

Wesley Memorial *magazine*

from Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Oxford

Spring 2023



New life!

The further adventures...

From death to new life

A few weeks ago we embarked upon a journey that would complete a promise to my old Dad before he died. My brother and our families climbed aboard a minibus and drove the 500 miles from Birmingham to the town of Dronten in the Netherlands. We carried half of Dad's ashes with us. We had already scattered the other half where my mother's ashes had been scattered 10 years ago, near a small river in Warwickshire at a place we used to visit for picnics and fishing when we were children. He was to make his final journey in the company of those who loved him. In truth, his last journey began in 1978 when he and our Mum made their first journey to the town that was to become



Peter and his Dad in 2022, on Ron's 43rd and last visit to Dronten

their second home. Every year for the whole of my adult life, they made their annual pilgrimage to remember another generation who died in conflict. I have been reminded that the time between their first visit in 1978 and the end of the second world war, 33 years, is less than the time from their first visit to now, 45 years! Time really does fly.

As well as our children, we also had our youngest family member with us, my brother's grandson. He's three years old. His excitement was focused on "I'm going on a big ship, uncle Peter". We had decided to take the ferry from Dover to Calais so that he could add another form of transport to his list. He loves vehicles and machines of all kinds. He also loves dinosaurs and cats and dogs and his great-granddad. Ninety-four years between them, and yet they had a special relationship. Young and old bonding over a love of toast, and jelly. As we approached the ferry he became fearful and didn't want to board. Real tears representing all the tears of those who fear new experiences, the unknown challenges of life to come. He overcame his fears and we got aboard. By the time we reached the port of Calais, he was deeply upset that we were having to disembark! He wanted to stay on the big ship that, an hour or so before, he didn't want to get on!

A micro-metaphor for life. We are fearful of that which is to come. In journeying through our fears, we discover things aren't as bad as we expected. More than that, we find ourselves in love with our experiences. So much so that the memories stay with us forever.

We scattered Dad's ashes in ground that was still sea in the 1940s. Land yet to be reclaimed from the water. Land that would give new life to thousands. Land that now grows food and tulips. Land that holds towns and industry and transport and commerce and homes. So much new life!

The trip all went as planned. Dad would be pleased to know that we have completed his life's journey. We read part of the Gospel of John. Chapter 14 has always been one of the most intimate parts of Scripture. Jesus is calming his disciples' fears about death, specifically his impending death. Jerusalem and the Cross awaited. Jesus knew that he was certain to

be arrested, probably beaten and killed. He knew he had disturbed those powerful rulers of the land so much that the only response left to them, in their ignorance and fear, would be to kill him. He offers words of comfort to those who would face death with him. They would run out of fear. They would desert him at the very moment he loved them most. In their fears of death to come, Jesus sits them down and comforts them. With words that are easy to understand, in simple theology, he gives them hope. "I'm going ahead of you", he says, "to prepare a place for you to be, a home, a room. And when your time to die comes, I shall come for you, and accompany you through the pain and loss of the dying time into the new life of heaven. I shall take you to the room I have prepared for you."

There is comfort and hope in his words. We will all find a new home and new life in the gift of the Servant King who goes ahead of us and all people, to make our place ready for us.

I know my Dad rests in peace. I know he lived a long, long life. I was with him when he died, and I know Jesus is with him in his death. Dad has two final resting places. Both were important to him in his life. We gave thanks for him and the gift of all those who gave us life. At Eastertide we give thanks to Jesus who gives us a new life that transcends all time and place.

May God grant you, and those you love and care for, joy and peace this Easter.

Peter



The memorial plaque



The memorials



Scattering the ashes

Editorial

It is always difficult to write the Editorial for the Easter issue of our magazine. Christmas is fine because Advent is a waiting time, but it holds us in joyful expectation. Summer presents no problem either, since we are all, more or less, looking forward to a holiday. However, in March we are not yet in the middle of Lent, still thinking of penitence and quiet meditation.

But we know that when you read the magazine, it will be Eastertide, the season when the Church universal sets no limits to rejoicing. Wesley Memorial, bedecked with flowers, will resound to strains of 'Thine be the glory' and 'This joyful Eastertide'; and children's faces will show evidence of breakfast chocolate eggs!

So we offer you Lenten thoughts, good news, sad news, happy tidings and a mixture of all, in the run-up to the great festival, and wish you all the comfort, blessings and joy of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

The Editorial Team

March 2023



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Notes from the Church Council February 2023

Church Council met on 9 February 2023 on Zoom. The following key points were raised:

- The Refugee family we are sponsoring is expected to arrive on 23 March 2023.
- The Warm Hub continues and has been appreciated. The Council recognised this as a valuable aspect of Wesley Memorial's ministry.
- Members were encouraged by the financial report and very grateful for the increase in congregational giving. Lettings income has also increased.
- Both the Church and Circuit Eco-Groups are going well. An energy consultant had met with a group at Wesley Mem to look specifically at the church's heating system and give advice on energy saving.
- Work on updating the AV-PA continues with thanks to Frank Vreede for all the time and effort he is putting into building a more comprehensive and manageable system.
- Members were encouraged to hear that the *Everyone an Evangelist* groups are going well.
- Members were delighted to learn that the Westminster College Oxford Trust has given Wesley Memorial a very generous grant of £127,750.
- The Annual Church Meeting will take place after worship on Sunday 7 May 2023.

Janet Forsaith, Church Council Secretary

Love unknown

Little Henny is too small to appear in a modern road atlas,
and it was no bigger when, in 1662, the young vicar was
driven out of his Essex living by the parishioners.

Looking for solace, Samuel Crossman was reading George
Herbert, and in the very long poem 'The Sacrifice,' he found
after each verse the refrain, 'Was ever grief like mine?'. He
was so struck by this phrase that in 1664 he wrote a poem of
his own about the cruelty of the world — humanity's ability to
turn on what is good and right — and the love which overrides this.
This poem he included in his book *The Young Man's Meditation*.

In 1925 the church musician and music arranger Geoffrey
Shaw invited a friend, the composer John Ireland, out to
lunch. Halfway through the meal he handed his guest a folded
paper, saying, 'I need a tune for this lovely poem.'

Ireland read it through a couple of times and then started
writing on the back of his menu. When he'd finished, he
handed it over, saying, 'Here is your tune.' Thus 'My song is
love unknown' was set to the tune *Love unknown*.

(As told by Ronald Blythe in his book:
Next to Nature, A Lifetime in the English Countryside)

David Bull

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

He came from his blest throne
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O, my Friend,
my Friend indeed,
who at my need
his life did spend!

Sometimes they strew His way,
and His sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!'
is all their breath,
and for His death
they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
to suffering goes,
that He His foes
from thence might free.

In life no house, no home
my Lord on earth might have;
in death no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing:
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like Thine!
This is my Friend,
in Whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

Life out of Death

I recently went to St John's Church, Notting Hill for the launch of a charity exhibition of Ukrainian Icons on Ammunition Boxes, curated by Yana Bobrova, Executive Director of the Ukrainian charity 'Peli can live' and Foundation Chair of the Rotary Club 'Kyiv Capital'. The exhibition will remain on display from 22 February until 4 June. It has already been shown at the University Church in Oxford to great acclaim, curated by The Revd Charlotte Bannister-Parker.

These Christian icons, painted onto the lids of wooden ammunition crates discarded in the Russian war against Ukraine, are the creation of two artists, Oleksandr Klymenko and his wife Sofia Atlantova. The artists have travelled the length and breadth of Ukraine, to bombed-out homes and devastated landscapes. Oleksandr says that this project is 'not primarily about icons, nor about war; it is primarily about humanity'.

The icons are painted in a unique style, some directly onto the wooden boards, without a layer of gesso, some on a background of camouflage fabric, and some using actual rubble, ash, and clay as pigment. Those painted without gesso have a mysterious quality, as though emerging from inside the wood itself. The camouflage backgrounds emphasize the transformational aspect of these icons. They are all extraordinarily moving.

As Sofia Atlantova says:

One of the important aspects for me is that this icon, showing a real box of real ammunition, affirms the reality of this war. For many (those who are far from the front line), the war unwittingly turns into a picture in the news. The boxes that came from the war zone are witnesses of real battles, each of them fought. Also, for me personally, writing an icon on the ammo boxes is a kind of act of awareness of what is happening and, at the same time, a reminder to myself that faith, mercy, beauty, humanity continue to exist despite everything. The charity component of the project is a unique opportunity for me to feel useful and help those who need help the most. For me, this project is about hope despite despair, about the victory of life over death.

Yana Bobrova writes:

The selection presents various icons, mostly oriented to the Byzantine tradition. The works are made in the traditional technique of tempera painting. It is unusual to use a board for the background which is not covered with a layer of gesso. Thus, the board becomes not just a material on which the icon is made, but a full-fledged part of the image. Half of the icons represent the Mother of God. This reminds us of the theme of maternal grief, which, unfortunately, is too much in Ukraine now. The theme of motherhood sharpens and illustrates the main idea of the project - the victory of life over death. Visitors to the launch also had a chance to observe the Mariupol Deisis, which is represented by eleven icons. In the picture they are standing in front of the artists' village workshop, which is located 100 km from Kyiv. All of them were painted in March-April 2022 during the active phase of the defence of Mariupol, as a prayer for the opening. At the bottom of each icon you may see the views from Mariupol.

Ambulance appeal

Proceeds from the sale of icons will go to the UK registered charity, British-Ukrainian Aid (BUA), to purchase ambulances and support the work of a new mobile hospital, to be named 'Apostle Luke on the Front Line' that will care for civilian and military war casualties.

Yana Bobrova said:

The exhibition is very important for me, as it is also dedicated to my twenty-two-year-old colleague Semen Oblomei who was killed in Siverodonetsk, defending Ukraine. Our Organization Committee believes that our fundraising campaign will save lives. Some people can do this through the purchase of icons, but some cannot afford this, so we have set up a JustGiving page for those who would like to support the project. Please follow the link: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/iconsonammunitionboxes>

Joanna Tulloch



St Panteleimon, Healer and Martyr



Mother of God of the Passion



Mariupol Deisis

Sometimes it seems so strange to say
That God would choose to work with clay,
That he would craft such little things
From such a fragile, brittle means.
Yet he finds dance within the art
Of shaping each and every part,
And he delights his work to see:
Its lively curves and symmetry.

He does not fear a crack or break
Be it by malice or mistake,
For he who formed our feeble frame,
The LORD Almighty is his name.
He holds and mends and tends his wares
Till all his love and strength is theirs.



This poem was one of 12 in a series inspired by Hebrew verbs. The are also available online, where I blog under my pen name of Christine: <https://wp.me/PcrWaA-nu>
Esther Woollgar

Through water and the Holy Spirit

With its seasonal message of new life and the assurance of the resurrection, it is perhaps no surprise that Easter was the time for baptism in the early Church. Whole households might be baptised; old and young, masters and servants. In Methodism, as in many other denominations and especially those who baptise infants, baptisms can take place at any time of the year.

Sadly, for many churches, they are not as frequent an occurrence as they once were. It was therefore a particular joy to be able to make our promises at Talav's recent baptism and receive him into membership, on the same occasion. I was very interested that he agreed to be baptised by having a quantity of water poured over his head and body! This choice was not as unusual in British Methodism as we might think.

My post of Mission and Heritage Officer and my stint on the Connexional Methodist Heritage Committee have both now come to an end. As a result, I have been encouraged to follow up with some related research and am focussing on this relatively overlooked sacrament.

Although baptism has been studied and written about from a ministerial point of view, there seems to have been less attention paid to the objects and the lay practices involved. I am talking about the baptismal fonts themselves, but also cradle roll work, cradle roll posters and cards, baptismal certificates, christening clothing, candles and other gifts etc. I think we tend to overlook this because it used to be so familiar to us. Memories of our children's baptisms fade into the blur of sleeplessness and wonder that is the lot of parents of young children. Life moves on.

In an age when most people will probably visualise a computer-generated typeface rather than a water bowl when the word 'font' is mentioned, it is surely a good idea to record and reflect on practices which are familiar are to us, but unknown to many.

One element of my research is to gain an overview of the types of baptismal fonts 'out there' in Methodism, whether old or new, large or small, mass-produced or one-offs, and you could help me with this. Do you have friends or relatives who worship in Methodist Churches around the country whom you could ask to photograph their font? If you do, please feel free to share my email address with them. (Libby Hawkness-Smith has been fantastic in sending me pictures of nearly all the fonts in the Abingdon and Wantage Circuit – so I already have photographs of these.)

Do you know of any churches who have reordered their worship space or decided to close and have struggled to know what to do with their font? Despite the large number of objects in our four Connexional museums, there are very few fonts. I am keen to see good examples transferred (especially table-top ones), so that they can be conserved, interpreted and on view to the public.

Do you have anything at home related to your own baptism? For example, some time ago Wendy Spray was kind enough to show me her cradle roll certificate. In some ways she was rather annoyed by it! Find out why at:
<https://www.wesleysoxford.org.uk/topics/youth-work/cradle-roll-certificate>

The output from my research, at this stage, might be a talk, a paper or even a booklet. Many interesting issues and intriguing possibilities are being raised already, so I feel I am on a worthwhile quest. I am excited by what is ahead of me. Please feel free to grab me for a baptism-related conversation at any point!

Email me: alison.butlerATwesleymem.org.uk



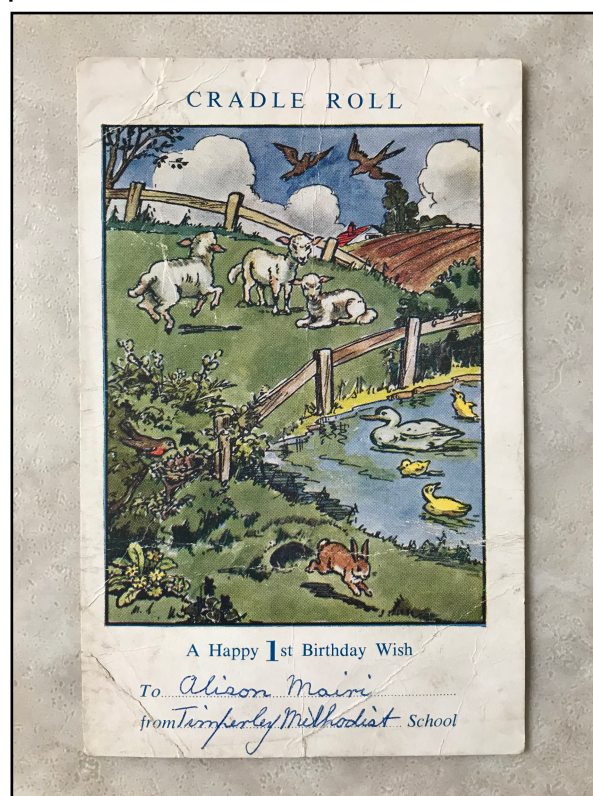
Wesley Memorial's Cradle Roll 1928 - 1934!



Wesley Memorial's baptismal font



The font at Kidlington Methodist Church



Alison's Cradle Roll 1st Birthday card

Lent, Easter and Liberation

For the past 25 years I have undertaken scholarly work in Britain as a Black liberation theologian. Black theology, in which I have specialised, is the radical re-thinking of the meaning of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, when imagined through the lens of Black suffering and marginalisation. The so-called 'Founding Father' of this intellectual movement was an African-American scholar named James H. Cone. In 1969 Cone wrote the first self-declared Black theology text, entitled *Black Theology and Black Power*. This book has given rise to the ongoing development of this intellectual movement, with scholars writing from as far afield as Australasia, the Pacific, India, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America.

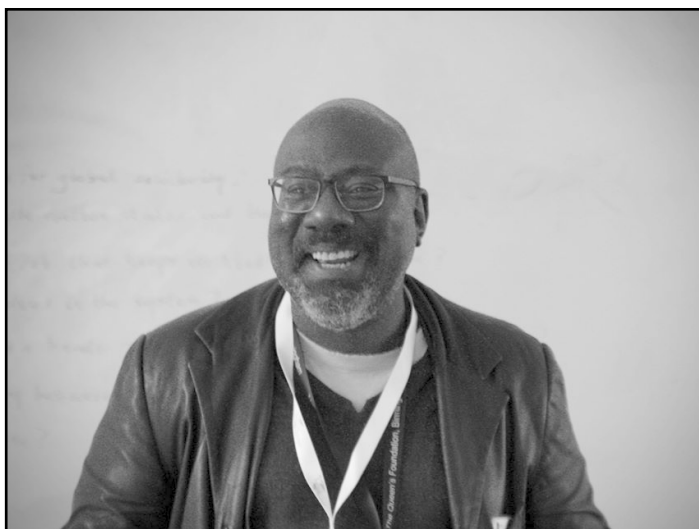
As we approach the season of Lent and then Easter, I am reminded that much of my research work is very much inspired by the radicalism of Jesus, whose resistance to Roman occupation, in support of poor, ordinary people on the margins, was seeking to speak truth to the power of the political establishment of his day. We can see this in Jesus' encounter with the moneychangers in the temple (Matthew 21:12-13 and Mark 11:15-18), when his 'righteous anger' sees him railing against what was effectively the central treasury of his day, the equivalent of the economic heart of an occupied and colonised community. Jesus' opposition to the vested interests of the religious authority in Jerusalem and their collusion with Roman imperialism can be seen in his teachings to his followers. He counsels his followers not to lord it over others, but to make love their central ethic, and not the inflexibility of the Jewish law or the violence and the love of power exerted by the Romans. (John 13:31-34)

As a Black liberation theologian, I see Jesus' execution by the Romans not as simply a spiritual necessity to secure salvation, as is often asserted by traditional Christian teaching, but rather, the inevitable consequence of speaking truth to power. In *The Cross And the Lynching Tree* published in 2011, James Cone outlined the theological significance of the cross and how its symbolic importance, like much else in mainstream, White theological scholarship, had been distorted and disregarded by white people with power. In

one arresting section, Cone gives vivid descriptions on the nature of lynching in the American South in the early 20th century, juxtaposing that with the analysis of Church historians and biblical scholars on the nature of crucifixion and its impact on the body politic of colonial regimes in the ancient Near East. The point Cone was making was that these two grisly forms of torture were synonymous. Both were not about simply killing people. Human nature has sadly accrued efficient means of simply disposing of 'undesirables'. The Cross, like the lynching tree, as I will demonstrate shortly, is not about simply killing people. It is about humiliation and subjugation. As Cone demonstrates, the cross and the lynching tree are joined by virtue of their symbolic association with the machinations of White supremacy.

In Cone's early theological work, he demonstrates how Jesus' identity, and his ministry and message are all intertwined. The identity as an oppressed, colonised Jewish man, gives rise to his message and mission, from which the inevitable consequences of his death arise. Cone outlines the grim similarities between the 'spectacle' of lynching in the US, between particularly, the peak years 1880 and 1940, and the 'spectacle' of Jesus' crucifixion at the heart of the occupying Roman forces. Both entities are about brutal colonial power imposing its vicious and evil will on those who are the colonised and oppressed, seeking to ensure complete subservience and compliance from the latter.

The fact that, in both cases, death comes as a merciful relief after days of unrelenting terror and unimagined pain, is entirely the point. As I have often said in many classrooms (and more recently via a computer screen on Zoom or Microsoft Teams), if one wants to kill someone, human beings are remarkably adept at doing this with great efficiency. In Jesus' day, a spear thrust into the chest of an opponent or enemy would pretty much ensure instant death for that recipient, and in the peak years of lynching, a gunshot to the head would achieve the same result. If death is the sole point, then crucifixion and lynching are slow and convoluted machinery for killing people.



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As Cone demonstrates, however, in this amazingly brutal and brilliant book, the essential point of both modes of killing is *not simply to kill the body, but more importantly, to crush the spirit and the soul*. The importance of Cone's searing analysis lies not solely in his identification with the literal lynching of Black bodies in White supremacist America, but in all the incidences of futile Black deaths in white majority countries. Jesus died in solidarity with all those who are 'crucified' by racist systems of power. In the UK context, there is the historic death of a British Nigerian man who was "hounded to his death" by police in Leeds and who was finally remembered with a plaque in the city, over 50 years after his death. David Oluwale was last seen fleeing two police officers on 18 April 1969 and was later found drowned in the River Aire. On one of the charge sheets, when asked for his nationality, the police had simply written the word "Wog".

1969 is a lifetime ago and in many respects, Britain is a different and, for many of us, a better country in 2023. And yet the scourge of systemic racism is still with us, even though we have a Conservative Party front bench that is the most diverse in history. Racism has not disappeared. It has quietly retreated into the shadows all the time being, stoked by right-wing 'culture war' reactionaries. In the words of Katie Cannon, one of the architects of Womanist Theology (the Black female equivalent of Black theology): 'When entitlement is the norm, equality feels like a defeat.' We, as a nation, still have a long way to go before we reach the hope of the 'Beloved Community' of which Martin Luther King Jr spoke.

Anthony Reddie

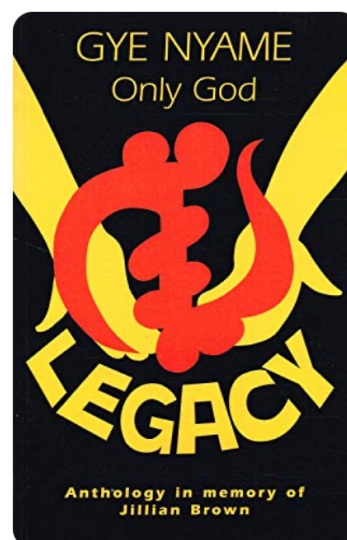
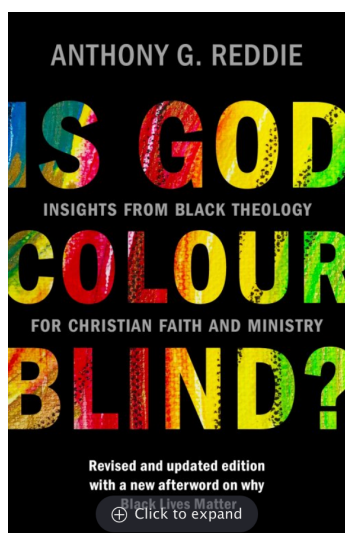
Professor Anthony Reddie is the Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture, in Regent's Park College, University of Oxford. He is also a Professor Extraordinarius with the University of South Africa.

Notes:

I have written an introduction to James Cone and his intellectual legacy. See Anthony G. Reddie *Introducing James H. Cone*, SCM press, 2022

For further details on the life and death of David Oluwale see the following link: [Remember Oluwale](#)

See the following blog for my analysis of the false claims of progress as indicated by the increased diversity of the Conservative Party front bench. [Anthony Reddie: Similar](#)



Easter Colours

Green is the Easter colour of this place—
green liberally interspersed with yellow.
Light falls on moss, which carpets stone
and bough and roof-tiles, all in their own pattern.
And the softened boulders shelter the primroses
and trade light with the daffodils.
The slightest crack is infused with life—
no dark crevice is without its growing,
for in the moss itself tiny plantlets
are pushing up and testing out the weather.

Snow fell this morning, but you wouldn't know it now
as blue, grey, white compete with the flashing sun
to dazzle and be-dapple the moving sky,
to find the emeralds in the vegetation.
What is not green, not yellow, is the brown
of many different trees in the Caer Martin,
but even these are borrowing the yellow
of the sun's rays and the green
of algae creeping along their swaying branches.

I tried to take a picture of this wonder
but never could quite capture what the light was like
as it transfused a leaf and illuminated moss,
turning it to a fairy wood in miniature.
Maybe it is the movement of the light,
the changing kaleidoscope of colour
that I wanted to take down, and failed.
For a photo is static and the moment it records
is no real counterpart of the living second,
leading from the last, beckoning to the next,
swept up on the breeze and scattered into memory.

But one thing is clear, and that is that life
is breathing into nature all its vigour.
Despite the morning's snow, winter is gone
now, and green-green-yellow grows the springtime.

Joanna Tulloch



This poem was written about the Easter that Joanna spent at Tymawr Convent in South Wales some years ago.

She also painted the watercolour there.

Interviewing Talav

Talav Bhimnathwala was baptised and confirmed in Wesley Memorial on 15 January 2023, in our Annual Covenant service, to general rejoicing.

Kate: Talav, your background is obviously Indian. How did your parents come to be in the USA?

Talav: I think my father went to the USA in the early 1990s, for a job. My mother meanwhile got a job in Wales, Cardiff I believe. But they didn't know each other at that time.

Kate: Did they meet in India? Was it done traditionally?

Talav: Yes, in India I believe. It wasn't entirely traditional, but I think they looked at the astrological charts.

Kate: And did you have any religious upbringing?

Talav: No, not at all, The family must have been Hindu in the past, but my parents were relatively non-religious.

Kate: How did you become interested in the Christian faith?

Talav: When I was about 12 or 13, I watched a series on the TV – the History Channel – about the Bible. I didn't do anything more at the time, but I thought some of it was pretty cool: the stuff about friendship and community. And love. When I came to Oxford, I met my friend who is a Roman Catholic. He was keen to introduce me to more of the faith – no doubt with a view to making a good Catholic of me – so we went to many college chapel services. The music experience, saying the Creed, or the bits of it I could say at the time, and hearing the Bible, seemed to draw me in. Gradually I found myself happy to say the whole Creed, and wanting to partake in the Eucharist.

Kate: Yet you didn't find an Open Table there?

Talav: No, not until I discovered Methodism. But it didn't feel right, and I decided I would ask for Baptism first.

Kate: How did you discover us at Wesley Memorial?

Talav: I looked on Wikipedia! I couldn't entertain a church that refused to ordain women, nor one that excludes gay couples from elements of its life. Transubstantiation was a sticking point too! So I looked for something more in harmony with my thoughts. Calvinism? No! Lutheranism? No! But Methodism? Yes, that looked possible. So I came to Wesley Memorial. I met Peter who explained Baptism as a gift from God, after which the rest follows. I thought that was a beautiful way to see it.

Kate: And were you very nervous at your Baptism?



Talav: I had a whole complex mix of emotions on the day, laughing and crying at the same time.

It was wonderful!

Kate: It was! And where did you learn all the hymns that you seem to know so well?

Talav: I guess it was in the various college chapels. I love music and found I could pick up the tunes quite well by verse 3 or 4!

Kate: How did you come to be in Oxford for your study in the first place?

Talav: I did my undergraduate degree in Economics here at St John's College, and then progressed to the M.Phil.

Kate: What do you see for your future, with your two Oxford Degrees?

Talav: I had thought I'd be an academic, and go straight on to do a D Phil, but now I'm not sure about that. My skill area is more microeconomics, the statistical side, than the big-picture macroeconomics. Maybe I'll look for a job for a few years, and then think again.

Kate: Would that be here or in the USA?

Talav: Maybe London. I grew up in a typical American suburb where there is absolutely nothing to do. And if you don't have a car, you simply cannot get to any centres of activity. And you can't walk anywhere! What I loved about Oxford, when I came, was being able to walk everywhere: to just step out of St John's, and walk to any of the places I want to go!

Kate: Well, it's been lovely talking to you, and wherever your journey takes you next, we wish you all the very best; our love goes with you.

Kate Dobson

New Creations!

There is a room in Wesley Mem, hidden away up the stairs in the old organ loft, which has had several names. It has been known as the Layworkers' Office and the Upper Room but I like to call it the 'Room of Possibilities'! It is a messy space (and I do promise to try to keep that messiness under control), but it is also full of creative possibilities.

At the moment a cardboard tree is being constructed by Rob for the new display in the glass cabinet near the hall and so that sits in there. There is also a whole shelf full of knitted banners, wool and items to be distributed created by the knitting group, who also happen to be knitting leaves for the cardboard tree.

In the big wooden cupboard, we have painting materials ready to be used by visitors to the Creative Craft group which works alongside the knitting group on a Tuesday morning. There are percussion instruments and ukuleles which are used at Rainbow House for our nursery rhyme sessions, and these have been a great resource in connecting with the children and families there. We had a spin-off eco-craft session during the February half-term, which was attended by quite a few Rainbow House families. This is definitely

Boxes of costumes are housed in the shelving too. These will no doubt be very useful when we get serious about rehearsing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* with the children after Easter. I'm thinking about how we'll stage some of the scenes, and looking forward to some fun prop-making.

Renaming the room started as a joke but it is amazing how a positive new name can change your outlook. I am excited about the possibilities ahead.

I have more tidying to do again, but as I sort through the room I like to reflect on how our God is the ultimate creative source and can see opportunities and potential even in the messiest situations. Hallelujah!

Junior Church Council

Last year the children decided they would like their own Junior Church Council, modelled on Church Council but a bit shorter and with biscuits! At our most recent meeting in January, I was able to report that an anonymous donor has kindly made a very generous



something for us to develop in our future planning.

The room also holds plenty of useful resources for Junior Church sessions. As well as lots of games and craft items, the Red Sea, a stable and a star can also be found there! I have the pictures drawn by Anna, a friend and regular visitor to Open Church. We will display some of these in our Art Weeks Exhibition in May. When asked to give a title to our exhibition (which we'd love you to contribute to!), we chose 'Special Places, Holy Spaces'. We hope to include artwork, photos and crafts from congregation members, regular visitors and some of our premises partners' members such as Phab, Cruse and Citizens Advice.

donation to Wesley Memorial's Youth work; and I asked the children for their ideas about what we could do with some of the money. Suggestions ranged from a biscuit fund to international travel. We will keep thinking, but at least one of those ideas is doable.

The thing we did settle on, in fact, is a sleepover at church later in the year. Everyone was very keen on it. And as hinted earlier, we are looking forward to our production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* in early June. Watch this space!

Mel McCulloch

To everything there is a season...

Way back in the 1980s, Derek Rawson began turning up at church on Sundays with carrier bags of 'Campaign Coffee'. It tasted terrible but we were persuaded to buy it because it was for a good cause – a new-fangled fringe movement called 'Fairtrade'. We also started to hear of a pioneering company called Traidcraft which was introducing other fair trade commodities to the UK market (including, fortunately, better-tasting coffee) with the simple but powerful strap-line 'Fighting poverty through trade'.

In 1990 we started our own weekly Traidcraft stall after Sunday services, storing the products in a couple of cardboard boxes in the organ loft. I remember feeling very nervous as I put in our first order for £100 of stock, wondering if we could ever shift that quantity. But the congregation rallied (of course!) to support this new venture and the Sunday stall flourished, while the range and quality of goods increased steadily.

Fast forward ten years, and growth slowed. We'd reached the upper limit of how much muesli and chocolate even our obliging Wesley Mem customers could consume; what we needed now was a proper shop in place of cardboard boxes. It turned out that Fairtraders in other churches had reached a similar stage, and six of us were serendipitously introduced to each other. Starting out in total ignorance, we registered ourselves as a co-operative and arranged to rent the basement of St Michael's Church on Cornmarket. And in October 2003 'Fairtrade at St Michael's' was born.

From modest beginnings the shop rapidly grew and thrived and earned itself a reputation as an Aladdin's Cave tucked away in the heart of the city. For twenty years customers have been thrilled by our colourful range of high quality, beautiful, unusual goods and by the inspiring stories of the people who produce them. Our total turnover is now approaching three million pounds; from our small profits we have donated £65,000 to fair trade projects worldwide.

At the time the shop opened, the wider 'fair trade movement' was gathering pace and enjoying a surge of public awareness and popularity. The number of products

carrying the Fairtrade mark increased at a breath-taking rate and, to great fanfare, the first few started to appear in supermarkets; now they are commonly found in all sorts of mainstream outlets. This was always the 'holy grail' for campaigners, and represents a major achievement.

But as fair trade has become more widespread and 'everyday', something of the original excitement and momentum has inevitably got lost. Other pressing issues like climate change and the environment have taken its place at the top of the public agenda. And recent years have confronted us with a series of challenges entirely beyond our control. The Covid pandemic has had a long-term effect on city centre footfall and accelerated the switch to online shopping; Brexit, and the war in Ukraine, have impacted supply chains; inflation and the cost-of-living crisis have hit retailers and consumers alike. Within Oxford, the Westgate Centre draws customers away from an increasingly drab Cornmarket, and the proposed new traffic restrictions are likely to further deter shoppers from coming into town.

The shop team has poured time and imagination and energy into devising ways to increase our footfall and our sales. But despite all these efforts, it's become clear that we are on a downward financial trajectory with little chance of getting back to profitability. We have decided, with the deepest regret, that it's time to close while we still have sufficient funds to meet all our obligations and 'end well'. So just after Easter, on Saturday 15 April, Fairtrade at St Michael's will shut its doors for the last time.

There will, of course, be a huge sense of loss – but as Anthony Buckley, the wonderfully supportive vicar of St Michael's, has said to us, 'the Lord moves in seasons'. Perhaps the shop's twenty-year season is ending now because it has achieved what was needed at this time. Perhaps God is pointing towards a new season and new ways of fighting the manifold injustices of world trade. And Wesley Memorial is still a Fairtrade Church! – so perhaps he's trusting us to keep the fair trade flag flying.

Clare Matthews

Calling Christian postgraduate students!



What does it mean to be a Christian and a postgraduate student? How does one engage faith with research? And how do we set about the pursuit of truth in an academic setting? These were some of the central questions discussed at a weekend-long ‘Christianity and the Life of the Mind’ conference which two of our doctoral students attended in January at Jesus College’s Ship Street Conference Centre. Sponsored by the organization ‘Developing a Christian Mind Oxford’ (DCMOxford), the conference brings together doctoral students, professors, and researchers to consider how Christians navigate their faith and academic life. Researchers from a variety of disciplines presented on a range of topics.

Theoretical physicist Ard Louis spoke about the God-given calling of Christian postgraduate students – a call to Oxford, the life of the mind, and ‘much more’. Theologian-philosopher-sociologist Elaine Storkey and her talk ‘What does it mean to be human?’ offered a Christian perspective on dominant ideas in the social sciences. Attendees enjoyed gracious hospitality in the homes of Oxford academics over an evening meal, as well as spirited conversations throughout the conference in breakout groups with other postgraduate students.

For myself, a doctoral student in education, the highlight of the conference was Donald Hay’s opening lecture. Professor Hay offered four wise points: ‘Don’t lead a divided life of the mind. Make an effort to engage with a Christian worldview. Be alert to the agendas of your discipline. Remember that things are rarely value-neutral.’ His lecture challenged me to work out the theology of my research. How does my doctoral project contribute to human flourishing and bringing about God’s kingdom here on earth? I hope by the next conference, I will have made progress towards thinking through a Christian worldview of my work.’



Yanie Tayipto, a doctoral student in immunology, had this to say about her experience: ‘As implied by its title, the conference has challenged me to develop my Christian mind. I was reminded that while I have striven to grow in expertise related to my field, I stopped developing my Christian mind many years ago. I have also been encouraged by the life stories that the speakers shared, about their calling and challenges of being a Christian in academia. I hope I will continue growing in faith with courage and humility.’

DCM Oxford holds two conferences each year for University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes postgraduates, postdocs, and academic staff. The first conference this year took a broad approach to Christianity and academia; it occurred in the second week of Hilary Term. The second conference will focus on specific academic areas, in ninth week, following the end of Hilary Term. To learn more about the conferences, resources for Christian postgraduates, and ways you can support DCM Oxford’s work, please visit dcmoxford.org

Shelby Knighten

Ian Maxwell Leck

14 February 1931 — 6 November 2022



Ian, by his children

Ian Maxwell Leck was born in Coventry on Valentine's Day in 1931. His own dad, Arthur, was a Methodist Minister, and his mum, Margaret, was equally active within the church family. Dad went to school in Bath, before going on to study medicine at the University of Birmingham. In addition to various other qualifications, he went on to become a Doctor of Philosophy and a Doctor of Science.

Dad graduated from Birmingham in 1954 and began his working life as a houseman at Walsall Hospital. This was also the year that he became a Methodist Local Preacher. He did his National Service between 1955 and 1957 and started as a Lieutenant before being promoted to Captain in command of the Medical Reception Station at the Chilwell Garrison, near Nottingham. It was during this time that his dad, Arthur, sadly died. Soon afterwards, he met our mum, Ann, while attending a Local Preachers' conference at Pembury, where she, in her college vacation, was helping prepare and serve meals.

Mum and dad married in 1959. Their first home was in accommodation owned by Birmingham University as dad had started working there as a research fellow, before becoming a lecturer in the Department of Social Medicine. Over the next seven years, mum and dad had us four children; they have loved and supported us throughout our lives. They moved to Cheam in Surrey, which is when dad set up a new department at University College Hospital, London, then moving in 1971 to Heaton Moor in Stockport. There he was on the staff of Manchester University, working first as a Reader and Honorary Medical Director, before becoming a Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine.

Their final move was in 1992 following dad's retirement from full-time work, and that was when they settled down in Woodstock. Despite being technically in retirement, dad was awarded the title of emeritus professor and continued with some academic work, as well as being secretary of the Woodstock Churches Together and also the Churches Together in Oxfordshire. He continued in his role as a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church; indeed, dad didn't stop preaching until last year, so he did this for 68 years! He continued to be as eloquent as ever right up to, and including, his last sermon.

The Christian faith and its expression through the Methodist church were a core part of dad and the man he was throughout his life, but he also always had a deep interest in, and respect for, all other faiths and everyone's right to their own personal interpretations of God. It was love and acceptance rather than a specific doctrine that lay at the heart of everything he did, said and believed.

Sue, Chris, Patsy and Jon

John Dixon Walsh

4 September 1927 – 3 November 2022

Here are some extracts from the Tribute paid by John's son James, at the funeral in Wesley Memorial, 12 October 2022.

As we grew up, we came to realise that he was a true and formidable scholar, with an international reputation, who inspired generations of historians with his writing and his teaching. He believed that ideas and knowledge should be shared, rather than hoarded jealously. He wanted to bring people together in discussion and friendship, in College, in his seminars, in the old catalogue room in the Bodleian Library, or on his travels. He was also more than an academic and tutor. He took a keen interest in college life and was highly supportive of all members at Jesus College. For him there was no division between work and home. At home he didn't have a study, so he was right among us in the family hurly-burly as he read theses on the sofa, prepared the next day's tutorials, or marked the books which poured into the house, many of them dedicated to him. Or he would look through the notecards, illegible to everyone but himself, which he kept in old shoeboxes, and from which his best ideas would spring.

His strong religious faith was deep and permeated him. He had a strong moral compass and a belief that everyone was equal before God. This played out in the rest of his life. He was a terrific grandpa to his seven grandchildren, taking a genuine interest and pride in all they did. He was always happy to play cricket or badminton on the lawn, share his liquorice allsorts, read them stories or offer wise advice as they got older. As a father he was unstintingly supportive, non-judgemental, approachable, intrinsically kind and always loving. He let us freely follow our own paths and only wanted to know that we were happy.

He also had a great interest in so many things which kept him fresh and young in attitude. He had a lifelong and genuine interest in people, was completely 'un-snobby', and could (and did) engage with anyone and everyone.

His gift for story telling was one of his ways to connect with others. Who could forget his anecdotes of many near-death experiences? These included: having a wall collapse on him; saving his friend in a terrible rock climbing accident; trying to rescue climbers benighted on mountain tops; and nearly being abducted by monkeys in a ruined Indian palace as a child.

Our Dad had a great and profound love of nature. He adored the countryside and mountains particularly in Scotland and the Alps. He could identify an impressive range of plants, butterflies and birds although he carried this knowledge lightly.

In his years in Oxford, he would unwind in his garden and allotment which he tended with great care. He loved to harvest sloes and blackberries, apples and plums. The annual hunt for a cuckoo featured large in his later years. The various animals that lived in the garden including birds, foxes and the odd badger were extremely well looked after.

He always used to say how grateful he was to have wonderful family and friends, and how much he was blessed by a very long and happy marriage to our mother Frances. We are so grateful that he died peacefully in a loving environment at home. It seems fitting that his charmed, lucky life ended aged 95 years and 60 days, in his own home, holding my mother's hand. He often liked to slip out quietly, and so he did one last time.

We are so thankful to have received his love and support, shared his humour, and had the sheer joy of him in our lives. Life will be much duller without him.

James Walsh



Pictures of John from the service sheet, 12 October 2023

Waiting for Elspeth



It's been a very busy few months for me and my growing family. Advent was truly a time of waiting and anticipation, as we prepared to move house to Abingdon while I grew steadily bigger and more pregnant.

Now, not much more than a month after we moved in, we have a new life to get to know and nurture: Elspeth Mackay was born on 11 February 2023 and, as all new people do, shows us every day more of God's love and grace. Her name means 'chosen by God' and she is a daily example for me of His wondrous love.

Victoria Stone

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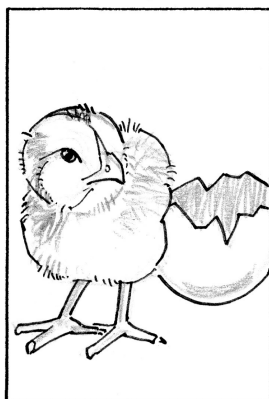
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WESLEY MEMBRAN



Jim