

Wesley Memorial *magazine*

from Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Oxford | Summer 2022



Holy Days and holidays

Dear friends,

What makes a holiday a holy day?

Back in 2016 we went on one of those holidays with friends. The kind of thing that can make or break even the longest friendships! We actually had a lovely holiday, not least because of the destination. We had a week on the Isle of Skye. The cottage overlooked Loch Dunvegan in the West of Skye. It was an idyllic place to stay. Wonderful scenery. We saw dolphins whilst out at sea and deer on the land from the same boat. We found small, white sanded beaches, so unspoiled that we felt like the first people to see them. But enough of the holiday. It is not that I wanted to share with you. Rather the story of a journey at the end of it. At the end of the week I had to leave the party to keep a promise made a year earlier. I have always felt that one of the particular privileges of being a Methodist Minister, rather than say, a priest in the Church of England, is that of the times we lead funerals, the vast majority are for folk we have come to know well. We do not often feature on funeral directors' lists for 'general' funeral provision. Even though we may well lead funerals for people with Methodist backgrounds or past family connections, most of the services are for membership card carrying Methodists.

One of the parts of being a minister that is little known about and often overlooked is the role we play in being alongside people as they find a resting place for their loved one's ashes. Sometimes this is in a family grave plot, or scattered in a garden of remembrance near home. Over the years I have noted an increase in 'special requests' in the disposal of ashes. These have been many and varied, and it was to attend to one such request that I departed from the rest of my family and our friends as we reached Fort William on the way back south.

The rest of the group took the car. I was left at a bus stop, ready to take public transport for a while. I would join them later in Glasgow. At this point my holiday took on a more distinctly 'holy' nature. I took my seat on the bus for the two hour journey to Oban. At my mention of Oban, there will be some of you that are ahead of me in the story. The bus seemed to lumber along, but the pace was steady if not brisk. I arrived in Oban around six in the evening.



Sunrise on Iona. Photo taken by Jenny Ayres.

When pilgrims of the past planned their journeys, some had sufficient funds. To plan ahead. They would book a room and board at the pilgrim lodgings that grew up along the way, especially of the most well trodden pilgrim routes. Many of these pilgrim lodgings developed into public houses, some of which we still visit today. Though they may have transformed into gastro pubs or worse! Most of the pilgrims of old did not have the money to pay for lodgings along the way, let alone send word ahead to book a room. They simply settled down at night wherever they could. The symbol of the scallop shell was linked with Saint James, who was one of the twelve disciples and was beheaded for his faith by King Herod Agrippa. You may read about that in Acts 12. The shell became a symbol of pilgrimage and was also useful to hold water, a little food and for begging along the way.

As I am relatively rich, I was able to book a room ahead. I took a short walk along the seafront in beautiful late summer sunshine and made my way to an early night, as I had a ferry first thing the following day. Or at least that was the plan.

I did not sleep well. It was one of the most striking storms I have witnessed. The rain came down in sheets and the wind lashed the town and whipped the sea into a frenzy of threatening foam. As I sat eating my breakfast, there was no sign of the storm abating. I wondered about the ferry that was to take me to the Isle of Mull. I put my waterproof coat on, picked up my rucksack and headed to the ferry dock. The ferry

was there. The rain continued to fall and the wind was up. As I approached I was greeted by a member of staff who looked for all the world as if wind and rain were never going to stop his work. They did not. He checked my ticket and bade me board the ferry. It was a short trip. Only an hour. But one of the most eventful weather hours of my life. As the ferry ploughed on through the waves, I thought I would lose all of my inner organs! Rise and fall does not begin to say what was happening to the ferry.

After more than an hour the ferry drew up to the dock to Craignire seemingly none the worse for the journey. The same could not be said for most of the passengers. I literally staggered down the ferry ramp and on into the small booking office come souvenir shop to ask about the bus across Mull to Fionnphort, where I was to take the ferry across the short sound to my final destination. As I spoke, it was obvious that the bookings clerk was looking doubtful. He told me that there were no buses. There were no buses because the ferry to Iona was too small to cope with the sea, even on its short hop from island to island. But don't worry, he said, if you're quick you can get back on the ferry to Oban and try again tomorrow. I was crestfallen. Not only was I not going to make it to Iona, I had to take the ferry back for another rollercoaster ride back to Oban.

The wind and rain were still pouring their blessings upon the earth and sea, but off I went. The ferry and I bore another wild journey and I reached Oban just in time to get to the tourist information office and find a bed for the night. I called the rest of the party to explain that I had not made progress that day, and could they wait an extra day so that I could still join them in Glasgow for the rest of the journey south. I fell asleep to the sound of the rain hammering against the bedroom window. And though worried about the prospects for the following day, I was so weary that nothing was going to keep me awake.

The sunshine poured through my window the following morning. It was a beautiful, calm day. It was so lovely that it was hard to remember just how dreadful the weather had been the previous day. Such is the changeable weather in that part of the world. I retraced my steps to the ferry and took a serene trip back to Mull. The foaming sea of the previous day had changed to a glass still mirror.

The buses for Fionnphort were waiting for the ferry to disgorge its passengers. I took my seat and looked forward to the journey across Mull and to the view across Iona sound to the island and its Abbey church.

The little ferry to Iona was as calm a journey as the previous day's had been rough. On this occasion I wasn't there to visit the Abbey. I set off to walk up to the Abbey. I had an idea of where I was heading, having remembered the area around the church from a number of previous visits. I took the road up the slope from the ferry drop, through the village to the Abbey. I skirted the edge of the site and took a path along the fields beyond back towards the sea. I checked the ashes I had been carrying with me for over a week now and in my rucksack on the journey from Fort William. I reached a spot a little way from the sea along the small stream that runs past the Abbey and into the bay. I had agreed to try and film as I scattered the ashes into the stream. I found a large rock, which had certainly been there for many hundreds of thousands of years. It overlooked the stream and would make a good place for my small tripod on which my phone sat to film.

The ashes were the last remains of a man who was devoted to Iona and its work and ministry. He had spent many, many weeks there over the years and way back, helping to rebuild the community. His work had taken him to Warwickshire decades ago, but his heart remained in Scotland where he was born and brought up. His spiritual home is Iona. As I poured his ashes into the stream I prayed and remembered his wonderful, soft Scottish accent, which many had found such a gentle way of sharing his faith in Jesus in his Local Preaching. He was a lovely man and it was my privilege to be alone with my memories of him as I did that which he and his family had asked of me. His 'last resting place' is a holy place. In the traditions of Iona it is often referred to as a 'thin place', a site where the borders between earth and heaven are blurred by natural beauty and a long history of prayer and the building of Christian community.

My holiday had gently turned to a holy day, a holy moment in memory of a person who tried to embody the holiness to which those who follow Jesus are called.

Blessings. Peter

Editorial

Although we are now several weeks away from the Jubilee weekend holiday and celebrations, we can still congratulate Her Majesty on 70 years of fulfilling her promise to dedicate her life to the role she had to assume so early in her life. We can be sure that she considered the anniversary not just a holiday but also a 'holy day', particularly since she has let it be known that her faith is very important to her. The Trooping of the Colour, the wonderful service in Westminster Abbey and the star-studded concert at the Palace in June, all paid magnificent tribute to her faithfulness and service.

However, this issue of the magazine has gathered a very varied selection of other thoughts on Holy Days and holidays. Follow our writers round Turkey, Scotland, Wales, Sark, Iona, Shropshire, for different reflections on holidays and holy days.

We wish you all a relaxing and restorative summer and hope you will enjoy this holiday reading.

The Wesley Memorial Magazine team



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Charlie at Launde Abbey



Suddenly he appears
as we eat our meals,
swooping over our heads
or hopping round our feet
in search of – what?

Charlie the chaffinch
seems more at home
in the dining room
than out in the garden
and he loves to seek retreat
in the Abbey chapel
or even to investigate
the rooms of the guests.

Not for him the bird table
or the seeds and nuts it offers;
veggie lasagne or nut roast
are more to his taste.

If nothing is forthcoming
he brings forth a song,
reminding us of his presence.
The life of the outside
has come in, as he whistles,
'I want fed – I do, I do, I do.'

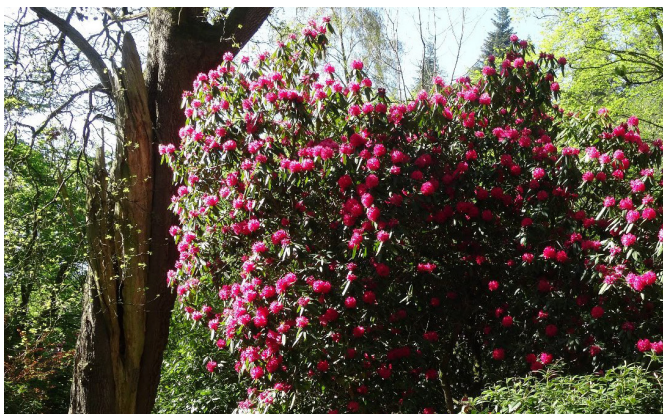
Joanna Tulloch

A special place

10 years ago, we were looking for somewhere to hold my 60th birthday party weekend and we stumbled upon Walcot Hall, a quirky and slightly dishevelled country house and grounds. We went to find out more and stayed in a Gypsy Caravan, one of their 'Hidden Treasures' in the wonderful arboretum. It was such a treat to go to bed and wake up surrounded by magnificent mature trees, wildflowers, beautiful blossom and incredible birdsong. We have been back every year for 10 years, gradually upgrading to a Showman's Caravan which has a bit more space and a better wood stove.



Each year, I think I have exaggerated in my mind how restorative the visit will be. It feels a big effort to pack: to dig out our gas cooker and check if we've got enough gas cylinders, to pack sleeping bags to put under the duvet to make sure we're warm enough and to decide how many bananas and how much chocolate we'll need to cook in the open fire that I light every day to keep us warm. I think surely the birdsong wasn't really that good and the blossom that amazing?



We drive the 3 hours and arrive a bit tired and bump up the last bit of road to park the car. We load ourselves up with rucksacks on our backs and Sainsbury's boxes full of food in our arms and set off on the path through apple blossom in the orchard, by the little lake where we've sometimes seen a kingfisher, under the flouncy rhododendrons, past the fluorescent primroses and up the final grass slope under the oak tree to the caravan. I have not exaggerated. We are accompanied all the way by birdsong and the colours we have passed have already lifted my spirits. We go back and forth with more loads and increasingly relax.

We soon realise that the thrush singing from the oak is going to be there every day, almost all day. Incredible song. That it's worth getting up at 4.30 am and waiting for the dawn chorus to start at 4.50 am and just soak it in. Each evening, we go for a walk, sometimes along the ride which is carpeted with bluebells and flanked by tall limes and ancient sweet chestnuts with twisted bark. They are majestic but elderly, but to our delight they have survived storm Arwen. Sometimes we hear owls and always feel happy. Once we saw a badger.

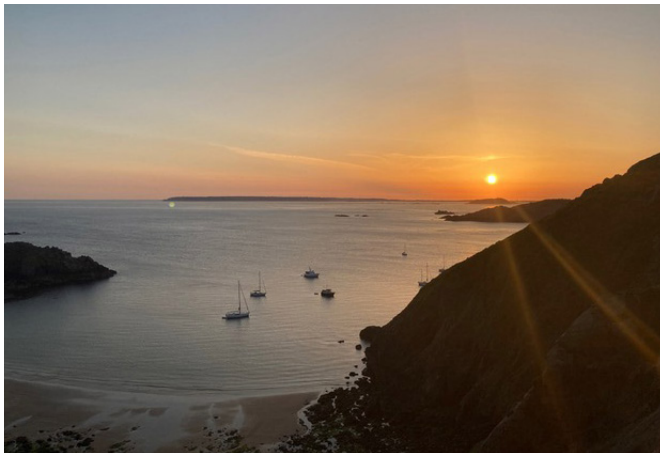
When it's time to leave after only 5 nights, I feel ready. The attraction of not having to wear 6 layers in bed and the lure of a toilet along the landing, not a 2-minute walk in my boots under pressure, increasingly becomes attractive. We feel so blessed to be able to recharge in this way. Strangely almost nobody else stays in the arboretum at this time, so we have its beauty almost completely to ourselves. It's not a mountain top, but it feels spiritual in being so close to nature and to my mind some of the very best of God's world.

Wendy Spray

Simply Sark

*For most of the Eddy family, Sark is **the** place to go to renew our batteries for the coming academic year. There is nowhere like it!*

The only way to travel to Sark is by boat from Guernsey, Jersey or France. Stepping off the small boat onto the island where the only traffic consists of bicycles, horses pulling carriages for day trippers, working tractors and a few electric scooters for nonagenarians, it is time to take that calming breath and feel life slowing down. Sark 'plateau' is 300 feet above sea level so the first physical challenge chosen by most is the climb up the long harbour hill on a pretty path through trees, while a tractor takes your luggage to its destination. As long as it is labelled, it will get there. For the less keen, a ride can be had on the 'toast rack' as it is affectionately called – a trailer-bus pulled by tractor – just to the top of the hill.



Grande grève.

Next stop the cycle-hire shop, then the Avenue for the first of many shopping trips to the Foodstop for supplies. In the shop there are familiar faces and friendly greetings. And so the holiday begins! The holiday is the total Sark experience and new generations fall in love with the freedom and independence it offers as they cycle to the shops to run errands at an age which would be unthinkable on the mainland. Everyone looks out for everyone. The locals can often tell members of our party where other members are heading for the day, after a chat in the shop.

Sark is beautiful, unspoilt and tranquil. There is something for everyone. The bays and beaches are 300 feet down the cliffs

and a daily decision is made as to the best destination. It does depend on the weather and the tides; wind direction is a particularly important factor because going to the right place can mean a sheltered spot for the day. Sometimes the energetic decide that 1 or 2 bays in a day is not enough. Then a multiple bay challenge is set which involves going down to and swimming in more than 10 bays in one day, and trying to be the fastest team. Part of the beauty of a Sark holiday is making your own choices: once a destination is set, you can make your own way there, in your own time, which reduces the organisational stress hugely. We all appreciate this even more since experiencing holidays on the mainland during lockdown.

Day trippers come to Sark and admire the beauty of the views across the sea to other islands and take carriage rides round the island. But for us, the attraction is the variety to be found in the rocky deep water swimming or the large sandy beaches. And nowhere becomes crowded. There is something magical about being able to stay on the beach in the last of the sunshine when there is no one else about, and just drink in the beauty and tranquillity of the sea and surroundings. Then make your way up the cliff as the sun is setting and along the quiet roads back to base. When darkness falls, the stars are vibrant in the skies of this 'Dark Sky' island where street lighting is completely absent.

Sundays find us in the Methodist chapel where we are often invited to contribute a musical item and provide pianist/organist to join the resident musicians. We have always had close connections with the Methodist chapel on Sark, attending Sunday school as children and there meeting John and Nellie Le Feuvre who welcomed us each year. Nellie is now the oldest inhabitant on the island at the age of 95 and still welcomes the extended Eddy family each summer. The fellowship at the chapel is still special and something that to be part of we treasure as a privilege. It is the perfect place to count one's blessings and we feel very lucky to be able to do so.

Kath Ridley

An Easter experience

I don't have strong religious experiences. I wish I did, but I'm rather pedestrian and prosaic. So what happened the week before Easter was all the more extraordinary.

I had gone on a three-day silent retreat, at a Jesuit centre in North Wales.

A friend suggested it was worth visiting their Rock Chapel, across the fields from the main building. I imagined a church in a cave, like an Easter garden. But when I set out, it became clear that somebody had just plonked down a tiny replica of a standard church on top of a small hillock.

I walked up there, and it was nothing special – small, with just two seats across, and a bit dour with heavy wood panelling. There was some attractive modern stained glass in the seven slit windows – each in a colour of the rainbow, from reds in the first one on the right hand side, through to greens in the centre, through to violet on the left. On the way back down, the zigzag path ran through wild flowers, and it did look a bit like an Easter garden. So – since there is plenty of time in a three-day silent retreat – I thought I would come back the next morning before dawn, and, like

the women at Easter, sit in the garden.

So early next day I set out again across the dark fields, with my torch. It was a bit chilly and windy when I arrived, so I went into the chapel for a while. I was thinking of Easter morning, and pitch black, it felt a bit like a tomb. I sat down in the peace. Eventually, I noticed that one of the pieces of glass in the orange window was beginning to glow with the first light from outside. How wonderful it could be to watch these rainbow windows lighten, I thought. So, I sat there for an hour or so. A snatch of a chant went round in my head: "I will sing, to my Lord, in this place." Then, since there was nobody anywhere near, I sang it out loud. Gradually, the windows lit up – first the red, and then one by one the others. Each lit up a stretch of the floor in its colour. I could hear the wind howling round outside. It felt like being a baby



in the womb – glimpses and sounds of the outside world, but still inside in safety. A wonderful experience, I thought, and moved to the door.

I opened the door – and outside was the full light of day, with hosts of daffodils and primroses, and the light green leaves of spring. Astounding brightness. This is what it must be like to be born, I thought. This is Easter – a new world. I walked back down the Easter-garden path, through the wild flowers, and then bounced, leaping, back across the fields. *Jesus is risen*, I felt. Not like me to have such an experience, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Paul Spray

Adventures in France

We went to France on holiday in half term. We went to our holiday on the train. We went to the Camargue. We saw wild flamingos and Camargue ponies. We went to the beach. We went in the water. My favourite thing I ate was a cheeseburger [Humphrey]. My favourite thing was a macaron [Edmund]. We went for a walk in the mountains and had to beware of deadly caterpillars. We saw tractors making hay bales at our holiday house.



Edmund & Humphrey Blainey

Zoo story

During the summer holidays I went back to Singapore and went to the zoo. The zoo is located on the margins of Upper Seletar Reservoir. The zoo has the Night safari, River Wonders and the Jurong Bird Park. The zoo has lots of endangered animals, including my favourite pandas called Le Le, who was the first ever panda cub born in Singapore and his mother Jia Jia. I wrote this story because it reminds me of them.



Catie at the zoo.

Once upon a time, there was a big zoo in Singapore (that means "Lion City"). In one of the gates in the Zoo, there was a pretty little treehouse in the enclosure. The enclosure was quite big because the last panda that was there died of a fever so it was overgrown with bamboo plants, and had a waterfall trickling down a rocky cliff. So, there was lots to eat for the pandas. People admired the treehouse a lot because there were so many beautiful little pink flowers covering the treehouse that people could hardly see the waterfall.



Jia Jia and Le Le.

In the tree house there were four cute pandas. One of them was called Yanjia. Yanjia was Yanle's big sister, and was a year older

than Yanle. Their Mother and Farther were not always with them because they were getting food to eat.

One day Yanjia said to Yanle, "I think we should have an adventure." Yanle said, "shouldn't we just stay here?" Yanle was always worrying about going out. But they went anyway because Yanjia said that Yanle was just being silly. Suddenly there was a loud roar and the pandas jumped in fright at the sound. The noise was so loud that even the treehouse shook a little and a giant boulder on top of the waterfall started to move and fell down the cliffy edge and landed on the soft, mossy ground near the stream.

The zookeeper dashed to the tiger's cage, but to his horror, the cage was empty and there was no tiger in there! Yanjia jumped

over the gate and looked around for the tiger and there it was sniffing the dandelions. The tiger lay camouflaged in the grass ready to pounce on a lady who was sitting on a bench in front of the tiger feeding her baby some milk.

Yanjia sensed the danger and she leapt onto the bench next to her and screeched to warn her. The lady was so scared that she jumped out of her skin and ran away. The lady escaped just in time while the tiger leapt up but landed on the hard, uncomfortable bench.

Suddenly, Yanjia had an idea. She would guide the tiger into his cage! The zookeeper soon found out what Yanjia was doing and he ran to get the tiger's favourite treat. When he came back, the zookeeper was hot in the face and he was holding a buffalo leg as big as a chair. He happily led the tiger in.

A week later, Yanjia woke up in the morning and when she opened the door, a sudden applause came and to Yanjia's amazement, the lawn was cut, the gates around the enclosure were gone and there were stalls and chairs. But in the giant patch of mud next to the treehouse, there was an enormous, beautiful, amazing and smart treehouse the size of a house. For a change, there were blue and pink big flowers and it looked as if Queen Elizabeth could live in it. The roof had an amazing garden on top with so many bamboo plants that she was not going to starve. Finally, she found out that she and her sister were going to live in it.

Everyone cheered one last time and if you have a chance to visit Singapore Zoo, don't forget to pay the famous pandas and Yanjia's new treehouse a visit. The end.

Catie Roberts

My daydream holiday

If I could go anywhere in the world, I would – first of all – visit Scandinavia and explore the rich and interesting culture. I would visit the deep fjords and steep mountains and discover more about the unique heritage of this impressive subregion of Europe.

Next, I would travel to the region of Italy and Greece, where I would meet incredible people and learn about the amazing music and fashion that has evolved through these parts. If I have time, I might catch a lift to Spain to admire the stunning scenery and taste the delicious foods, smell the different smells.

Or I might travel to Africa: I would love to visit Egypt and see the Pyramids of Giza – the ancient tombs of past pharaohs. I might explore the vast culture, art and creativity of Nigeria and Burkina Faso and the many vibrant African countries.

Then I would sail to Asia and be fascinated by the beautiful temples and statues that places like India provide. Maybe I would visit the Golden Temple of Amritsar or the Taj Mahal in the city of Agra. I would also be sure to go and explore the famous Himalayan mountains in Nepal, such as Mount Everest, K2 and Himalchuli.



Moving on to Oceania, where I would explore the vast plains of Australia and Tasmania, admiring the well-known creatures like the kangaroo, wombat and koala. I would take a trip to the remote islands off Indonesia, such as Fiji; here I would find pure, sandy beaches and gorgeous terrain, tropical trees and turquoise oceans.

I would fly to the Amazon rainforest in South America and see the elegant trees in Ecuador and Brazil, the many species of birds and monkeys in Colombia and Peru.

But after all my adventures, I know I would be just as happy to be safely home again.

Laura Ibbotson



Holidaying in The Netherlands

Tomas & Aaron Vreede went to The Netherlands in April.



Walking in the footsteps of Saints Mungo and Ninian



Cover photo. At St Ninian's Cave I would love to have brought this stone home, but it was much too heavy!

A Methodist Women in Britain pilgrimage

In mid-May, I joined 11 other women in a pilgrimage journey which started in Glasgow and ended at the Isle of Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway. Led by former Vice-President of Conference and recent Chair of Methodist Council, Jill Baker, this pilgrimage had been meant to take place in 2020, but like many things had been much delayed due to 'you-know-what'.

We were a happy pilgrim band, sensitively led by Jill. We had bible readings to reflect on as we walked, questions to ask ourselves as we visited holy and cultural sites and with short acts of worship spread through each day, some on busy streets, others in train stations, on beaches, in hotel lobbies or out on the moors.

Day 1 *Setting Out:* Beginning with the story of Glasgow's patron St Mungo and his mother Saint Enoch, we spent a full day walking around the historic religious and cultural sites of Glasgow. We also enjoyed hospitality from Woodlands Methodist Church and heard about their role in COP26 and of outstanding work with anonymous groups.

Day 2 *Travelling the pilgrim path:* We walked from Troon to Ayr along the beach. An incredibly special day for me as Troon is my mother's home town, where we spent many happy holidays with the Scottish side of my family. We walked past the church where my parents were married 60 years ago and along the beach where, as children, we had played and paddled, free from parental supervision! It was magical to be back, although pretty chilly!

Day 3 *Travelling the pilgrim path:* We walked from Stranraer to Glenluce through the magnificent gardens of Castle Kennedy and along some of the Southern Upland Way, passing the beautiful and romantic Glenluce Abbey. On this day we were considering the story of the healing of the blind man and were asked to think about what our response would be if Jesus walked beside us and asked, "What would you like me to do for you?".

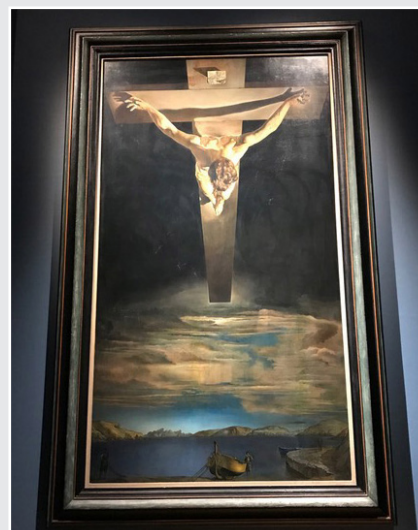
Day 4 *The Sacred Centre:* Here we reached the heart of the pilgrimage with a walk to St Ninian's cave on a stony beach,



Alison, Portland Parish Church, Troon 2022.



Alison's Mum and Dad, Portland Parish Church, Troon 1962.



Many of us were struck by the beauty of Salvador Dali's Christ of St John of the Cross in Kelvingrove Art Gallery.

5 miles west of our final destination. It was a wild, exhilarating place, exposed to the elements and tough on the feet. Whether or not St Ninian actually came here, there was a significance in the atmosphere that stripped away your defences. It was a 'thin' place, tough, but much to be treasured.

Day 5 *Re-entry*: We continued our walk from St Ninian's cave along the cliff path to the Isle of Whithorn, under darkening skies and to the sound of the waves crashing on the cliffs below. The drifts of wildflowers, thrift, vetch and stitchwort, were beautiful and the wheeling of seagulls, gannets and terns was a sight to behold, although you had to look down a good deal of the time as the path was narrow and very close to the edge! By early afternoon the sun, which had been with us all week, finally left us and the heavens opened. When we arrived at the

Isle of Whithorn visitor centre, cold and wet, we were dismayed to discover that the staff had decided to close the café early. Fortunately, the sight of our bedraggled faces pressed up at the windows persuaded them to relent and open up again!

An intentional pilgrimage gives participants time for reflection and offers companionship on the way. It encourages attentiveness to God and to others, whether in the group, or those met along the way. It strips away the busy-ness of everyday life and gives space for holy encounters. It was all these things for me, plus a huge boost to my confidence that I actually managed the walking and pack carrying. I've learned a lot and still have much to process, but already feel enriched and strengthened.

Alison Butler

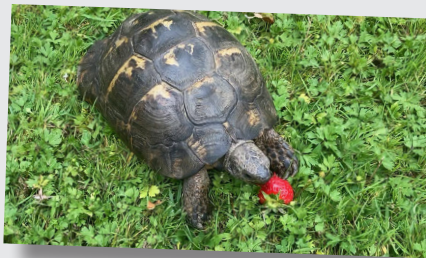
Worzel, by himself

The very Big Ones who come into my domain keep talking about summer and holidays. I'm not sure what it all means but I do like these long light days with early warmth. I emerge from my favourite bedding place and walk across the grass, so that the warmth falls on me and I feel like running around and helping myself to food.

Very often the Smaller Big One brings me beans, or green leaves which I like because it saves me time on munching so much grass! After the beans, I might chop off a few yellow flowers for dessert. I'm glad to say the Big Ones haven't cut all those down with their noisy box on wheels; but the grass all around is a bit shorter and easier to wade through!

Not long ago I came across a red berry on the ground. I tested it and found it

very sweet and enjoyable. The Smaller One brought me another but she seems to have forgotten now.



This week I found a space to crawl through, at the end of the land, and came into another domain. But I wasn't there long. Some other big creatures put me into a basket, and took me back to my old place. I was very cross about that!

I heard them talk about another one like me, called Twin, who had gone for a walk and been brought back a long

time later. But she was said to be 80 years old. Sounds like old. I think I'm only about 55 in Big People's counting.

Talking of Big Ones, mine seemed to disappear a few days ago. Holiday? And two different ones brought me some green leaves, a Big One and a Half Big One who was very pleased when I ran to meet her. Anyway, my Big Creatures are back now, and so are the beans, I'm glad to say!

And at the end of the light time – whenever I feel like it – I crawl under my favourite conifer facing the setting warm thing in the sky, and stay there until morning. Maybe that is what a holiday is? If any of you would like to pay me a visit before my next deep-sleep time, I'll be very happy to entertain you.

Seven lampstands

For 12 days this May, I was privileged to be part of a pilgrimage group travelling around 'Asia Minor' – modern-day Turkey – primarily to visit the sites of the seven churches to whom letters are addressed at the start of the New Testament Book of Revelation: the 'seven lampstands' then called Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. We started our tour on the landing beaches of Gallipoli, paying our respects at the Turkish, Anzac, and British memorials, and ended with three days in Istanbul, to explore the impact of Islam on the region's history and culture.

Turkey is investing heavily in tourism and that includes historic sites; so many of the remains of the ancient cities in Revelation have been excavated relatively recently. If you have been fortunate enough to visit Pompeii or Herculaneum in Italy, or Jerash or Petra in Jordan, you will be familiar with the sort of remains we saw repeatedly; Ancient Greek and Roman cities so well preserved that you can walk along the streets and explore houses that in many cases just lack a roof.

Before this trip, I thought of the letters in Revelation and from St Paul to places such as Ephesus as being written to 'the Church' and that being the whole community. Far from it! Visiting brought home to me that these were small groups of believers under secular and religious pressure. They were living in big cosmopolitan places, at the crossroads of East and West, with commercial centres, government buildings, theatres, and temples – to the Greek and Roman gods for the peoples' present-day fate, and to the Egyptian deities because the people liked their idea of an afterlife!

In Laodicea, we saw a typical Roman 'peristyle' house, a square of rooms built around a central courtyard; one house among several on that street. Here, however, the dining room had had a curved 'apse' added to make it into a 'house church'. But the room had been converted with minimal and subtle adaptation.



The huge remains of the library at Ephesus. Photo ©JH2022

Clearly these believers wanted to worship together in a dedicated and recognisably Christian space, but to do so discreetly. I think we can be sure their neighbours would mostly have held alternative religious beliefs, and in some places became actively hostile to followers of the Way of Christ.

We were invited to consider that John must have had intimate knowledge of the townscapes and geography around the places to which he addressed the letters in Revelation because they reference features that could (and can still) be identified. Laodicea is a good example of this: ¹⁶ 'So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth' (Rev 3). Above Laodicea on the mountainside are the 'Pamukkale travertines', terraces looking like snow, but actually made from white limestone deposited by thermal springs. The water comes out of the ground at 33-36°C. Here stood the ancient city of Hierapolis, a wellness and healing spa since the 2nd century BC. You can see in the archaeology that Laodicea had a very



Roman pipes and mosaic floor at Laodicea. Photo ©JH2022

extensive Roman network of pipes and drains. By the time the hot spring water has run down from the mountains to Laodicea, it is 'lukewarm and neither cold nor hot' – John's readers are being compared to their own water supply!

Another key concept of our pilgrimage was that of 'living stones'; that pilgrimage should include worship together and encountering today's people of faith in the region. We were

invited to vespers and an audience with the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, and we were welcomed for worship and coffee and excellent homemade cake by the Anglican communities in Izmir and Istanbul.

When we got to Istanbul, we visited Hagia Sophia, Church of the Holy Wisdom. With a chequered history as a Christian, Muslim, and secular museum space, this beautiful Byzantine church is now a mosque once more, with many of the ancient Christian mosaics covered and Christian symbols incorporated into other painted patterns. It was very busy and noisy with simultaneous tours, preaching and prayers. I did not feel threatened at all but was aware of being in the religious minority – ‘constrained’ and conscious to be ‘careful’. It was a valuable and challenging added insight into how it might have felt to be an early follower of Jesus in one of the seven churches of Revelation.



Terraced Roman houses with original wall paintings. Photo ©JH2022

¹² *Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.* (Rev 3)

Jo Hibbard

High Church and Holy Days

When I hear of Holy Days, I automatically think of the branch of Methodism that centres itself around the Communion, meditation and reflective practices, that of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship. There is an excellent article by Martin Wellings (published in 2016 by Cambridge University Press), “*Discipline in Dispute: The Origins and Early History of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship*”, which provides a very good introduction to the Fellowship. In short, it’s more ‘high church’ in its service patterns and dress, and uses a lot of traditional forms of prayer, including the rosary.

There are three forms of rosary – the Orthodox Jesus Prayer Rope, the better known Roman Catholic Rosary, and the Protestant Prayer Beads. The Protestant Prayer Beads were designed in the 1980s, and are used by sacramental Methodists, particularly in America, as a deeply symbolic style of prayer.

The focus is the Cross, reminding us of our salvation through Christ, and it is through the Cross that we can begin and end the prayer. The prayer beads are circular to remind us of the sense of wholeness we gain through a life steeped in prayer.

The contemplative style emphasises the importance of being mindful, and focusing on being in the presence of God, by praying with our minds, bodies, and spirit. The rhythm and tactile nature of the prayer prevents our minds from wandering and increases our inner stillness.

Lines of scripture or short prayers are repeated with each set of four, with silence in between for personal prayer. When Protestant prayer beads are used, each chain of beads may be handled for three complete rotations to symbolise the Trinity. The prayers are often said slowly with pauses where appropriate. The Lord’s Prayer and the Grace are often said when the large invitational bead is handled; and different prayers are said for the handling of the ‘weeks’ beads.

Methodist Prayer Beads have been in the sanctuary at Wesley Memorial (under the candle lighting stand) since Lent, and almost 40 strings have now gone to find a more permanent home, gladly received by candle-lighters!

Libby Hawkness-Smith

The church garden project

The church garden project is beginning to take shape. A small group of us had a planning session early in June to think about the next steps. We would like to be able to make our spaces flexible, somewhere the people who use our premises can sit quietly, and a place to attract insects and other wildlife.

- **Planters and plants:** We have a contact who will make us some free planters. These are going to be on castors so that we can move them around if necessary. In these we will plant herbs (rosemary, sage, mint, allium, chives, thyme and fennel), wild strawberries and lavender. We will also buy some terracotta pots to plant with nasturtiums, calendula, heartsease violas and borage. A member of the congregation has offered to buy an olive tree and perhaps we will get a fig tree too.
- **A growing medium:** A costly part of this project is the purchase of a



growing medium as we want it to be organic and peat-free. We have settled on Melcourt Silvagrow from the Oxford Garden Centre.

- **Seating:** We would like to purchase a backless bench to match the seating already there. This will allow for more flexible seating.
- **Trellis:** We would like to put the window grids (removed from the stained-glass windows) on the wall at the back to grow fragrant flowers against, such as honeysuckle or jasmine.

- **Bug hotel:** A former member of the congregation, an entomologist, is researching 'bug hotels' for us; and a member of the congregation has offered to pay for this.
- **The front garden:** Here we have been thinking of succession planning and some ideas for plants are hellebores, autumn cyclamen, crocuses, and winter aconites. We are investigating how to replace the trellis on the wall.
- **More ideas for the future:** We are thinking about getting a water butt, putting a sedum roof on the storeroom and window boxes on the windowsills.

You are very welcome to join our group or, if you would like to contribute financially to this project, we have a local giving page <https://localgiving.org/charity/wesleymemorialchurch/>

Jo Godfrey

Market merriment

It was a joy to be back face-to-face for this year's Christian Aid Week street market on Saturday 14 May. Volunteers new and old (you know what I mean!) had baked, planted and donated, and then many gathered on the day to sell our wares – huge thanks to all of you. It was a delight to have so many Wesley Memorial customers and also to sell to lots of passers-by, including people enjoying the CD fair in the Hall. The café, the plant stall, the cakes and the books all raised more money than they ever have done since (my) records began, and our total, including

donations on and before the day, and sales of leftovers afterwards, was a staggering £1932.96. Our church collection brought in a further £746 making our grand total a frankly jaw-dropping £2678.96!

This year for the first time we had card-reader devices from Christian Aid meaning we could take card payments, and we also had an online giving page linked to this. For those who like the detail, we raised approximately half of our total in cash

(£1342.43) and half through virtual means (£990 on the online giving page and £346.53 from card payments).

What a wonderful amount to send off to Christian Aid. But also what a lovely way to raise it, spending a day together working hard, sharing smiles and laughs, enjoying a joint endeavour and showing all those passing by that we believe in helping others. It was of course all the more enjoyable for having missed two years due to Covid.

Jenny Ayres



In Zimbabwe, the climate crisis is causing aching hunger for families like Jessica's. Here she is with her 5 children, pictured in the garden where they grow their crops. Christian Aid / David Brazier

The needles of the friends

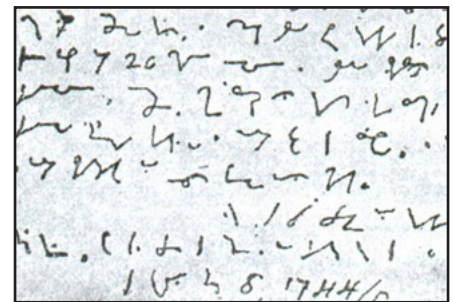
The annual John Wesley Lecture, Oxford, is an event sponsored jointly by Lincoln College, the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, and Wesley Memorial Church.

On Wesley Day, 24 May, Dr Tim Underhill delivered the 2022 Lecture at Lincoln College. His title was “*The Needles of the Friends*”: the Wesleys and Shorthand”. He showed us eighty-six slides (probably a record!) and what he had to say was very engaging.

There were many shorthand systems around in the eighteenth century, but the main technique used by John and Charles Wesley was that developed by the Cambridge-educated John Byrom (1682-1763) of Manchester. Byrom is best known as the writer of the hymn ‘*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn*’, a Christmas 1749 present for his daughter Dolly. The most significant Wesleyan manuscript which uses his shorthand system is John Wesley’s diary, which he kept throughout his life, the later entries evidently being written with a trembling hand.

Why did the Wesleys use shorthand? Dr Underhill suggested four main reasons. First, its speed enabled them to capture conversations more or less verbatim. Second, it helped the brothers to maintain some privacy when writing on personal and family matters: Charles urged Sarah Gwynne ‘Don’t forget your shorthand!’ in a letter written during their engagement. Third, it helped them use their time efficiently: one contemporary estimate was that one page or one hour of writing shorthand equated to six of writing longhand.

A final benefit, which certainly makes sense given what we know of John’s character, was that – in our lecturer’s words – it ‘imposed less physical demand than longhand... using less ink, which means less time in quill cutting and dipping, reducing neck and shoulder strain too.’ As Methodists, we owe a



A page from John Wesley’s diary.

great deal to this feature. It enabled John Wesley to maintain the daily discipline of diary-keeping, charting his extraordinary decades of mission, even when old age brought frailty. And according to the preacher Henry Moore, when inspiration struck Charles while on horseback, even in his late seventies, he would jot down the words of hymns in pencilled shorthand on cards, and then transcribe the full text in ink on to paper upon reaching his destination.

Byrom’s shorthand system is now far less celebrated than that of Isaac Pitman (1813-97), himself a zealous Wesleyan in his youth; but our debt to him is beyond measure.

Clive Norris, Oxford Brookes University



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

**Deadline for the next issue:
28 October 2022**

Celebrations!

Margaret Crow and Helen Paige both celebrated their 90th birthdays recently. Congratulations to you both!

Margaret

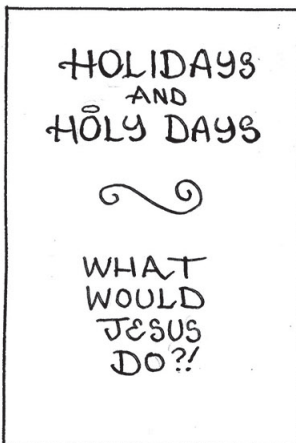


Helen

And congratulations also to
Nia and Cecily on their
engagement. We wish them
well for their future life
together in Cambridge.



WESLEY MEMBRAIN



JIM