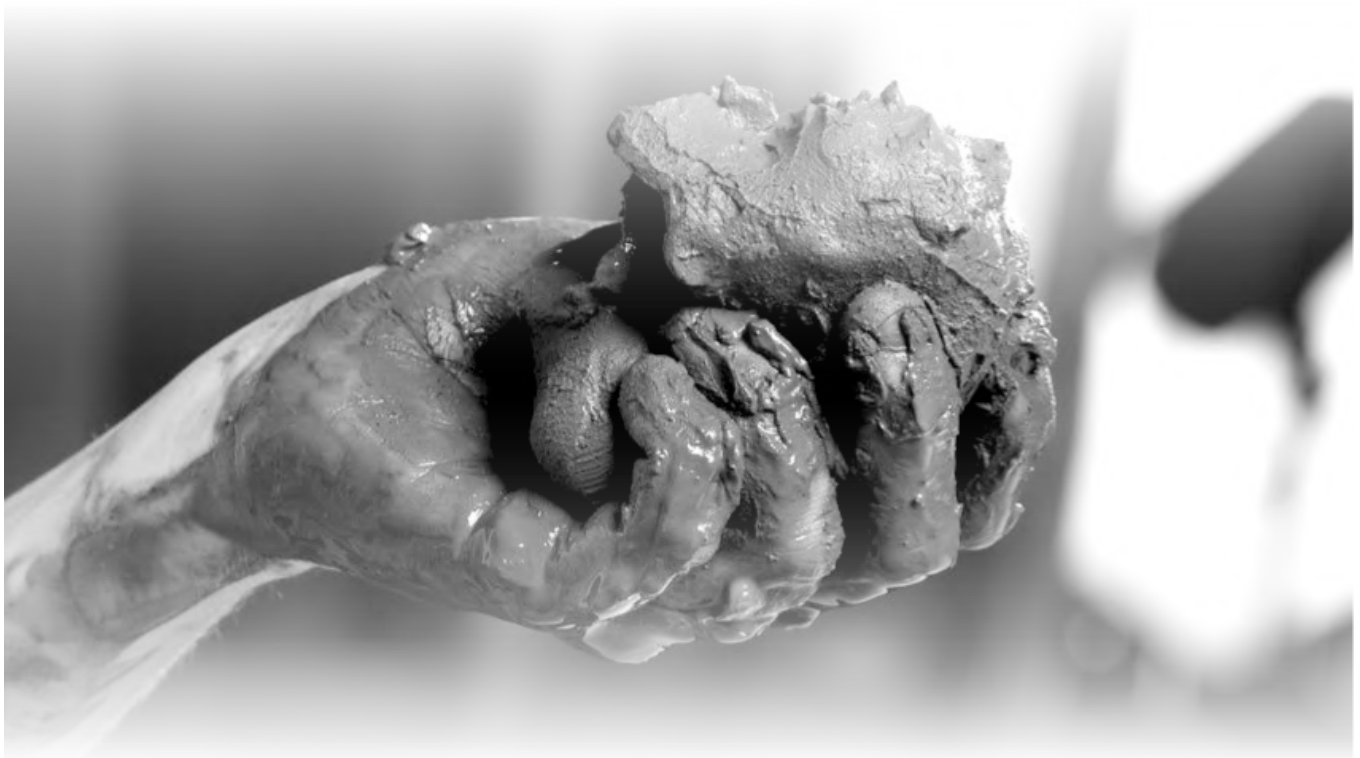
In Jeremiah 18, God is pictured as a potter. Using the analogy of clay, it is suggested that what is marred in us can be re-made. God can and will, with all of us, begin again, shaping and re-shaping us to heal the spoiling that our lives incur. Despite the anger in the verses which follow this comparison, the essential image of the potter kneeling before his malleable, mouldable clay speaks to me hopefully of the continual possibility each one of us has to be forgiven and restored in the gentle hands of a creative, creator God.

Having said that, I think there is immense challenge here too. If Jeremiah 18 goes on to present a decidedly sharp, retributive edge in God’s voice, equally sharp might be our own edges, as we harden, brittle and stubborn, into what

we might think of as fullness of life and the best version of ourselves. We can petrify in so many different ways - not just through degraded values and self-oriented thinking but probably more often through routine and tiredness, or disappointment and defeat, or through the pressures of an often unjust world and its demands upon us to fill a particular mould. Who we are and how our life is just gets a bit rocky sometimes, maybe a bit too baked. My own hard edges have formed particularly around my presumed powers of perception, an assumption that the way I see things and my understanding are definitive. Maybe it can feel safer to be pots of our own construction than indeterminate clay in the hands of something or someone other.

So the recognition here for me is partly that to be close to God, to be caught up in the dynamic of ongoing restoration and renewal, may mean also to be putty, as it were, in his hands, to lose the certain shapes that we and our lives have assumed, and to submit... to submit again and again to re-formation, to a life of potential in which God’s purposes of love can only be creative if we let ourselves go a little, into the fluid unknown, like the clay.

Fiona Macdonald



Wesley and Luther

When Methodists celebrate the anniversary of John Wesley's evangelical conversion, they often read an extract from Wesley's Journal, where he writes of attending a religious meeting in Aldersgate Street on the evening of 24 May 1738, and of finding his heart "strangely warmed". Wesley's experience took place while "one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans". Wesley, then, came to an assurance of salvation partly at least through the works of Martin Luther. But what else may we say about the relationship between Wesley and Luther?

The first thing to say is that, Aldersgate Street notwithstanding, the traditions of faith and spirituality in which the Wesleys were nurtured owed little directly to Luther. The Wesley brothers were raised in an atmosphere of High Church Anglican piety at Epworth and Oxford, and they inherited a residual Puritan influence from their maternal and paternal grandparents. Neither tradition appealed to Luther. The course of the English Reformation was shaped significantly by Swiss and South German Reformers of the generation after Luther, and the Elizabethan and Jacobean Church of England fitted into a pan-European Calvinist consensus, rather than a North German/Scandinavian Lutheran bloc. When seventeenth-century Anglicans turned away from Calvin, they looked to the Primitive Church for theological and spiritual resources. John Wesley read widely in Patristic and Puritan divinity, but it is not apparent that he had much first-hand knowledge of Luther's writings.

It was during their expedition to Georgia in 1735-38 that the Wesley brothers encountered groups linked to Lutheranism, first a band of German emigrants affiliated to the Moravian Brethren, and then Protestant refugees from Salzburg. These were Pietists, appealing to a fervent Christ- and faith-centred spirituality against what they saw as the dry dogmatism of traditional Lutheran orthodoxy. Wesley found common ground with the Pietists in their enthusiasm for the faith and practice of the Early Church, and he was deeply influenced by the use of hymns. There were, however, significant differences between Wesley and the Moravians in Georgia, and this was a foretaste of tensions to come.

By the time John Wesley returned to England in February 1738, the effects of spiritual renewal were being experienced in this country. One of the channels of renewal was the preaching of justification by faith; another was the fellowship and sharing of experience in religious societies, particularly in London, where Moravian influence was again apparent. The Moravians played a crucial role in the evangelical conversion of both John and Charles Wesley, and it has been suggested that the Aldersgate Street meeting where John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" was in fact a Moravian society.

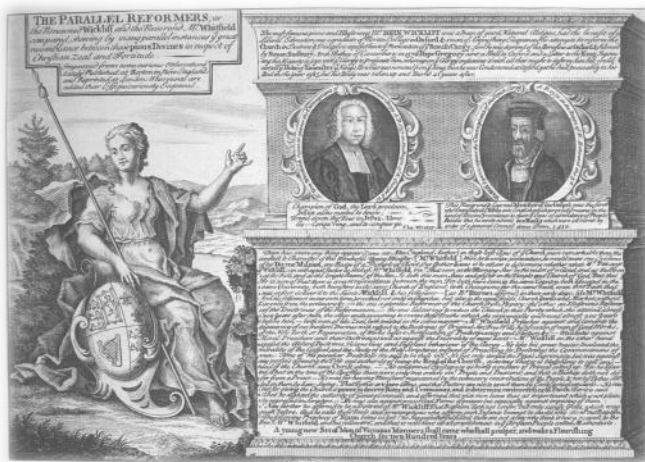
Within a couple of years, however, Wesley had decisively broken with the Moravians. The quarrel was perhaps partly about personalities and about the control of the revival, but it was also about fundamental beliefs. The Moravian emphasis on faith led them to discount both spiritual practices and holy living, or so it seemed to Wesley. Wesley was sure that people seeking salvation and awaiting assurance of God's love should continue to pray, read the Bible, attend worship and receive Communion, making the most of these God-given 'means of grace'. Some of the Moravian leaders in London taught that seekers should, rather, be 'still', setting aside all Christian practices until assured of salvation. Wesley rejected this teaching, withdrawing in July 1740 from the Moravian Fetter Lane society, and setting up a new society at the Foundery. Wesley, then, encountered Luther through the Moravians, and Wesley also judged Luther through the Moravians. In neither respect did Wesley engage significantly with the fullness of Luther's theology at first-hand.

In the middle years of the twentieth century British Methodist scholars, including Ben Drewery, a former minister at Wesley Mem, made important contributions to Luther scholarship, and did much to tease out the relationship between Luther and Wesley. Surely there is scope for more to be done, both historically and theologically, and the Reformation quincentenary provides a good opportunity to do so!

Martin Wellings

Methodism, Dissent and ‘Reformation’

In 1740, the anonymous author of a pamphlet, entitled *The Parallel Reformers*, compared the evangelical preacher, George Whitefield, to that “morning star” of the Reformation, John Wycliffe (1320-84). The author noted that, like Whitefield, Wycliffe had preached in “open fields, church yards and markets”, and exposed the “insolent behaviour of the clergy”. To their followers, Wesley and Whitefield’s ministries represented a continuation of the Reformation. But how did their opponents - most of whom were also Protestants - view them?



The Parallel Reformers, 1740

When answering this question, it is initially important to remember that Methodism emerged as an evangelical movement *within* the Established Church. Indeed, Wesley never wavered from his pledge that he would “live and die” an Anglican. Yet, many of their practices violated ecclesiastical and criminal laws. In 1744, Edmund Gibson, the bishop of London, informed Whitefield that, by preaching in fields, he was violating the 1670 Conventicles Act. This piece of legislation had originally been enacted as a means of preventing Dissenters from holding outdoor services. When Whitefield responded to Gibson’s attack, he claimed that, since he was an Anglican and not a Dissenter, this law did not apply to him. Like Wesley, Whitefield remained an Anglican throughout his life. Ever the diplomat, Whitefield once compared his relationship with the Church of England to a sailor who refused to abandon a leaky ship.

When High Churchmen attacked Methodists, they often compared them to historic examples of Protestant anarchists, including sixteenth-century German Anabaptists and seventeenth-century Puritans. To these divines, Methodists were ‘schismatic’ Dissenters in all but name. However, early Methodism’s relationship with Dissent was anything but straightforward.

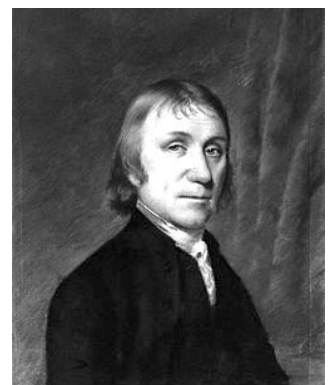
In his recent Wesley Lecture, Professor Grayson Ditchfield (University of Kent) described John Wesley’s highly complex relationship with Dissent. As Professor Ditchfield noted, there were various ways in which Wesley’s thoughts and actions complemented those of Dissenters. Like Wesley, many Dissenters - including the hymnists, Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge - endorsed extempore preaching and prayer. Also, Wesley’s condemnation of the slave trade was mirrored in the works of such Quaker abolitionists as Anthony Benezet.

Yet the connections between early Methodists and Dissenters should not be overstated. Politically, their agendas were often entirely different. During the last two decades of his life, Wesley’s Tory politics often led to clashes with those Dissenters who embraced the revolutionary sentiments of the age. One such Dissenter was Joseph Priestley, who was lambasted in a 1790 cartoon, which depicted him as a politically subversive ‘Devil’.

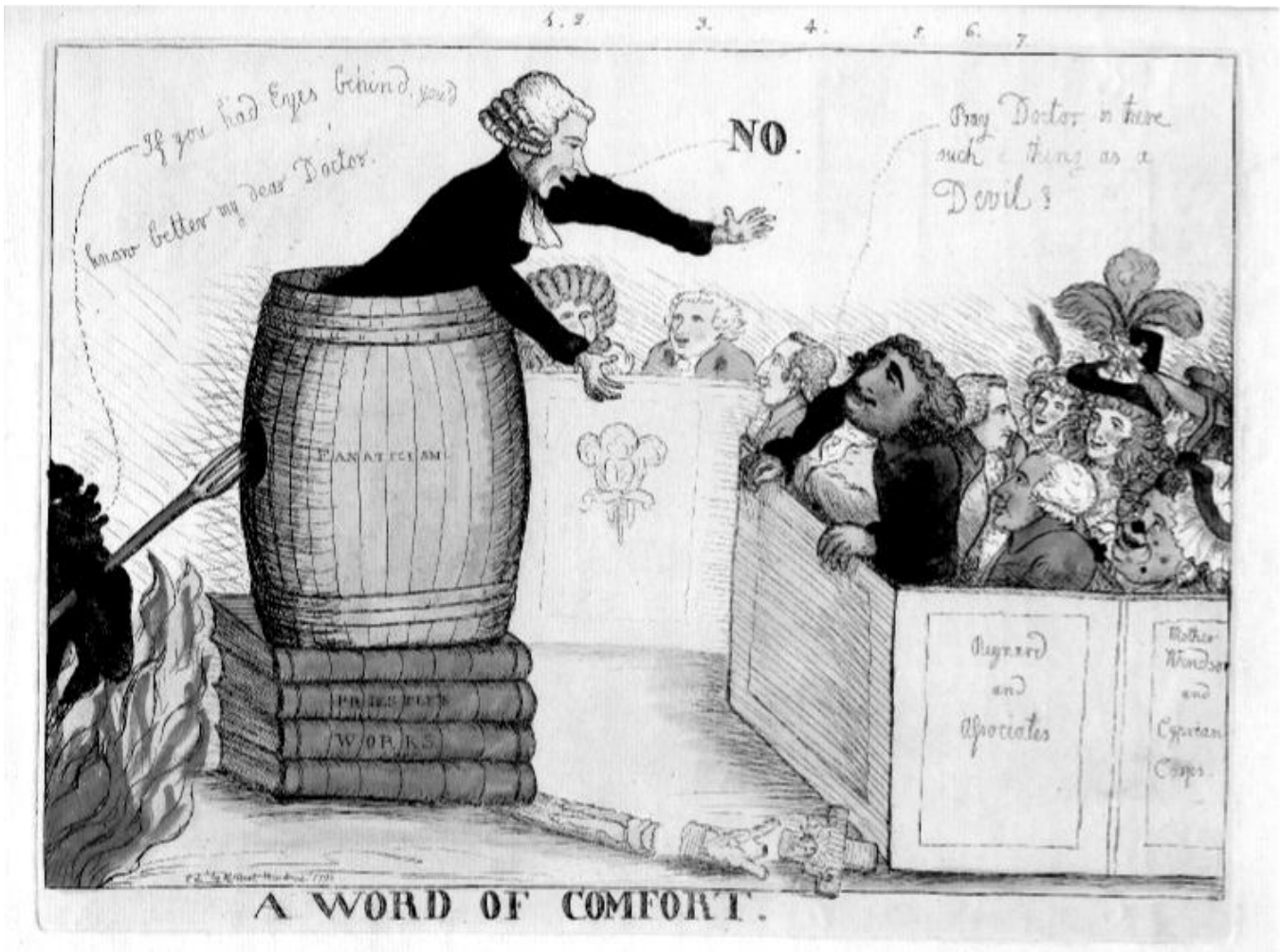
Methodists and Dissenters also clashed on theological issues. In his lecture, Professor Ditchfield highlighted Wesley’s



John Wesley, 1789



Joseph Priestley, 1794



"A Word of Comfort" by William Dent (1790). Charles James Fox asks the preacher, Priestley, "Pray, Doctor is there such a thing as a Devil?", to which Priestley responds "No" while the devil prepares to attack Priestly from behind. © The Trustees of the British Museum

skirmish with the Norwich Dissenter, John Taylor, who rejected original sin in a 1740 work. To Taylor, the notion of inherent sinfulness was preposterous because it removed all culpability and encouraged people to commit 'actual' sins. Given that the sacrament of baptism rested on this Augustinian doctrine, Taylor's views would have been repugnant not only to Methodists but also to High Church Anglicans. Indeed, original sin was one of the Thirty-Nine Articles to which all Anglicans were required to subscribe upon ordination. In his response to Taylor, Wesley claimed that, by denying that humans were born in a sinful state, Taylor had implied that there was no need for them to be 'born again' in Christ. To Wesley, Taylor's sentiments simply rendered Christianity obsolete.

So, what does all of this mean in the context of Methodism's perceived relationship with the Reformation? To their High Church and Dissenting opponents, Methodism represented

two seemingly conflicting extremes. To High Church Tory divines, who venerated the memory of the martyred King Charles I, Methodism was a prime example of what happened when Protestant 'enthusiasm' was left unchecked by church order and discipline. In other words, these divines believed that Methodism embodied the worst excesses of the Reformation. On the other hand, 'rational' Dissenters, such as Taylor, viewed Methodism as a priestly branch of the established Church, which had not allowed the Reformation to go far enough. They believed that, by requiring subscription to such doctrines as original sin, both Methodists and High Churchmen were guilty of 'priestcraft' - a charge which Luther had levelled at Roman Catholics two centuries earlier. During the eighteenth-century, the Reformation clearly meant different things to different people.

Simon Lewis

A square dance in heaven: music and the Reformation

We tend to think of the Reformers as a serious lot, excluding music from worship, or indeed anything artistic that might be regarded as idolatrous! Luther in particular represents for us the triumph of the written word, just as the printing press comes into its own, and we tend not to think of him as a champion of music in worship.

Lucy Winkett in her Radio 3 programme *Breaking Free: A Square Dance in Heaven* demonstrated that Luther transformed church music, using it as a means of helping people to understand “that God was with them and for them”, and allowing them to communicate directly with him in their own language. Luther himself was an accomplished musician, singer and lutenist who cherished musical tradition of the church of his youth. He and his contemporaries were keen to promote music in worship and to make it accessible to the whole congregation - including, for the first time, to women! Music lay at the heart of Luther’s Reformation: “when people sing in four or five parts”, he declared, “it is like a square dance in heaven.”

Only Zwingli in Zurich banned music from worship. Calvin was very keen on metrical psalms, sung in unison, and lovingly imitated by John Knox in Scotland. Luther, assisted by his friend and colleague Johann Walter, wrote new hymns and chorales, bringing such a high reputation to Saxony that it was known as ‘Saxonia Cantata’ - singing Saxony. Luther’s colleague Philip Melancthon was influential in adding four hours of music per week to the school curriculum in Saxony in 1528. Meanwhile the town council of Torgau, where the first purpose-built Lutheran church was built in 1544, invited the Kantorei (amateur choirs - male members only) to a great banquet four times a year to encourage the music-making for which they were becoming famous.

Clearly the music had to be simplified in order that all might participate. Luther’s ‘Ein feste Burg’ (right) was originally a



complicated fugal setting for four parts. Most part settings at the time held the tune in the tenor line, reflecting the monastic chant tradition. So the Reformers made rhythms less complicated and gradually the tune came to rest in the soprano line, as women were able to sing in worship.

It was delightful to hear the story of pastor’s wife Katharina Schütz Zell, born around 1498, and to note how soon the Reformers laid aside their celibate state! She encouraged women to sing in church, and at home, by her arrangements of hymns published in her pamphlets. Her introductory notes urged women to think of themselves as singing the monastic hours, even while they were busy with housework, and assured them that they pleased God just as well with their singing as any monk.

A far more influential woman, England’s Queen Elizabeth, the ‘Star of the Reformation’ according to Professor Diarmaid McCulloch, saved English Cathedral music. England was the only Protestant country to keep its cathedrals. Because Elizabeth loved well-sung music, she maintained it in the Chapel Royal, and this gave the signal to the cathedrals to retain their professional musicians. Byrd and Tallis were favoured by the Queen’s patronage and Elizabeth’s 45-year-long reign allowed the cathedrals and the musical tradition to settle down again and flourish. Thanks to her, we enjoy the heritage of English church music that emerged in succeeding centuries.

For Lucy Winkett it is J S Bach, above all, who takes up the baton of Luther and runs with it. Having learned Luther’s chorales and hymns as a boy in a Lutheran school, Bach’s genius as a composer amplified the texts and the harmonies in a colossal body of work. She finds in Bach’s work a sense of forward propulsion that echoes Luther’s urgent call to change, and his ceaseless harmonic exploration, for her, “asserts in the manner of the restless Luther, that change is always possible.” Music is itself a “language of the human spirit,” and Bach called people to embrace the new while singing his music, partly bequeathed to them by the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther.

Kate Dobson

Lost in the labyrinth

The toddler with very curly hair and a perfect smile.
The king of Subbuteo. The boy who got into too many arguments and mishaps. The piece that completed the triptych. You have always been loved, because or in spite of many reasons, in all your incarnations. Sometimes like a weather vane you were pushed around by the winds of life, and only your love of art brought peace among the storms.

You spread your wings, loved and lost, struggled with the everyday. And then one day you took a seemingly insignificant decision, and you got lost in a labyrinth.

Life is not about seeking shelter. It's about being aware of the challenges and opportunities ahead. It's about growing as a person, keeping an open soul and a hand reaching out to help others.

I have been learning to look at the world through different eyes lately, making the most of this opportunity to grow, however painful.

I wish you would understand that we are solely responsible for setting the course we want our ships to sail on.

What this means for me, is that I cannot guide you outside the labyrinth.

Because everything that tries to break us has the potential to make us stronger.

Because tomorrow starts today, if you work to make it happen.

Because if you stumble, you can stand up again.

Because life is tough, mixing beauty and peace with loneliness and raw pain, but it is a gift not to be squandered.

We must keep walking. We must find new ways to do things.

And at the other side of the labyrinth, someone special will be waiting for you. And that amazing person, looking familiar in the distance, is you.

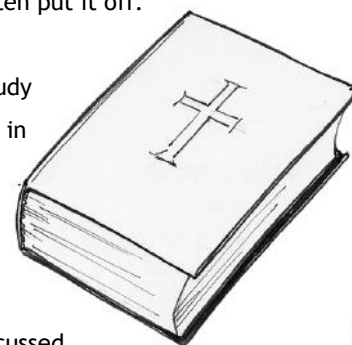
Eva Oliver

Doers of the Word, not just hearers

It's easy to take for granted rights that we now enjoy that have had to be fought for in the past and that have cost lives, such as being able to read the Bible in English.

But when did any of us last sit and read a chapter or more of the Bible and think about its implications for us, our life and our world today? Was it days, or weeks, or months ago? It's important, but we so often put it off.

A lot of people find Bible study more encouraging if they're in a group. During Lent two groups and a few individuals followed the booklet *All together for justice*, where we read, discussed,



took actions and prayed, linking the Bible and our daily living, focussing particularly on the situation of widows in Cameroon overcoming discrimination with the help of an All We Can partner.

The people who took part found it helpful and stimulating and want to do some more. So, we're going to take up the Connexion's 'Bible month' scheme that encourages the whole Methodist Church to spend a month engaging with one book, this year the *Letter of James*. This short book ('snappy and challenging' is one description) manages to tackle a lot of topics including wealth and poverty, temptation, good conduct, prejudice, faith and action, wisdom, quarrelling, pride and humility, judging others... plenty to discuss! Sounds very contemporary.

So, on the four Wednesday evenings in September (6th, 13th, 20th and 27th) there will be meetings to look at James and see what he's saying to us here and now. We shall try out a variety of ways to read the Bible (some would say, 'let the Bible read us') so that by the end of September we shall know James better and have new ways to approach scripture passages. Later in the summer there will be a sign-up sheet in church for those who'd like to be part of the Bible month group.

David Bull

Favourite B

**“The mountains and hills may crumble,
But my love for you will never end;
I will keep forever my promise of peace.”
So says the Lord who loves you. *Isaiah 54:10***

(Good News Version because that's how I first read it).
This is one of the first Bible verses that got stuck in my heart when I was a teenager. It's all about God's love for Israel but I'm sure I heard a whisper telling me it was for me (and for you) too!

Mel McCulloch

Days ahead of the General Election, ***Luke 1:52:***

“He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted the humble and meek.” Mary is singing it - one of the poor and humble herself, in the eyes of everyone around. She echoes Hannah's song at the birth of Samuel. It is the story of what God wants, and has always wanted.

Paul Spray

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *John 1:1* (Surely everyone's favourite!)

...and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. *Acts 2:17*

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. *Psalms 121:1* (Authorised Version)

Glenda Lane

“Let anyone who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” *John 8:7*

When I was young I was impulsive and so was continually being told to think before I spoke or acted. Over the years I've given this quote a wider application and have tried, but am not sure I'm quite cured.

Margaret Crow

One of the beliefs of the Protestants was able to interpret the Bible for asked members of Wesley Men passages of

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. *Isaiah 35*

My mother didn't sing like the rest of the family, but instead would recite whole chapters of the Bible. She knew this whole chapter by heart.

Christine Spray

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint. *Isaiah 40:31*

Frank's favourite really, but I like it too. And it features in Clare's lyrics for one of the *Alternativity* songs! Clever stuff.

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching. *Romans 12:6-7*

Kirstie Vreede

My favourite Bible story is the nativity (*Luke 2*)

because it's when Jesus is born. I like stories about babies and families.

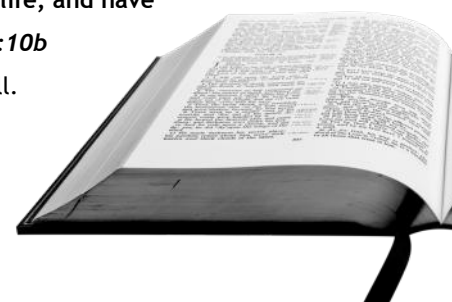
Laura Ibbotson

“I came that all may have life, and have it in abundance.” *John 10:10b*

The Good News in a nutshell.

Who could want for more?

Simeon Mitchell



Bible verses

ant Reformers was that everyone
for themselves. In that spirit, we
memorial to share their favourite
of Scripture.

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *Philippians 2:10-11*

Martin Slade

Daniel 6: Daniel in the lions' den.

John McCulloch

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. *Hebrews 13:2*

This is the verse on the ticket of membership from September 2005 which I keep as a bookmark in my Bible. I chose this verse because although I have never knowingly given hospitality to an angel, and though Paul doesn't let on, following this advice is up there with the most enjoyable things to do.

Marion Turberfield

1 Samuel 17: Goliath is beaten by a cool slingshot!

Jim McCulloch

She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Matthew 15:27

I love this witty reply from the Canaanite woman to Jesus. And the fact that she is rewarded!

Kate Dobson



For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. *Jeremiah 29:11-14*

For many of us life has times of 'exile' when we struggle to feel we 'belong' or wrestle with the uncertainty of the future. I have read and re-read this passage many times. Each time I have been surprised to hear in the midst of my loneliness, fear and mistrust the gentle whisper of those simple verbs - call, come, pray, seek - and the reminder of a God who is eternally loving, faithful and present.

Fiona Macdonald

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth. *Psalms 121*

Grace Samkange

My choice is the second commandment "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (*Mark 12:31*), as it encapsulates how together we can bring the Kingdom of God on earth.

Wendy Spray

As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces...
Ezekiel 1:15-21

I like the mad imagery of wheels...

Malcolm McCulloch

Reviews

A United Kingdom



I actually went to see this film twice as it made such an impression on me the first time! Based on real events in post war Britain and Southern Africa at the end of the 1940s/early 1950s and adapted from Susan Williams' novel, *Colour Bar*, this film tells the remarkable story of Seretse Khama, the heir to the throne of Bechuanaland (then a British Protectorate, now independent Botswana) and Ruth Williams, an English clerk at Lloyds of London. Their whirlwind romance and decision to marry despite opposition and rejection from both their families sparked an international outrage. At the time when the rigid apartheid system was so deeply entrenched in South Africa and Britain could not afford to damage their trade agreements with them, this interracial marriage was bad news for many and the couple faced intense pressure from Seretse's tribe, from the British government and from South Africa to annul the marriage. Suppression of the recommendations of a parliamentary enquiry into Seretse's fitness for the chieftainship, coupled with the fear that the marriage may result in either military or economic sanctions resulted in the couple being exiled from Bechuanaland, despite the fact that Seretse eventually had the support of the elders of his tribe. However, through it all, the couple remained firm in their love for each other and withstood all the barriers put before them. The performances of David Oyelowo and Rosamund Pike are very convincing and, as the film moves from post war London to the vast African plains (the cinematography of the film is stunning), struggles to marry deeply embedded heritage, political turmoil and deep love, are clear to see. I found the film very moving, troubling and uplifting all at the same time!



Lion

This is another film based on real events related in the autobiography of Saroo Brierley and documents the incredible journeys he made, both as a child and then as an adult. Hardship as a young boy in India led to separation from his family and subsequent adoption to a loving couple in Australia (played by Nicole Kidman and David Wenham).

Saroo never forgot his home, but it was only when he went to Melbourne to study and faced questions about his heritage that he realised that he would not be whole until he found his roots and so he committed himself to finding his way back to his small home village becoming more and more frustrated as he tried desperately to locate his family using Google Maps. Sunny Pawar, an amateur actor, is brilliant as the child Saroo and Dev Patel gives a sensitive, emotional performance as the adult Saroo. The cinematography and film score are both outstanding, complementing this amazing story.

The Kite Runner



I found this very popular book, recommended to me by lots of people, extremely difficult to read, despite several attempts, and then had the opportunity to watch the film and found myself profoundly moved by the story. Set in Afghanistan and America, it tells the story of two boys with very different heritages, one privileged, the other an Hazaras, a member of an ethnic minority and destined to serve the privileged. The film charts the different paths their lives go as a result of this. As small children there appear to be no boundaries - they live alongside each other in the same house and rely on each other's company - but one life-changing incident at the Kite Festival defines the rest of their lives. It is a story of love, guilt, shame, forgiveness, secrecy, remorse and redemption, all woven together with tension against a backdrop of inequality and destructive war.

Janet Forsaith

King Charles III



This highly controversial play, after running to great acclaim on Broadway and in the West End, was broadcast in an edited 90-minute version for BBC TV viewers in May.

The hero of it all is the late Tim Pigott-Smith, who played the part of Charles on stage, and lost none of the angst and drama for being on the small screen.

The plot - for those who didn't see it - goes like this: the Queen dies at some date in the future, and Prince Charles, having waited most of his life, like Edward VII, finally becomes king. Almost immediately, he is asked as monarch to assent to a new law which will strictly limit the freedom of the press. Instead of giving royal assent in the normal way, Charles hesitates and wrestles with his conscience. A huge crisis in the family ensues, with William and Kate fearing a threat to their future. Before Charles can make a final decision, they are intervening to protect themselves. Throw in a couple of ghostly appearances of Diana, and Harry's involvement with a young female art student, and you can see why there were suggestions that the Director General of the BBC might end up in the Tower!

Shakespearean resonances did not stop at ghosts, and hints of a new Lady Macbeth in Kate. The play is written in blank verse which gives it a kind of historic feel, regularly interrupted by contemporary slang: a strange and at times uncomfortable mix. One critic's opinion was that 90 minutes of this rhythmic speech on TV was just too much. However, the actors interpreted the roles with great conviction, not apparently bothered by the slightly incongruous word-setting.

But to return to the plot, here's the question: is this a disloyal and insensitive piece of theatre, or can it be justified as a timely warning to the Monarchy? The answer probably hangs on the personal stance of the viewer. Convinced republicans might approve, those who favour the monarchy with all its faults may flinch at this portrayal of a dysfunctional royal family. Whatever your perspective, it remains a thought provoking, and enjoyable - if shocking - entertainment!

The BBC version is no longer available on iPlayer, but the whole play, with all its more shocking moments still intact, can be bought on DVD.

Kate Dobson

Jack's next musical

Hot on the heels of the success of *Amazing Love!* in February, church member Jack Godfrey has been working on a new musical, *Free Solo*, which is being performed at the Camden Fringe Festival in London from Monday 31 July to Wednesday 2 August.

Free Solo takes its name from a form of rock climbing which the individual performs alone and without the use of any ropes or other protective equipment.

The musical follows Hazel, the daughter of world-renowned free solo climber John Robinson, as she traces a path through her memories of her childhood. A childhood in which Hazel and her mum, Jess, followed John around the world. A childhood in which they watched on wide-eyed as he scaled each sheer rock face. A childhood in which John was a superhero; and nothing bad ever happens to superheroes.

Hazel continues her journey, desperate to understand her father. Why was he so compelled to climb? Why could he never stop? How could he be so fearless in the face of death? *Free Solo* is about family, overcoming fear, and following in your parents' footsteps.

The show is being performed at 6.00pm at the Hen and Chickens Theatre Pub in Highbury. Please email Jack at jackjgodfrey@gmail.com if you would like information about tickets.



Judith Mary Atkinson (1941-2017)

Judith Atkinson was born on 9 January 1941 in Nottinghamshire. Her father was a primary school teacher, and the family home was full of books and music. Judith won a scholarship to Nottingham Girls' High School, where she was Deputy Head Girl, and she went on to read English and French at Bristol University. Right from university days Judith was determined to be a teacher, and this was her lifelong career, teaching English in a series of schools, heading a department in one, and finding time as well to express her love of music and amateur dramatics. On retirement Judith stepped into a vacancy in adult education, and continued to teach. And, first in Hull and then in Oxford, Judith put her teaching skills to work in tutoring new Local Preachers, helping them not just with the demands of the course of study but also with the practice of leading worship and preaching. Judith was a great communicator, always interested in people.

Judith's Christian faith was characterised by total fearlessness and utter sincerity. She had no time for lazy clichés or pious platitudes - she wrestled with the intractable questions of faith and life and was always open to fresh insights. As a preacher, this meant that she spoke

to people exploring faith and needing to hear that we are allowed to ask questions. Congregations appreciated her thoughtful preaching, her honesty and her meticulous preparation.

As well as preaching, Judith was part of the editorial team for *Wesley Memorial News* - a regular and much appreciated contributor and an eagle-eyed proof-reader.

It was in her second school that Judith came to know Robert and Margaret Protherough, thus beginning a lifelong friendship. They came together to Oxford seven years ago, making a happy and hospitable home together. Judith joined the Bach Choir and the Oxford Harmonic Choir, and enjoyed reading her beloved literature and listening to music.

Judith fought a courageous battle with cancer, refusing to be defined by illness, even at its worst. She died on 14 April, Good Friday, in her 77th year.

Martin Wellings



Derek George Phillips (1930-2017)

Derek Phillips was born in Tolworth, Surrey, on 13 September 1930. After education at King Edward's School, Bath, and Monkton Combe School, where he took up rowing, Derek came up to St Peter's Hall, Oxford, in 1949, to read Geography. During his undergraduate years Derek rowed in the St Peter's Second Eight, and he was also a keen member of JWS. Although his work in local government finance took him to posts across the Midlands and South of England, and to York and London, Derek's connections with Oxford continued, and he shared a home in the city with his mother until her death in 1980. After taking early retirement Derek served as Church Treasurer at Wesley Memorial from 1987 until 2001, and was also treasurer of

Oxford Cruse and of the Oxford Council of Churches. Derek enjoyed travelling, keeping detailed notes of places visited and miles covered. He was a person of quiet, unobtrusive faith, deeply committed to the life and work of the church. A fall in 2011 led to a prolonged residence in St Luke's Hospital, where he died peacefully on 18 April 2017.

Martin Wellings



Holiday club - coming soon!


We're really looking forward to exploring the exciting story of Jonah with the children who come to our Holiday Club later in the summer. We have a great team of people involved and the children are sure to enjoy an action-packed week of games, crafts, story telling, music and team challenges. As well as groups for younger children there will be a 'Fizzy Zone' aimed at those aged 10 and over.

Over the three days, threaded through all the fun activities, we'll be looking at the choice God offered, the courage Jonah needed and the change that came about when Jonah and the people of Nineveh finally listened to God. We'll also discover those themes in other Bible stories and will be able to reflect on God's call to us now.

Do take a flier from the link porch and share it with any young families you know who might be interested. Places are limited but we'd love to welcome as many children as we can. Prayers and offers of help are very welcome too! See me or Jenny Arnold for more information. Thank you!

Mel McCulloch

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church Holiday Club 2017



Expect Games, Crafts, Stories, Music and fun!

Groups for Children aged 3-14

**Tues 29th - Thurs 31st August
10am - 12.30pm**

Only £3 per child for the week

**Wesley Memorial Methodist Church,
New Inn Hall Street,
Oxford**

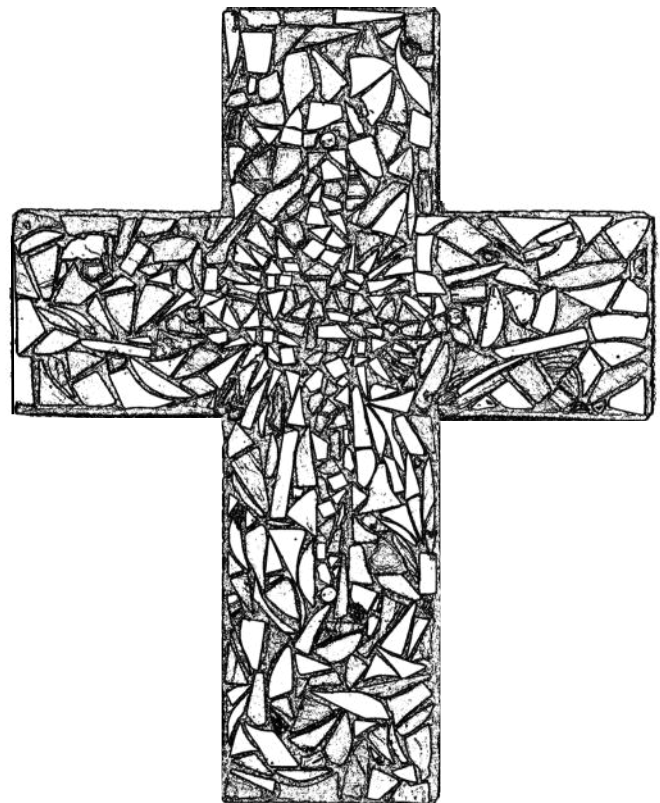
For more details and a booking form :
e-mail mel.mcculloch@gmail.com
Or visit our website, www.wesleymem.org.uk

Colouring challenge

Can you come up with your own design for the mosaic cross we made on the Church Day Out?



Brass rubbing in Dorchester Abbey on the Church Day Out



Christian Aid street market

Huge thanks to everyone who came to our Christian Aid Week street market on Saturday 20 May. A fabulous band of volunteers, including from our sister church Cowley Road, raised an impressive £1414.39 through selling plants, cakes, lunches, books, cards, toys, crafts and more. And the next generation of fundraisers thoroughly enjoyed running Rowan's Rummage, Jasper's Jumble and Alice's Allsorts Stall! Well done everyone.

The money raised will change the lives of people needing a safe place to call home - refugees, people displaced from their communities and those struggling with poverty. For a short video showing some of the lives you are transforming, visit www.youtube.com and search 'Lebanon: educating refugee kids'.

A few quotes from volunteers who helped on the day:

"I thought it a lovely event on Saturday with plenty of new visitors to Wesley Mem. Well done everyone who participated - selling, making and buying."

"I really enjoyed the camaraderie. Lots more than two or three gathered together in Jesus name. And what a great total."

"Great result. Always good fun."

Jenny Ayres



Thy Kingdom Come

Last year the Archbishops of Canterbury and York invited Christians from all denominations to join in what they hoped would be a global movement of focussed prayer during the ten days between Ascension Day and Pentecost. They called the movement 'Thy Kingdom Come', and, in Justin Welby's words, they were "utterly astonished at how it took off. Many tens of thousands of people across denominations - Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox - came together and prayed, 'Come, Holy Spirit.' I can hardly remember anything that I've been involved in which I have sensed so clearly the work of the Spirit."

They repeated the call this year and again many individual Christians and Churches took part.

At Wesley Memorial, as part of Open Church, I set prayer stations on window ledges around the church, each one focussing on a different line from the Lord's Prayer. There were various actions that those taking part could do to help understand each phrase, for instance a pebble held and then let go as we thought about forgiving those who have hurt us. It was a very low key way of being involved and those who came into church were able to completely ignore it if they wished but it was there for those who felt it might be helpful.

As an individual I also committed to praying specifically for five (although in an act of rebellion I actually went for six!) people during the period. Since Pentecost I may have taken off the twine bracelet with the six knots which I made as a reminder but those people are still in my thoughts and prayers.

I think that one of the big positives for me of 'Thy Kingdom Come' is that I went into it thinking, "Oh yes, I might be able to manage to do that for 10 days," but actually the impact of it has stayed with me for longer, and hopefully in the long term those people who have been particularly in my prayers will also start to sense God with them.

Mel McCulloch

Open Doors update

Thanks to the generous response to our March 2017 appeal, we can report that the Connexional Grants Committee has confirmed its offer of £180,000 for Phase Four of the project. The offer is conditional on our raising the whole of the £451,000 required (although that estimate is likely to increase) before the money will be released. Our total has now reached £301,226 (this sum includes £10,000 from the Methodist Insurance Fund and £1,000 from the local Doris Field Trust).

We are continuing to hold fundraising events. Alexander Ardakov returned for his sixth recital on 25 May. His recitals have raised £1,244 in total as well as providing wonderful evenings of music.

On 12 June, Peter Berry led a Jane Austen walk (raising £90) to mark the 200th anniversary of her death. The photo shows the group in St John's College where Jane Austen's father and brothers were Fellows and Alumni.



We are also pleased to report that acoustic panels are to be fixed on the Hall ceiling during August - this will improve sound quality.

Derek Rawson

Meet our new Mission and Heritage Officer

I am very excited to be joining Wesley Memorial in September. I felt called to apply for this new post and am very much looking forward to getting started properly. So far, I have made a few visits and met with staff and some members. I hope to get to know more of you soon.

I was brought up in Timperley Methodist Church in the Altrincham Circuit and went on to Edinburgh University to study philosophy. There I met my husband Chris. We have two sons: Guy, who has just completed his degree, and Jamie, who finished school this year. After University I worked for the Methodist Church in Nicolson Square, Edinburgh as manager of the newly opened community centre. I went on to the National Trust for Scotland, where I was in charge of Gladstone's Land, a 17th century property on Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

After our children were born, I focused on voluntary work in the local area and at Church. By 2005 the various Methodist Churches in Edinburgh were beginning prayerful conversations about the future. This eventually led in 2008 to the formation of a new Church, the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church from four previous city-centre congregations. A large-scale renovation of the Nicolson Square premises followed, creating a 'new home' for the new Church.

This process was not without its challenges and it was during this 'reformation' that I realised how important it was going to be to value our separate stories and achievements even while we were being forward looking and focused on serving the modern world. I began to attend Methodist Heritage conferences and events and found myself very excited by the heritage-for-mission emphasis of this initiative. In April 2015 I took up the Connexional post

of Liaison Officer for Methodist Historic Objects and joined the Methodist Heritage Committee.

I have learned both through my work for the National Trust and at Methodist Heritage sites that with practice and tact, interesting conversations and even deep encounters can occur with those who visit historic buildings, including

churches. Our built heritage can create a 'safe space' for honest testimony and prayerful active listening.

On my most recent visit to Wesley Memorial, I read through the notebook filled in by the loyal volunteers who help staff Open Church during the week. This little book revealed just how many people appreciate the ability to sit in a quiet church in the middle of the busy city, light a candle, pray and perhaps chat. This is a gift to the city and should be cherished.

There is more we can do to develop our 'offer' to visitors, users of the building and those who are yet to find us. Sometimes we must try new

methods to share the love of God with others. John Wesley shocked the establishment by preaching outdoors after all! At the moment I cannot predict how this initiative will develop, but it won't be simply more of the same.

The church has agreed to make 'Mission and Heritage' its emphasis over the next few years. This should not be at the expense of all the interesting and worthwhile work that is already being done. I would see the emphasis rather like a lens (or set of spectacles) through which we see more clearly how what we are doing fits in with our calling to be a Methodist people in this time and place. Please pray for this initiative and consider how you might be called to respond.

Alison Butler



Community flat

Many church members may not know that on the second floor of the church premises there is a three-bedroomed flat. Accessed through a door adjacent to the women's toilets, it was built originally for a caretaker, but for many years it has been rented out to private tenants. Among other virtues, it has a balcony with great views over the Oxford skyline.

Around a year ago, Church Council decided that we should be making a more strategic use of this part of the church's premises to support the mission of the church, and agreed to the setting up of a residential Christian community in the flat. After due preparations, we are now recruiting community members for a launch in September.

Members of the community will be expected to make a commitment to being involved in church life, and will have support as they seek to live together as a Christian community alongside their daily work or studies. Community living will manifest itself in a 'community night' each week, shared fellowship and prayer, collective responsibility for the flat and its communal areas, some sharing of food/cooking and potentially hospitality. The practical details of community living will be worked out and agreed by the community members themselves.

This model has partly been inspired by the experience of two similar community flats that have operated successfully for many years at Hinde Street Methodist Church in London, where Jenny and I once lived, and several former JWS members now reside. But since the earliest apostles, Christians have gathered in community to pray, learn and minister together. Intentional residential communities have provided an alternative model for social relationships and shared living, a supportive context for deepening discipleship, and a springboard for mission and ministry.

We hope that church members will share our sense of excitement about this new initiative, and provide prayerful and practical support to the project over the months ahead.

Simeon Mitchell (Convenor, Community Management Group)

New Chair of District

We are delighted to report that The Revd Helen D Cameron has been appointed Chair of the Northampton District of the Methodist Church. Helen will be officially welcomed at a service at the Church of Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes, on 26 August, and will then take up responsibility for the large swathe of 'Middle England' covered by the District: principally the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

Helen was the guest speaker at our Church Weekend in 2010, reflecting with us on the novels of Marilynne Robinson, and she has led worship at Wesley Memorial, so will be known to many of us already. She practised in the NHS as a senior physiotherapist before training for the Methodist ministry at the Queen's College, Birmingham, and she was awarded an MPhil by the University of Birmingham in 1991. As well as serving in several circuit appointments, she has been on the staff at Queen's, most recently as Oversight Tutor and Director of the Centre for Ministerial Formation within the wider work of the Queen's Foundation.

She is well-versed in the Connexional life of Methodism, through membership of the Conference and of a number of Connexional committees. Since 2015 she has been Assistant Secretary of the Conference, based at Methodist Church House in London.

Martin Wellings





Wesley Memorial Church

New Inn Hall Street, Oxford OX1 2DH

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

Mission & Heritage Officer: *Alison Butler*
Church manager: *Nikos Paplomatas*

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Wednesdays 12.30pm

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Contributions, letters, questions, pictures, book reviews and any other suitable items 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 views of Wesley Memorial Church or the Methodist Church as a whole.

Printed on sustainably sourced paper.

*Deadline for the next issue:
20 October 2017*

Dates for the diary

Tues 25 & Weds 26 July, 7.30pm	Wesley Memorial Lectures, given by Lord Leslie Griffiths. Lecture One: Place, Poetry and Prayer Lecture Two: Bringing Theology to Life
Monday 7 August, 7pm	Starfire UMC Choir concert
Tuesday 29-Thursday 31 August	Junior Church Summer Holiday Club (see page 15 for more details)
Sunday 3 September, 10.30am	All-age Communion Service
Sunday 3rd September, afternoon	Garden Party at the Stocks' home to raise money for Oxford Phab
Weds 6, 13, 20 & 27 September	Bible month evenings with David Bull (see page 9 for more details)
Saturday 9 September, 10am-5pm	Oxford Open Doors. The public are invited to come and see "Wesley Memorial as you have never seen it before; newly refurbished rooms, unexpected hidden views, new stained glass but the same warm welcome and opportunity to see what we're about. Includes children's activities, refreshments, all-age trail and musical interludes." All welcome!
Sunday 24 September	Harvest Festival
Sunday 8 October	Start of Oxford University term

WESLEY MEMBRAIN

