

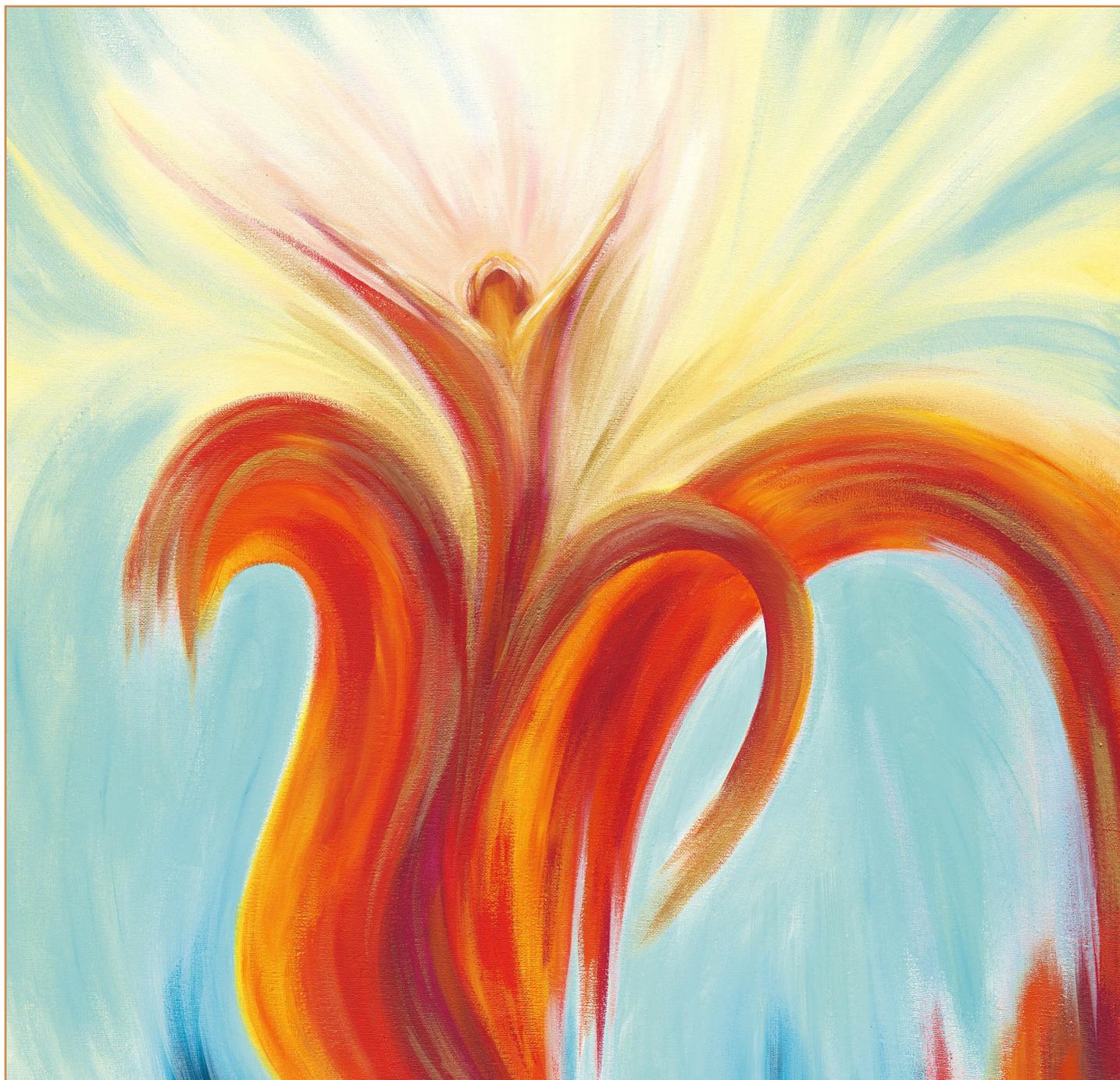
# metconnexion

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## FEATURING

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GILL DASCOMBE, KATE SHARMA, FIONA FIDGIN, ANN HALL, MIKE JACKSON AND KATHRYN TAYLOR



## *Transforming Minds*

NURTURING MENTAL HEALTH AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING IN OUR CHURCHES



# EDITORIAL

Anne Middleton

It has been a privilege to work on this edition of MET Connexion. I have been able to reconnect with my former life and passion as a (drama) therapist and manager of a therapeutic community for adults with mental illness. It has been great to engage with people who are doing important work in this field and trying to get rid of outdated stigma of anyone who is seen to be 'different'...

Gill Dascombe shows us how possibly the real miracle of the healing for the Gerasene would be the changing attitudes of his community. Ann Hall shares her story of how postnatal psychosis became her best qualification for being a Minister. Kate Sharma has written on behalf of the Cinnamon Network, who have just released their findings on research into the important role that churches can have in supporting those with mental health (and other) issues. Mike Jackson has enlightened us on being an introvert and an evangelical, humorously reminding us that we all have different needs and mustn't try to make anyone fit into an evangelical mould! Kathryn Taylor has shared her experiences of how it feels to be a single person arriving in a church for the first time and encourages us to be more aware of what we do - or don't do - to make people feel welcome. Fiona Fidgin, like me, has a passion for labyrinths and sees the value in taking time to reflect on our life journey in a mysteriously transforming space.

As a Christian therapist, I have always felt strongly that we cannot separate our mental and spiritual well-being. This edition represents universal needs and I have deliberately mixed more severe examples of mental illness and distress with the kind of situations that we can all identify with. We are emotional and spiritual beings and we all have certain needs to enable us to flourish as human beings. I hope that this edition encourages us, as individuals and as churches, not just to be more understanding and accepting of others, but also to recognise our own needs to take care of our mental and spiritual well-being...

The Bible Study is the first in a series of three, by Kevin Jones, focusing on Colossians 1. Kevin has also put a lot of research, as always, into Praying Always and has given us many areas to pray for, including mental health charities and people who work and live in quite stressful circumstances. Louise Gough has shared some of her moving prayers, also using the image of the labyrinth, to help us to reflect on and bring to God both the heights and depths of our life journeys. Sadly, Paul Wilson has shared his final letter as MET's Development Worker. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his love and support as my Line Manager throughout my time as Editor of MET Connexion.

I hope and pray that we will continue to be more loving, more caring, more accepting and kinder to ourselves and others, as we plod, strive or limp along on our earthly journey! Our goal - to reach the perfection and beauty of our true spiritual home, when there will be no more suffering of any kind, for an eternity of wonder, reunited with our loving heavenly Father. Amen!

The Editor welcomes articles and Good News stories for future issues. The theme for the Winter edition will be Vocation. The deadline for submission is 1 October 2018, but please do let the editor know well in advance if you would like to submit an article for a specific issue, to ensure space is reserved, as the Editor commissions articles at the beginning of the process. To submit or to ask permission to reproduce anything, please email: [editor@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:editor@methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

## FEATURE ARTICLES

- 5. THE HEALING OF THE LEGION  
By Gill Dascombe
- 8. WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH  
By Kate Sharma
- 10. THE LABYRINTH OF LIFE  
By Fiona Fidgin
- 12. THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, GO I  
By Ann Hall
- 18. INCLUDE ME - BUT DON'T OVERDO IT!  
By Mike Jackson
- 20. THE POWER OF WELCOME  
By Kathryn Parker

## REGULARS

- 3. FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER  
Farewell from Paul Wilson
- 16. GOOD NEWS STORIES
- 22. RESOURCE REVIEWS
- 24. BIBLE STUDY  
By Kevin Jones
- 26. MET REPORTS
- 29. PRAYING ALWAYS
- 31. FROM THE CHAIR

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### BEGINNINGS...

Paul Smith preached as I was inducted into the new role of Development Worker for Methodist Evangelicals Together, at the Plymouth Methodist Conference in 2012. The words that spoke to me were, 'While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul (later Paul) for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2). Unknown to Paul Smith, God had used those same words to help me to make the step to apply and then seek permission to be released by Conference to this post. It was affirmation that we (Karen and I) had taken the right step of faith in me leaving circuit ministry, to equip, encourage and support evangelicals in Methodism.

The role of Development Worker had been on the hearts of MET and predecessors for many years. Some have told me how it was a vision of the Revd Dr Donald English. It has been a privilege to be part of the ongoing ministry of MET around the connexion.

Thank you for your prayers during the last six years. At the start of teaching sessions or acts of worship, I often tell those gathered that they are being prayed for by people all around the connexion. Congregations and gatherings have been encouraged that they are part of a much larger family of MET and Methodism. I have relied on those prayers and Karen and the family join me in thanking you for your faithfulness.

The role has been financed by sacrificial giving of those in the MET family. We started in faith wondering if we had enough for a year or two. Despite treasurers giving conservative projections of cash flow, their faith in pressing on has resulted in six years of ministry and the role continuing.

What I share with you now, is a result of God answering your vision, your prayers, and your sacrificial giving. We give God all the praise and all the glory.

### MET IS A RENEWAL MOVEMENT...

It has taken several years for MET to develop the strapline which encapsulates our vision and purpose. We are a renewal movement! Over the years, I have seen hundreds of people renewed in their faith and ministry as they experience an anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit. Burnt out, faithful Christians have had the flame of the Spirit rekindled in their hearts. A recent weekend in Basingstoke brought the following feedback,

*'There has been real fruit already... it's been a real joy to chat to some folk, who have been relating how wonderful it is to feel God closer than they've felt before or for a long time. What a blessing to see these precious folk full of joy and peace, serving in the cafe in their faithful way but with fresh vision and loving energy.'*

*Deacon Marlene Skuce*

Perhaps the greatest blessing has been to see people experience the forgiveness

of God, being able to forgive themselves and experience that Jesus, 'breaks the power of cancelled sin.'

Seeing presbyters and deacons engage in prayer ministry, occasionally through tears, has been wonderful. People have been encouraged and equipped to fulfil their ministries and new ministries have emerged as they caught a vision of God's love for their communities.

### ...WHICH IS BIBLE-BASED

It has been a privilege to lead Local Preacher and Worship Leader training, Bible weekends, Church weekends, retreats and seminars at Cliff Festival and ECG. District Chairs have invited me to address Synods and lead training, ministry days and retreats. As MET partners you have put my name forward in church councils and circuit meetings and I have been welcomed across all the mainland Districts of the Methodist Church of Great Britain. The evangelical teaching has provoked conversation and debate. Above all it has encouraged and supported people in their ministries. Thank you for releasing me to this preaching and teaching ministry.

It has been good to work with the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, Consultation on Spirituality, Equality and Diversity groups within Methodism, plus EA and renewal networks across the denominations.

### ...AND PRAYER-FOCUSSED

Graham Horsley, at a seminar at ECG, reminded me of the example of my

mum, as a prayer warrior and faithful worshipper. Prayer has always been at the heart of my life and ministry, though it is feeble compared with many I encounter. This role has released me to continue to encourage prayer and prayer ministries in local churches, where prayer and renewal groups have emerged.

Tom Stuckey, Howard Booth and Rob Frost encouraged me to pursue a healing ministry. Many churches have taken up this opportunity. Prayer ministry teams have been established in local churches. We have stood back in amazement as God has ministered his healing touch. A text message has just been received,

*'You stepped out in faith to a deeper level in your healing ministry and I feel God is honouring your listening to him as you prayed specifically for me.... I am so thankful for your prayers and God's healing grace. The pain and stiffness settled over the following days.'*

#### ENCOURAGED ...YET CHALLENGED

Six years of travelling the connexion have encouraged me. In her 2017 Presidential address, the Revd Loraine Mellor said, 'I know that I am part at present of a declining Church, but I am not part of a declining gospel.... Because you see, perhaps in my naivety, I don't believe that God is done with us just yet.' I affirm what Loraine said. I do believe that God has not finished with us, but we are required to heed his warning.

For me, the Methodist Church mirrors so much of the church in Ephesus. Born in a move of the Holy Spirit, with many accounts of healing and transformation, the church grew based on faithful teaching, pastoral care and oversight from a succession of godly leaders. However, when the risen Jesus spoke about the church in Ephesus, he gave a challenge. Jesus intimately knew the work of the Church in Ephesus as he 'walks among the seven golden lampstands' (Revelation 2:1). I think that we forget the risen Jesus' presence in worship, small groups, committees and church councils. To recognise his presence may change our expectations, conversations, and actions. Jesus knew about and praised the deeds, hard work, perseverance, testing of doctrine and practice, persecution, and lack of toleration with wickedness within the Ephesian church (Revelation 2:2-3,6).

The same applies today; Great ministries are happening all around the connexion,



reaching hundreds of thousands of people, through the hard work and perseverance of many faithful people. However, there is a big BUT in Jesus' loving critique of the church at Ephesus. The one who has intimate knowledge of the church, wants the church to pursue intimacy with him, 'Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love' (Revelation 2:4).

To remember is the first action we are called to take. Remember what we were like when we first came to faith. Remember how we loved God so much we spent time in the word and prayer. Remember how we went with eager expectation to worship. Remember the zeal and expectation in fulfilling God's calling on our lives. Remember that we loved God with our whole being and loved our neighbours so much that we not only met their physical, emotional and mental needs, we also shared with them the gospel to meet their spiritual needs. To repent is our response as we recall how far we have fallen from our first love. We must turn again to Jesus. The danger is that if we do not repent, 'I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place' (Revelation 2:5).

MET and the historic tributaries of Methodist Revival Fellowship, Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism and Dunamis, have been heeding the challenge of the risen Christ over the years. We have called the church back to its first love as:

- We uphold the authority of the Bible and the centrality of the cross.
- We pray for revival and spiritual renewal.
- We encourage evangelism through relationships, prayer and action.

Evangelicals seek to be the body of Christ in our communities being full of grace and truth. As we grow deeper in intimacy with God, we will grow in fellowship and mission, and God will add to our numbers those who are being saved.

As you read this, I will have returned to circuit ministry as Superintendent of the Liverpool (South) Circuit. I am looking forward to returning to day-to-day pastoral ministry and all the challenges that face the circuit. What I have written, challenges me as I embark on a new season of ministry. God has never let me down as I have pursued these principles throughout my ministry. May I assure you that he will not let you down either.

Thank you once again for your support in this season of my ministry. God has blessed me as he has outpoured his blessings around the connexion. I hope you will support whoever follows me in this role and welcome the gifts and graces they bring.

*Paul*



# THE HEALING OF THE LEGION

*Gill Dascombe*

## GILL DASCOMBE RE-EXAMINES THE HEALING OF THE GERASENE DEMONIAK (MARK 5:1-20) IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PSYCHIATRY AND SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY BE A SECOND POTENTIAL MIRACLE HERE, HIDDEN WITHIN THE STORY...

What is this story about? Primarily, it is a story about a man with a mental illness. It seems possible, from the description of the symptoms, that the man whom Jesus found wandering amongst the tombs in Gerasa was suffering from schizophrenia. Secondly, it is an account of a miraculous healing; a tortured soul being restored to his right mind. But principally, I think, it is a story about attitudes, and about what it is that is going to win out in the end, love or fear. And therein lie the makings of our second miracle, as we shall see....

### WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Schizophrenia is a terrible disease. Not, of course, that there are any pleasant diseases, but schizophrenia robs the sufferer of their very self, altering perceptions, beliefs, personality, and emotions. One of the major symptoms is psychosis: an inability to discern between reality and imagination; from this arises hallucinations and delusions. Hallucinations are false sensory experiences; hearing, seeing, even feeling, smelling or tasting things that are not really there. Often sufferers hear voices, which seem to them entirely real, telling them that they are useless, worthless, even evil. Delusions are false beliefs, one of the most disturbing being a delusion of persecution where

sufferers are completely convinced that others, often unseen, are trying to undermine or destroy them. Naturally, these symptoms can give rise to extreme anxiety, hence patients may shout and accuse anyone who approaches them, or rove around restlessly trying to dissipate their distress by struggling or self-harming, like the man in the story. To these symptoms are added disordered thinking, a difficulty in engaging appropriate emotions, and in making conversation. The patient becomes lost in an unrelenting turmoil of wild thoughts, conflicting impressions, unruly emotions... A Legion.

Equally harrowing are the so-called negative symptoms of schizophrenia. These include a growing apathy, indifference, emotional flatness, a lack of self-care and blunting of motivation. It is no coincidence that the Gerasene, unkempt and dirty, was found wandering in a deserted graveyard, amongst the tombs. This existence is a kind of living death.

### WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

The human brain is an astonishingly complex organ. It is made up of 100 billion interconnecting nerve cells, or neurones, the same as the number of stars in the Milky Way. The constant electrical and chemical interplay of

these neurones regulate such things as breathing, heart rate, muscle contraction and body temperature. The majority of the neurones, however, are concerned with the processing of information from the five senses, enabling us to interpret and interact with the world around us, through memory, personality, behaviour and abstract thought. Together these make up all the beautiful intricacy and subtlety which go to making up what it is to be a human being.

However, as with any other organ in the human body, things can go wrong with the brain, and when the result is a disabling disorder of perception or emotion, this is what is defined as a mental illness. Just a miniscule disruption of neuronal activity can plunge the sufferer into a chaos of anxiety, or despair or delusional beliefs and fears.

Schizophrenia, along with bipolar affective disorder, is classed as a 'severe and enduring' mental illness, affecting about 1% of the world population. It typically arises in early adult life; in the late teens or early twenties in men, a little later in women. It has nothing to do with a split personality, as in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. As to what causes it, there is as yet no clear understanding. There is a genetic component, and a link to stress and upheaval in childbirth or early childhood. It is also associated with a chemical imbalance in the brain. The mainstay of treatment is with antipsychotic medication.

Antipsychotics act by blocking or reducing the activity of certain chemical messengers, or neurotransmitters, in particular areas of the brain. The resulting reduction in neuronal conduction can lessen or abolish some of the symptoms of psychosis, clearing the mind and the thoughts, and imparting a wonderful relief from the torture of psychosis. There are, however, no drugs without side effects, and with antipsychotics these can be harsh; examples include: weight gain, diabetes, drowsiness and problems with co-ordinating movement. Sadly, there are as yet no drugs that can treat negative symptoms effectively.

#### MENTAL ILLNESS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

The first readers of this gospel, however, would have interpreted the Gerasene's plight in a completely different way, as indeed would Jesus and his followers.

“  
*It's about attitudes and what is going to win out in the end: love or fear. Jesus encountered this man – this frightening, hostile, raving man – with the repulsive appearance and malevolent cries... and he loved him.*  
 ”

They understood the human mind to be controlled and influenced by external supernatural forces, in some way mirroring the constant interplay between good and evil in the greater created world. Seeing someone experiencing extreme mental chaos, they would have been put in mind of that chaos that existed before God spoke the first words of creation, brought forth the dry land from the tumultuous sea and conveyed order and tranquillity upon a disordered and unruly world (Genesis 1:1-10). Mental disorder seemed like the work of those who would disrupt God's orderly rule: evil spirits, demons, who could possess a human being and disrupt the order and reason within the mind. This was only one step away from the desecration of the whole creation and the return of primordial chaos. Such a possibility was too terrifying to contemplate. Little wonder that the local townspeople had driven the man away to live in isolation, where they could no longer see his repulsive appearance or hear his ghastly cries.

If they had asked the Gerasene to tell them the worst thing about his condition, he would have undoubtedly said that it was not the symptoms but the isolation. The townspeople had shunned him and driven him away to live in solitary confinement amongst the tombs. He would have longed for someone to sit alongside him, to apply the healing balm of love to his troubled mind. But no-one did, instead they just bound him with ever stronger chains. Until Jesus came along.

#### MODERN DAY RESPONSES TO MENTAL ILLNESS

Does our modern scientific understanding of schizophrenia reduce our fear of it? Not very much. We still, as a society, retain from ancient days the remnants of a feeling that mental illness is something dark, something to be feared and shunned, or even ashamed of. We expect people in mental distress to 'pull themselves together' or 'get over it', when we would never say anything like that to a victim of diabetes or cancer. Even in our churches we are reluctant to talk about it, or to welcome or relate to those who suffer. Many of the mentally ill would say that the stigma which society attaches to mental illness, and the resulting isolation, bad housing, poverty and loneliness is actually harder to endure than the illness itself. They feel themselves shunned, as did the Gerasene in his lonely existence in the graveyard.



*1 in 4 people using mental health services no longer has any contact with their family.*

*1 in 3 has been deserted by all of their friends.*

*Only 1 in 10 people in our prisons do NOT have a mental disorder.*

*50% of all ill-health in Britain is mental; yet it attracts only 10% of the NHS budget.*

*Mental Health Foundation*

#### THE CHALLENGE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

What is this story about? It's about attitudes and what is going to win out in the end: love or fear. Jesus encountered this man - this frightening, hostile, raving man - with the repulsive appearance and malevolent cries... and he loved him. And his love was enough to annihilate the Gerasene's madness, plunging it away into the chaos of the primordial waters.

And after this first great miracle, the scene is set for the second. But will it happen? Can it happen?

Crowds begin to gather in the graveyard. Summoned by the astonished swineherds, they congregate quickly in their hundreds to see if the new wonder-worker from Galilee has achieved the impossible. As the crowd swells, so does the excitement and the noise. Then, suddenly, as they come close to the graveyard, their chatter stills to a shocked silence. The Gerasene demoniac, healed, clothed and in his right mind greets them with a serene smile. They don't know what to make of this! They don't know what to make of him, now. They don't know what to do with him, now they can't hide him away, out of sight, out of mind.

Suddenly, fear erupts. One or two voices begin to protest, then the number and the volume rises, and then everyone starts to panic. They don't understand! Jesus has broken down the norms and brought in a new way of seeing, of doing, of being. They beg him to go away and leave them, so that they can put the whole dramatic episode away at the back of their minds and not think about it anymore, or what it might mean. There's a lot of pushing and shoving, shouting and cursing and Jesus is propelled down to the lakeside and bundled into the boat. The Gerasene

is puzzled and frightened, and in the morass of all this turmoil, he begs Jesus to let him come with him and escape the angry, unruly and violent rabble. It is they who have now become Legion.

And it's in this moment that the whole meaning of the story hangs. For a moment we are held in suspense. What will Jesus say? What will he answer? Will he save the man from a Legion for a second time? Will he take him to join the disciples? No, instead he challenges him to take his healing back into his own community. 'Go home to your friends,' says Jesus, 'and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.'

The man must have wondered who Jesus was talking about as friends, given all that he had endured, and all the mayhem going on all around them. No amount of wonder working or sermonising was going to heal them. They were going to have to overcome their guilt and fear and welcome this man back into their community, and he was going to have to overcome his nervousness and fear and join with them. And if they did, then a Legion would have been healed for the second time that day, and the second and much more far-reaching miracle would have begun.

And what about us and our church communities? The mentally ill are still shunned by our society; left alone in 'the

realm of the dead'. Can our churches make room for people who manifest disturbing behaviours, who challenge our notions of 'normal'? Can we open our hearts; can we lose our fear? Can we offer authentic acceptance, genuine understanding and unconditional love? Can we continue the miracle? Can we take the risk?

*Gill Dascombe, a retired specialist psychiatric hospital pharmacist, is a local preacher, and a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. During her year of office, her theme was 'Mental Health Matters': encouraging and equipping churches to become more welcoming and hospitable to people suffering from mental illness.*



Methodist  
 Evangelicals  
 Together  
 met

## WORD 2018

THREE SESSIONS OF CHALLENGING BIBLE TEACHING APPLIED TO LIFE

Speaker: The Revd Paul Smith

Saturday 22 September, 10.00am for welcome drinks (finishing at 3 pm)

The King's Cross Church, Doncaster

£7 (for the whole day)

For booking form, please contact Richard Iball:

[richard.iball@btinternet.com](mailto:richard.iball@btinternet.com)

or 01302 855389



# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

*Kate Sharma, Cinnamon Network*



## RESEARCH RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY CINNAMON NETWORK SUGGESTS THAT THE CHURCH HAS A LOT TO OFFER WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.

If more than 7.7% of the population were to catch flu - it would be classified as an epidemic (Outbreaks vs Epidemics, Brendan Koerner the Slate, 2003). If we work on those percentages, then mental illness is an epidemic in our midst. One in every six people has a mental health disorder; the suicide rate of UK students has increased by fifty-six per cent in the ten years to 2016 (Pinkney et al, 2018, cited in the TES); and mental health problems represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK costing an estimated £105 billion per annum (NHS England Five Year Forward Task Force, February 2016).

### WHAT HAS ALL THIS GOT TO DO WITH A CHURCH?

In 2017, Katharine Welby-Roberts, daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, opened up about her own battle with depression. A few years earlier, the American pastor Rick Warren spoke about his son's suicide and urged the church to stand up and recognise 'the wolf in its midst.' In an interview, Rick said, 'It's amazing to me that any other organ in your body can break down and there's no shame and stigma to it, but if your brain breaks down, you're supposed to keep it a secret.'

Thankfully we've learnt a lot about the reality of mental health in the past few decades, but we still have a long way to go. Stigma and taboo continue to surround the topic and as a church we can't ignore it.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Church should be the one place where the lost, the broken and the hurting can be themselves without fear or judgement, but when we try and take a Biblical approach to mental health, things can get sticky.

“  
*Churches are well positioned to tackle the complex, long term health issues such as mental illness.*  
”

A report published by Christian Think Tank, Theos (Christianity and Mental Health: Theology, Activities, Potential, Ryan, 2017), suggests that one of the issues Christians face is the fact that words used in the ancient biblical texts are not akin to the terminology we currently use to describe mental illness. Language about demonic oppression and madness certainly aren't helpful when trying to shape a practical response to a very 21st Century need. However, there are a great number of passages that speak closely to the experience of depression; Psalm 88 is just one example: 'You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves' (Psalm 88:6-7).

### SO, WHAT'S THE CHURCH GOING TO DO IN RESPONSE?

It has long been tempting for local churches to offer tea and sympathy, but many have struggled to know how to help in the face of debilitating mental illness. Perhaps it is not surprising; since mental illness is undoubtedly complex. The term covers everything from depression and anxiety to schizophrenia and psychosis.

In 2010, Cinnamon Network was set up in response to growing public sector cuts and the rising needs of communities. It recognised the fact that churches wanted to do something powerful, effective and sustainable about the needs they saw on their doorsteps. To help make it as easy as possible for churches to replicate effective models of action, Cinnamon established a menu of best practice, social action initiatives, known as Cinnamon Recognised Projects. Churches can take these tried and tested initiatives off the shelf and put them into action to

address key needs within their community - including the issue of mental illness.

### HOW EFFECTIVE ARE CHURCH-LED INITIATIVES?

In 2017, Cinnamon Network set about researching the Church's impact on health and care. The research was published in May 2018 and has identified that churches are well positioned to tackle the complex, long term health issues such as mental illness.

#### FOUR KEY BENEFITS OF CHURCH-LED INITIATIVES

- Holistic health care - Churches are not bound by the same restrictions as health services and can support a variety of needs.
- Giving the gift of time - Churches can take time to get to know people and understand their deep-set needs.
- Creating community - When individuals feel a sense of belonging and trust they are more motivated to make positive lifestyle changes.
- Value for money - In comparison to current health services, church-led initiatives are relatively inexpensive to set up and sustain.

### HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE

There are inherent links between our physical, social, spiritual and emotional wellbeing, and a holistic approach to health has long been identified as one of the most effective approaches. Without the restrictions that many health services are bound by, church-led initiatives studied in the research helped to align both health and social care and, in the process, serve the needs of the whole person. For example, Sharon Morgans, who runs The Pain Exchange, explains, 'We use the physiotherapy to meet that particular need, but what it usually unveils is a whole hoard of other things.'

### THE GIFT OF TIME

Addressing complex issues such as mental health takes time, but many of our health services are bound by targets and goals. Simply spending time with individuals, getting to know

their wider needs, listening to their deepest concerns and discussing their hopes and fears, not just their prevailing symptoms, are central to the care relationships delivered by churches. As Ruth McDonald, a Parish Nurse who works with GPs and other health services to care for individuals of any age within their community, says, 'We can spend time with the patient, and get to the bottom of issues and ongoing problems.'

### CREATING COMMUNITY

The church-led projects studied in the research tackle a whole variety of issues, but they all bring people into relationships with each other. We know that God built us to live in community with one another for a good reason. Through the development of relationships, a sense of trust, belonging and hope is created. For those who have experienced isolation, depression and, in many cases, chronic pain, being valued as part of a group of people is extremely powerful in helping to sustain positive lifestyle changes.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

If these benefits weren't enough - perhaps the rub comes when we start to talk about the numbers. It remains a challenge to quantify the financial benefit that church-led health initiatives can provide. However, in comparison to the costs currently being incurred by health services, setting up church-led social action initiatives remains relatively inexpensive. When these costs are aligned with potential benefits, the cost-value potential is huge.

#### PROJECT COSTS

- £650 is the average cost to set up a Cinnamon Recognised Project
- £280 a year is the approximate cost of maintaining a project
- 90% of Cinnamon Recognised Projects continue into a second year and beyond

#### HEALTH SERVICE COSTS

- £28,000 each year is the average cost of supporting a patient with Alzheimer's Disease in Europe
- £124 is the average cost of a single visit just to be seen at A&E

- £700 is the base cost of outpatient appointments for one patient with type 2 diabetes per annum
- (Source: Jönsson and Wimo, 2009, NHS Digital, Lean et al, 2017; costs as of September 2017.)

### WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CHURCH AND MENTAL HEALTH?

The need is immense and it is precisely at such a time as this that the church can come into its own, by drawing on local knowledge, connections and expertise in order to ease the burden and allow healthcare professionals to channel their resources, time and energies most effectively. The church-led projects studied in Cinnamon's research have proved to be cost-effective, 21st century healthcare solutions that can help to address the nation's major health needs. We should be under no illusion that this is an easy topic to address, but as Christians we shouldn't shy away from the challenge. With the support of initiatives like Cinnamon Recognised Projects, the church has never been in a better place to respond.

*Kate Sharma writes on a whole range of topics including health, development and the church and her work has appeared in the Guardian and Times newspapers among other publications. Kate is a passionate advocate for the work of Cinnamon Network and loves nothing more than telling stories that inspire action.*

*Cinnamon Network champions church-led social action, by building partnerships between churches and civic organisations. For more information about Cinnamon Recognised Projects and the work of the Cinnamon Network, visit: [www.cinnamonnetwork.com](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.com)*





# THE LABYRINTH OF LIFE

Fiona Fidgin

## FIONA FIDGIN, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER FOR THE METHODIST CHURCH, EXPLORES HOW WALKING LABYRINTHS CAN HELP OUR WELLBEING AND PRAYER LIFE.

A few years ago, I organised a 'Labyrinth Walk' for a conference run by the Scottish Association of Mental Health. This was the first time I had offered a walk to folk with serious mental health issues and one particular lady arrived and asked what was happening. I told her a little bit about the labyrinth and suggested how she might walk it. She promptly walked right in the middle and started by walking the path back out again at the time when most folk on the canvas were walking in. Realising half way through that she was passing everybody she stopped, looked around her and shouted in a loud voice, 'Am I going the right way?' I knew just how the lady felt.

I currently work for the Learning Network and much of my time is spent driving to and from venues. When I first started this job, I became addicted to my Sat Nav. I was always wondering, 'Am I going the right way?' It's a question I expect many of us ask.

We are all seekers, searching for a path to guide us in the right direction. During our lives we begin to ask fundamental questions of meaning, purpose and

value: Who am I? How do I find what I'm passionate about? What is my purpose on earth? In order to explore the path and direction that God is calling us to, we need to find a sense of stillness, to allow us to listen and to let the Spirit in as we search for answers.

### A SPACE TO BE STILL

It's hard to find stillness in our modern world. Most of us are familiar with the chaos of a 24/7 modern life. Too much information clutters our lives, too many images claim our attention. The stories of our lives have become complicated and full of doubt. Anxiety lurks in the background of our lives, whether it be Brexit, terrorism, image, clothes, weight, social media... the list is almost endless. Recent research by the Prince's Trust shows that young people's wellbeing has fallen over the last twelve months. The results of the annual UK Youth Index, which gauges young people's happiness and confidence across a range of areas, from working life to mental and physical health should 'ring alarm bells', says Nick Stance, Chief Executive of the Prince's Trust ([princes-trust.org.uk](http://princes-trust.org.uk)). No matter what challenges we are facing, we need to find ways to help us to stay centred, to find that quiet place inside, so that we can learn to quiet the outer world and begin to listen to our own inner world and wisdom.

For many of us, finding that place of stillness and quiet is hard. As soon as we try, our mind becomes full of distractions. To be physically still is not something

that comes naturally or easily to me. I can still hear the voice of my mum saying to me in Church, 'Fiona, keep still!' as the restless child in me struggled to pay attention or find a comfy spot on the upright pew. Most of us live our lives out of balance. We are too active when we long to be quiet. Indeed, we keep active because we fear the quiet!

When I discovered the labyrinth, I found a way that enabled my mind to be quiet and still, while my body was physically active in the walking process. I had found a way to calm the busy me but more importantly, I had found a path of prayer, a place where I could listen to God.

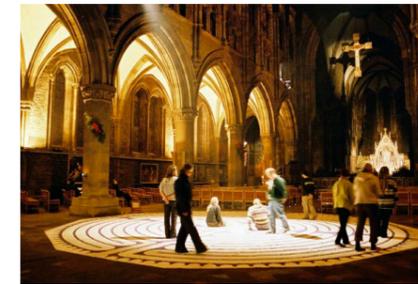
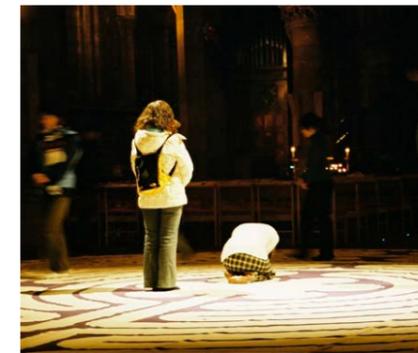
### DISCOVERING THE LABYRINTH

I first encountered the labyrinth in the late 1990's at the Greenbelt Arts festival in England. There, a labyrinth had been marked out on the grass and a friend and I stumbled across it late one night purely by chance. It was hard to see where the path was as there was little light. We didn't have any instructions to follow, but we guessed that we were supposed to follow the one path weaving in and out as we journeyed to the centre. I grew up in London, fairly near Hampton Court, so I was familiar with the notion of getting lost in a maze and all the excitement and anxiety that came with that - but this was different. I became intrigued by the pattern and by the journey.

Soon after this encounter, several people based in London who were exploring contemporary worship, developed what



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they called an 'interactive labyrinth', which was housed in St. Paul's Cathedral for a week. Never one to miss an opportunity, I found myself following this labyrinth path, designed in the image of a Celtic key pattern, complete with headphones and accompanying music and poetry, to guide me through the journey. I adapted this idea and created a similar path which was first used in Edinburgh during Holy Week in 2000. This process was much more of a guided walk, with stations to follow along the way where folk would be invited to make some sort of response.

The reception this received was very positive, but I still felt that there was something missing from the jigsaw puzzle. The pieces finally began to come together when I found myself training to be a labyrinth facilitator with Lauren Artress, founder of the Veriditas, the worldwide labyrinth movement, based at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco ([veriditas.org](http://veriditas.org)). Since then, I too have been using a canvas replica of the eleven-circuit classical labyrinth, the most famous example of which is found on the floor of Chartres Cathedral. I have offered labyrinth walks in churches, conferences, in schools and with organisations - the labyrinth is growing in popularity as more people yearn for quiet in our busy and frantic lifestyles.

### WALKING THE LABYRINTH

Labyrinths are not mazes - they are not a puzzle to be solved. There are no tricks and no dead ends. There is only

one path that leads to the centre and back out again. That is what is different about the labyrinth and sets it apart as a spiritual tool. There are three stages to walking the labyrinth: releasing (walking in), receiving (at the centre) and returning (walking out).

Releasing - walking towards the centre is about letting go. The invitation is to let go of the things that are on your mind - worries, anxieties, to do list... Walking the twists and turns of the labyrinth helps to slow the body down and gradually the shedding of thoughts and emotions quiets and empties the mind.

Receiving - eventually you will arrive at the centre and here is the place of receiving. Many people sit or kneel here, it's a place to pray and to listen to God.

Returning - as you walk back out, retracing the path, you can reflect on and absorb any insights, words or images that may have come to you at the centre; how do they speak to your present situation? On the returning path, many people experience a sense of being more empowered to find and to do the work that God is calling them to do, a sense of joining God at work in the world.

Labyrinths are mysterious. We do not know the origin of their design or exactly how they provide space which allows clarity. It is an ancient spiritual tool that is being re-discovered as a tool to promote mental and spiritual wellbeing. In a busy-driven linear world,

the labyrinth enables us to quieten the outside world and listen to the inner world. It does not engage our thinking mind, but invites our intuitive, creative mind to come forth. As you walk into the labyrinth, each turn becomes a metaphor for the twists and turns in our own lives. The times when we feel close to God and the times when we feel flung out to the far desolate edges. There are times when we feel we are walking with companions and times when the journey feels lonely and isolated. As one person said to me, 'In our modern world we are surrounded by chatter - mobiles on the street, in the train, walking the labyrinth enables me to find a still place in this busy world. A place where I meet God.'

*Fiona Fidgin works for the Learning Network of the Methodist Church and is currently studying part time for an MA in Digital Theology in Durham. She is a member of the Iona Community and has been offering labyrinth walks for many years.*



# THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, GO I...

*Ann Hall*

## ANN HALL SHARES HER STORY OF HOW POST-NATAL PSYCHOSIS TAUGHT HER EMPATHY AND ACCEPTANCE AND TURNED OUT TO BE HER BEST QUALIFICATION FOR BECOMING A MINISTER.

Part of my candidating process for presbyteral ministry involved a meeting with a District Assessor exploring my psychological profile, childhood and life experiences, self-identity and sexuality. As a baby boomer coming of age in the swinging sixties, my story provided 'rich pickings'! At the end of two hours, he asked me, 'is there anything else you would like to share?' His face was a picture when I replied: 'Yes - I was sectioned in a Psychiatric Unit with post-natal psychosis after the birth of my first child!' He was clearly not expecting this kind of admission and he asked why I felt I needed to tell him. I replied that I knew this was in my medical records and had no wish to hide it. Above all, I said it is my most important qualification for ministry, for through this I learned so much about God's grace and humility and grew in empathy and acceptance of vulnerable people. I truly learned that 'there but for the grace of God go I'. I thought I knew this beforehand, but I did not.

At the time I was a real 'Yuppie', highly qualified academically and fulfilled in a well-paid prestigious career as a Management Consultant, whilst pursuing a PhD researching the Self-

concept and its impact on handling poor performance and conflict in industry. I had married at thirty-five and inherited a share in Tim's two children from his first marriage. We were on fire for God and involved in a vibrant church and charismatic renewal movements. We had witnessed God do amazing stuff and our lives had been transformed. Tim had a senior management role whilst studying as a Local Preacher and for an MBSc at Manchester Business School. Having our baby was the icing on the cake, or so we dreamed!

## MY JOURNEY TO THE ROCK AT THE BOTTOM

None of that qualified me for an incredibly complex birth after which I became sleep-deprived and delusional. Nothing in life had qualified me for being put in a straight-jacket, having three men sit on me and pump me with tranquilisers. Faithful attendance at antenatal classes didn't prepare me for waking up the following day to see my two-week old son being bottle fed by a stranger whilst my breasts were swollen and sore from having tried to learn to feed. My MSc in Psychology didn't qualify me for being powerless, dehumanised and being obliged to queue for medicines and food with disturbed patients.

I had felt so exhilarated and close to God when I was manic, now he felt absent and I felt despair. I never felt, 'why me?' - I could see the pain in those around me. No one deserves to suffer. I did however ask,

'why?' Why does God allow such suffering in body, mind and spirit? How can you trust hearing God's voice again when you have been delusional - what's real?

There were of course some funny moments! My Mum said to Tim: there isn't any madness in our side of the family (ie. it was his fault!). It is amazing how few people came to visit me and some people gave me a wide berth and treated me suspiciously subsequently, as if mental illness were catching. Oh and of course there were some who felt I needed deliverance ministry or had clearly not forgiven someone from my past... Argh!

I thank God that I was only hospitalised a short time, as I have since ministered to many women who have never recovered from this dreadful experience; some have had ECT, spent months in hospital and need inner healing for the disappointment and broken dreams. The horrible memories, guilt, anger and hurt have destroyed their family as well as them.

I thank God for the tender, unconditional healing love of my precious husband and the Christian community at Knutsford Methodist Church and their practical and pastoral support. However, for a few months, God felt very far away; I really questioned my faith and that was the most isolating and scariest part of all. I knelt down one cold morning and said, 'Lord I do believe, help thou my unbelief'. Then I noticed the snowdrops in our garden and slowly and imperceptibly

faith, hope and courage were restored. I thank God I had two more babies and was perfectly sound in mind and have been well for the thirty-four years since, even in the sheer pain of grief when Tim died suddenly in South Africa in 2015. I thank God that Jesus walked through the desert of mental illness with me and carried me when I couldn't walk. When I hit rock bottom, I encountered THE ROCK at the bottom!

## MY JOURNEY ALONGSIDE OTHERS

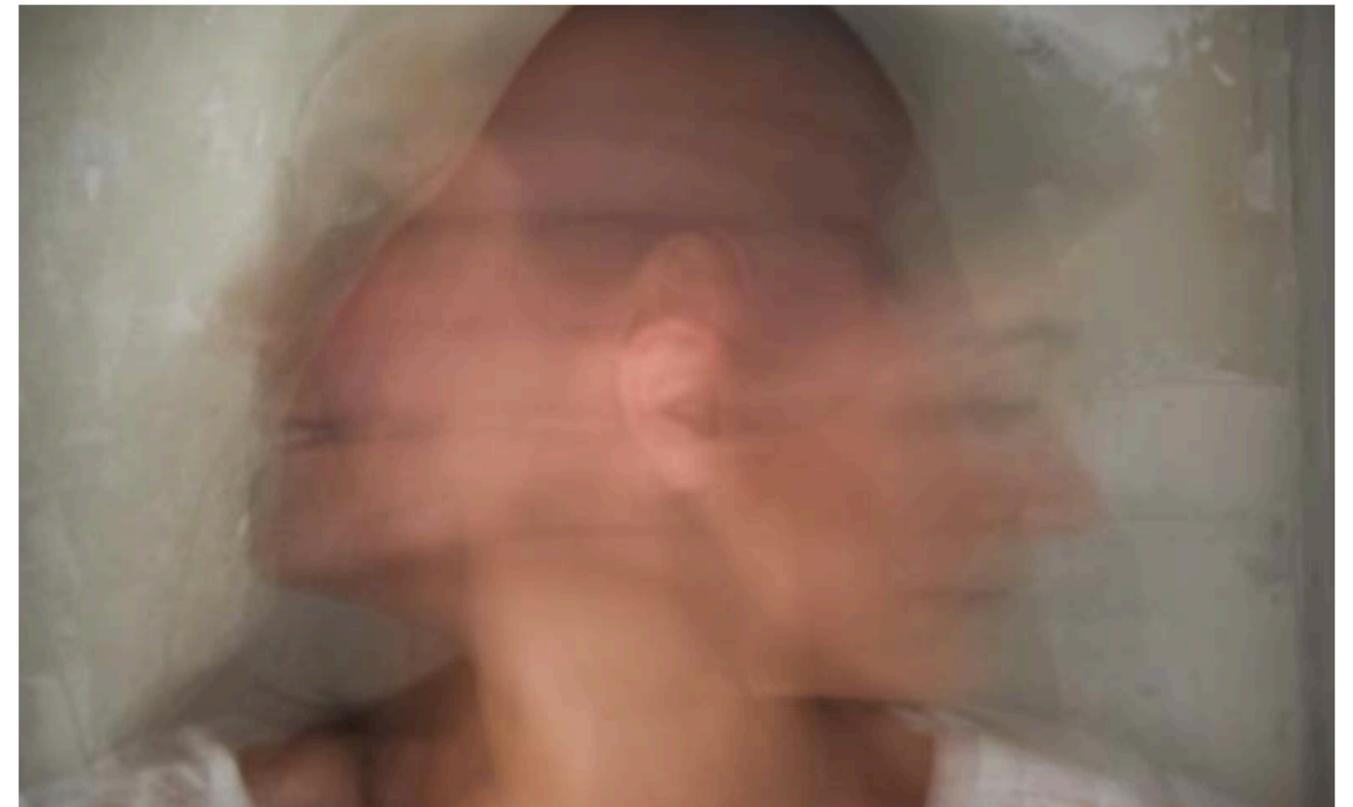
Over the years I have come alongside so many people whose lives are chaotic and are dis-eased by mental health problems. So many people suffer from anxiety and depression and have unresolved issues. Even when they are born again and get a new heart and a new spirit, they are still dogged by that battle for the mind of which Paul speaks in Romans 12. Sometimes being filled with the Holy Spirit means immediate freedom from these oppressions, but for most it is a continuous process of daily choosing to trust that God hasn't given us a spirit of fear but of a sound mind, of love and of self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).

Now I am a supernumerary minister and a widow (that's a qualification I would prefer not to have). I have facilitated NHS Loss and Bereavement Courses and I run a weekly mindfulness group in an acute psychiatric inpatient unit. I listen and pray and share Holy Communion. Sometimes I just sit silently with a suicidal person and maybe massage healing oil into arms and wrists covered with a tapestry of self-harm scars. It is not my earthly qualifications which equip me for this, it is that God has broken my heart for what breaks his and gifted me to see even the most unlovable with the Father's eyes. It is incarnational ministry, humbling and challenging. To be equipped, I need my own stillness to be a channel of Jesus' peace which defies human understanding in a volatile context.

I have a real concern about the increased frequency with which young adults are diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder these days. I am certain that this stems from two generations of children, growing up without healthy boundaries, without faith or moral compass. Many lack a sense of responsibility for their choices or behaviour and feel powerless victims of a system which they see as malevolent. Conspiracy theories seem more plausible than the truth. To most, the name of Jesus is just an expletive, they have never heard of his love or encountered his presence.

Jesus said 'I am the Truth, the Way and the Life' and he came to bind up the broken hearted and set the captives free.

This morning I baptised a one-day old baby in a Neonatal Unit. She looks perfect but suffered lack of oxygen for eight minutes in a traumatic birth. Just now her survival is uncertain and her future bleak. I pray that her Mum will recover from this traumatic birth and not suffer post-natal illness. I pray that God will work in and through the skill of the neonatal team and the miracle of modern medicine. I believe he can and does work miracles but it won't be my lack of faith or of the family if it doesn't happen. As I anointed her with oil and prayed for her and her young parents whose dreams have been shattered, I am yet again confronted with the question of why does God allow suffering? I cannot answer why, only trust this precious family into God's hands. I cannot and never will say that 'everything happens for a reason' because some things are not reasonable! Nor will I ever say that this is God's will, because saying that God is sovereign or 'in control' doesn't mean that he wants a baby to have a traumatic birth or an innocent child to be abused or a young mum to have breast cancer or a brilliant teenager to develop



schizophrenia at university or a bomb to go off in Manchester - what kind of model of God is that!



*I thank God that Jesus walked through the desert of mental illness with me and carried me when I couldn't walk. When I hit rock bottom, I encountered the rock at the bottom!*



For me, Jesus is there sharing the suffering and mental torment; Jesus has not promised us we will not suffer and he holds and heals our broken hearts and ravaged minds. In the midst of the pain he can and does bring good things into our lives and we are enabled to grow in grace and faith and in the understanding and knowledge of the love of God. Then we too can become better qualified and equipped to fulfil our calling as wounded healers in our world of need:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

*2 Corinthians 1:3*

Please pray for your local mental health unit and the staff, patients and their families and friends and for hospital chaplains.

*The Revd Ann Hall is a Supernumerary Minister in the Southport Circuit and is still very active as a preacher. Ann is a Bank Chaplain at an NHS Trust and a voluntary member of the Chaplaincy Team at a Mental Health Trust. Ann serves as a Spiritual Director with the Liverpool Anglican Diocese. Her late husband Tim was Superintendent of the Southport Circuit. Their lives changed dramatically when they became committed Christians together through Marriage Preparation at Knutsford Methodist Church in 1982. They have five children and two grandchildren. Ann is a keen photographer and loves to dance!*



Methodist Evangelicals Together  
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## DIGGING FOR TREASURE 2018

*THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS TODAY*

Speakers: Jonathan Lamb, Amy Orr-Ewing, Ed McKenzie and Derek Tidball

Saturday 6 October, 10.00am to 4.30pm

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH

£25.00

A one-day conference on expository preaching - hosted by MET in partnership with LWPT.

The booking form is available at [methodistevangelicals.org.uk/dft](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk/dft)



# EASTER HOPE

*Richard Iball*

## WHAT A THEME – THE GREATEST THEME!

Over twelve months ago The King's Cross Church, Hexthorpe, Doncaster, a lively, all age, multi-ethnic and growing evangelical church in a deprived and often despised area of town, decided to celebrate Easter 2018 with a special season of outreach. It was to build on all of our normal work within our community which seeks to love and cater for all and bring the wonderful message of the Good News of Jesus.

The Revd Paul Wilson was the speaker at the main events and the programme was developed with a clear focus of getting as many people as possible to hear about Jesus dying for their sins and rising again to bring new life with the assurance of heaven for all who will believe. Very Methodist! At that time, we had no minister willing to come here. Later, God provided the Revd Jon Bellfield for us; he suggested we should add a Holiday Club to the programme and this proved a word from God.

Running for seven weeks before Easter Hope, were weekly sessions of 'Life Explored,' a contemporary visual and Biblical approach encouraging people into faith. Holy Week began with Holiday Clubs for about fifty Primary School children. Some parents stayed



for the sessions as they do in our monthly Engine Room (Messy Church +). They loved the theme song so much that when one volunteer, Lynn Petersen, walked home on Easter Sunday evening a group of children gathered round her to sing it in their street! During that week there were hour-long sessions ('Time for Jesus') at The Junction in the afternoon, which were mostly attended by Roma children.

The main programme began on Good Friday with a service that Paul addressed. All able-bodied attendees then formed a stream to march to four places in Hexthorpe where, with the aid of a loudspeaker system, we introduced ourselves, read a few Bible verses, sang and briefly explained about Good Friday. Two hundred palm crosses, decorated with the words, 'It's Good Friday but Easter Sunday is coming,' were taken by passers-by. Many had heard the Good News; undoubtedly, some for the very first time.

Friday evening was the celebration (with food of course!) at The Junction. Sadly, only a few came to share and hear Paul. We went home and prayed... Saturday morning was the brunch for men and a very good number attended, a third of whom were not yet Christians. By the challenge of a strong message, during which Paul shared deeply and personally about his life experiences, the Good News was made known. Great food!

Saturday afternoon brought the final Holiday Club event to which parents were invited. They joined in the games and songs and listened to the direct message about what Easter brings to us - Hope Through Jesus. Having been invited to come later to the evening buffet and meeting, we waited patiently..... and prayed...

We set the room for 60+ places. We were about to begin when a number of whole families, most of whose children had attended Holiday Club, poured in and extra tables were set. We felt God move. The food was enjoyed and Paul began to speak - God led him directly and he went off his prepared text - people listened with rapt attention and the challenge to respond was given. Children were separately looked after in our newly renovated building, The Crossing. Good conversations and prayer for people followed. We felt things building up... The church was almost full on Sunday morning - about one hundred adults as well as some children - they were eager to hear more and learn more.

## WHAT LESSONS THEN?

First ask God in prayer to change the local spiritual atmosphere and show himself to people. Ask him to preserve church unity and protect the work from the attacks of satan. Plan carefully what matches locally. Make sure a full Biblical message is declared in ways suitable to the hearers; no watering it down as that is useless, for people will listen to the real thing. Expect God to work. Use food. Get a team ready to speak and pray with those who want it. Finally, outreach like this is not an end; it brings even greater needs for new home groups, courses and commitment to new relationships of loving, Bible teaching and discipling. It costs much more than money...

Sometimes I hear people say, 'They don't want to listen these days, they are not interested.' This is just not true.

*Richard Iball is a member of The Kings Cross Church, Hexthorpe, and former General Secretary of MET.*

# GOOD NEWS STORIES

## WHAT A JOURNEY, BUT WHAT A GOD!

*Kerry Gibson*

My past doesn't define who I am - Jesus does.

My journey as a Christian started when I was five. I went to Sunday school in Ashburton and the only two things I was interested in was how to pray and how to read the Bible! So, God had his hand on me even then. This proved a great comfort to me the following year, when, having returned to Birmingham, my Mum walked out on us as a family for two years; this left me with a lot of issues. We eventually moved back to Devon in 1995 and at the age of thirteen I became a Christian; at fifteen I was baptised and became very involved in church and missions. I probably didn't realise then that I was quite a broken young person emotionally. I was sexually abused at an early age and God had to heal a lot of wounds in my life.

In 2004 I moved to Chester and did a theology / evangelism course with the Light Project run by the Baptist Church. That year, I also got into an abusive relationship with an older woman in Wrexham where I was in care work and my life just went out of control. I lost my way, took a real detour, I left God behind. I was very angry, hated the church and was a rebel - I wanted to do life my way not God's. My plans fell apart, people that I thought were friends and cared, left... I developed an alcohol addiction and an unhealthy interest in the paranormal, as well as other things which wouldn't be helpful to share.

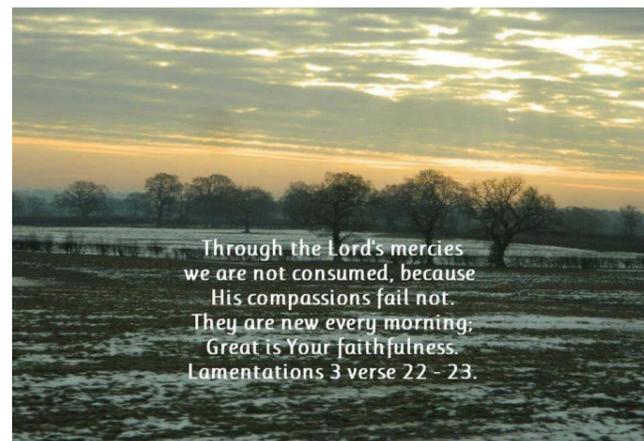
2009-2012 were my desert years (thank goodness it wasn't 40 like the Israelites!) In 2009 I tried taking my own life and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Wrexham. I had packed my Bible, which I hadn't read for years, and in my hospital room I hugged it with tears rolling down my face and said 'you

are the only hope I have left.' Also, that night another patient gave me a leaflet from the Chapel; it said, 'My Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you' (John 14 v 27). In 2010, in China, while visiting a Buddhist temple, I suddenly thought 'why am I here if I'm a Christian?' In 2011, I noticed a sign in Chester which said, 'to the cross,' and I was moved to tears... but I gave God every reason why he wouldn't love me or want me because of my lifestyle. Looking back, these were all signs that God hadn't given up on me!

Then, in 2012, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit stepped into the brokenness and complete mess of my life and began to heal me and restore what the devil tried to destroy. While visiting family in Devon, two friends separately told me about 'Freedom in Christ', but it was always, 'I am Okay thanks'. However, in November that year I arranged to meet up with my old friend Heather, who had just moved back to Plymouth. She challenged me about my lifestyle as a Christian and told me that she was going to a Freedom in Christ course that day and invited me to come. That weekend I quit running and gave my life back to Jesus. God's timing never ceases to amaze me, because I had just decided to get a tattoo with the words: 'only God can judge me,' and then take my life...

I would like to say it has been plain sailing ever since but it hasn't! Then began the next part of my journey of healing, a journey which I am still on! I had to face up to the fact that I had mental health issues and a problem with alcohol addiction - that wasn't easy to admit, but with the help and support of family, friends and professionals I have come a long way. I had two years of counselling, which was tough and painful, but now I can say:

- I'm now no longer running away from life
- I haven't self harmed for nearly two years
- I no longer have panic attacks



- I'm no longer addicted to painkillers
- I've been alcohol free since July 2017 (although I still struggle with cravings)
- I have learnt to trust again
- I am more at peace
- I have finally got the message that I can't do life on my own and that I need others to help me on this journey...

I also received ministry for deep-seated roots of rebellion, and after that, something really shifted in me. God really steadied my feet and enabled me to be more honest with myself and with other people.

I am also here today because of the faithful prayers, love, support and friendship from the people of Ridgeway Church. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for never giving up on me. You took me in when I needed a home and then supported me to find one of my own. For those whom I have hurt along the way, I am really sorry. And I hope you will forgive me for all my stubbornness! I look forward to sharing the journey ahead as a member of this church fellowship and seeing what God has in store for us individually and as a church.

One of the things God has used to heal me is music. I have always loved music and he has given me the gift of songwriting, which helps me express more clearly what is sometimes difficult to put into words. So, I will finish with a song I wrote:

You're my perfect Father, You've always been Father to me,  
You loved me then, You love me still and You always will.

*Kerry Gibson is an active member of her church and loves to use her photography skills to express her Christian faith and relationship with God. She also loves talking to people on the street, sharing Jesus' hope & love.*



## YOUR GOOD NEWS STORY!

We would love to share your Good News story here! We are looking for short stories of around 300 words. Please send your story asap, so we know how many we can fit in our next centre fold (with your name and church details) to: [editor@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:editor@methodistevangelicals.org.uk).

Thank you!

## WITH GOD'S HELP, I WILL!

*Jackie Greateorex*

In 2012 Chris Bryant (a member of Methodist Evangelicals Together) asked me to talk about my wedding service instead of him giving a sermon. I spoke about how we used products and services which are eco-friendly and/or from organisations that treat people well. These are ways of loving others and stewarding the earth. After the service several preachers and worship leaders said in different ways that they hoped I would lead worship again.

Around the same time the phrase 'feed my lambs' frequently came to mind. So, I decided to test whether that was a call to preach, in a pastoral way (tending for the whole person; body, mind and spirit).



The six years of testing a call to preach were a mixed experience. I met people from UK churches who do not know Jesus as Lord and others who discourage sharing the gospel of grace; believe in Jesus as Lord, repent, receive forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and eternal life. I had support in circuit and at the Faith and Worship conferences. Additionally, the Revd Paul Wilson's ministry and Methodist Evangelicals Together conferences, teaching and resources have been a great encouragement and support. So, I invited Paul to preach at my Local Preacher admission service at High Street Methodist Church in Stevenage. Paul's sermon encouraged me to pray often, pursue God, strive for holiness, repent as needed, be a disciple, love congregations, challenge congregations in love, make disciples, use the Bible, invite people to believe in Jesus as Lord, receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. With God's help, I will!

*Jackie Greateorex is a member of High Street Methodist Church Stevenage. She works full-time and volunteers as a Local Preacher and home-group session leader. She is married to Tim Hoof, a Children and Family Worker in a Methodist Church.*

# INCLUDE ME – BUT DON'T OVERDO IT!

Mike Jackson

## MIKE JACKSON PRESENTS THE CASE OF THE INTROVERTED EVANGELICAL AND ASKS FOR MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENT NEEDS WITHIN THE LIFE AND WORSHIP OF OUR CHURCHES.

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'*

Mark 1:35-37

Jesus went to a solitary place. Did he need to? We know he went to pray, but did he have to be so alone when he did? Couldn't he have told the disciples where he was going so that they wouldn't have to look for him?

The beginning of retirement is a good time to evaluate who you really are. We are all shaped, to a certain extent, by the work we do. When that job no longer exists, we can begin to consider what type of person we can become without the constraints that employment enforces. So, recently I have asked myself some questions. 'Why is it that I don't like parties?' 'Why must I carefully consider an invitation to a marriage even though I wish the happy couple all the best in

the world?' 'Why is an opportunity to network so unappealing?'

The answer is that I am an introvert. Unfortunately, that answer doesn't make sense to many of my friends. They know me as someone who worked as a university lecturer giving talks at conferences around the world. Or else, they have encountered me in my capacity as a Local Preacher with thirty-five years of experience of standing up in churches and giving sermons. How can someone so clearly capable of making public appearances be so afraid of a simple social gathering?

### FAITH AND THE INTROVERT

In trying to puzzle through this question I have been helped by a book called 'Quiet,' by Susan Cain ('Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking,' 2013, Penguin Books). Whilst trying to simplify what are often contradictory academic views of the psychology of introversion and extraversion, it offers an explanation of introversion which I find satisfactory. All human beings enjoy stimulation. They find the company of other human beings very stimulating. Each individual, however, has a limitation on just how much stimulation they can take. In the passage from Mark, quoted at the beginning of this article, it looks as though Jesus had reached his limit and just had to be alone for some time. The difference between an introvert and an extrovert is that the amount of stimulation needed to reach the limit is much lower for an introvert than an

extrovert. The need to find a solitary place comes much sooner for those of us with an introverted personality.

Intriguingly, the book includes a short section entitled 'Does God love Introverts? An Evangelical's Dilemma.' We know the answer to the question – God loves every individual. Do we accept that there may be a dilemma, in which introverts whose theology is soundly evangelical, may find a



difficulty in belonging to an evangelical church? In evangelical circles, we often value a number of characteristics that the introverted personality might find challenging. There is often an understanding that the declaration of faith should be a very public affair. A rally is viewed as successful if the congregation bubble over with enthusiasm and begin to share freely with one another. Either of these expectations could be more than an introvert can bear. Introversion is not shyness in the sense that someone who is shy can 'be brought out of their shell'. An attempt to change someone who is introverted to become more outgoing will simply cause them to seek solitude sooner rather than later.

### MAKING SPACES FOR EVERYONE

The world is not, however, divided into two classes of people: one group called extroverts and the other called introverts, who can never meet. Instead, there is an introvert-extrovert spectrum with some individuals being very introverted and others being very extroverted, with most people somewhere in between. It is, nonetheless, important to recognise that differences related to an individual's position on the spectrum exist. If you do, you will understand that some people will find Messy Church very challenging, that others will hate shaking hands after saying the peace and that others will find the offer of coffee after Sunday worship a daunting prospect. None of these



should be offended if someone else doesn't join in. When an individual has been stimulated beyond a level they find comfortable, they will experience stress and tension and we need to be sensitive to this. Thought should also be given to planning events that will encompass both extroverts and introverts. The secular world is currently tied to the idea that people should be constantly encouraged to collaborate in groups (in contrast to the past where a modicum of British reserve deserved respect). Whilst accommodating these attitudes in church activities, it is also sensible to consider other ways of eliciting responses, such as individual written contributions. Perhaps it might be even more modern to encourage the use of social media. People who would never consider expressing themselves in a spoken discussion are often more than happy to air their views electronically. At any rate, it is important to balance activities which demand a more outgoing character with those that require more introspection.

*God has created each of us as unique individuals and it is only through accommodating and building upon our unique abilities that we can move forward as his Church.*

feelings are related to a theological position but instead are just part of an individual's personality.

So, is there a dilemma that evangelicals need to address? Not really, as long as we are prepared to accept the obvious truth that everyone is different. The problem is not caused by introversion – whilst this article concentrates on the view an extrovert takes of an introvert, it would be just as easy to write one which switches the roles round – there is a need, however, to be thoughtful. It is important to understand a person who cannot take part in an activity because it is simply in their nature not to. Just because we like an activity and believe it is helpful to us does not mean we

In short, we need to avoid the trap that many extroverts fall into of denying the complexity of the situation, devising a one size fits all solution and ignoring any evidence that it isn't working. Rather we should recognise our different needs and capabilities. God has created each of us as unique individuals and it is only through accommodating and building upon our unique abilities that we can move forward as his Church.

*Mike Jackson is a Church Treasurer and Local Preacher in the Shropshire and Marches circuit. Prior to retirement, he was a University Lecturer specialising in Computer Science.*





# HELLO THE POWER OF WELCOME

*Kathryn Taylor*

**KATHRYN TAYLOR SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF FINDING A NEW CHURCH AND DESCRIBES THE INVISIBLE HURDLES SOMETIMES FACED BY NEWCOMERS. SHE OFFERS PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP US MAKE PEOPLE FEEL ACCEPTED THE FIRST TIME THEY VISIT OUR CHURCH.**

'Phew. That's the car parked. Now where's the front door? Hmm. Looks like it could be either way... I'll try right first. Nope this doesn't look right, I'll go back round. Ah there's someone coming, maybe they can help...

I'm in and I've got my notice sheet and service book from the lady on the door who smiled at me. Now where shall I sit? That looks a bit too far forward, I'll go somewhere in the middle, this little row is empty, I'll go here. Let's have a look at the service book. Seems fairly straightforward to follow. Oh, wait a minute, we've skipped ahead to another section... Time for a hymn. Oh, good I know this one...

Uh oh, time to share the peace. Okay just be brave and smile. Oh good, the lady in front has turned around briefly, I better turn around to the one behind. 'Peace be with you.' It looks like the minister is coming down. I think I'll just stay in my seat. Ah she's coming to say hello to me, that's nice...

Time for communion I think. Do I stay in my seat? Will I be told when to go forward? Will they allow me to take the bread and wine if I'm not a member here? I'll just do what everyone else does and hope I get it right...

I think that's the end of the service, they said something about tea and coffee in a hall? I wonder where that is. Maybe I should go through by myself, but what if no one comes to talk to me? I'll just sit here and read the notice sheet for a minute and have a look round, maybe someone will come and say hello and invite me to have a coffee with them... Looks like no one is coming, they just keep walking past me. The odd person smiles. I'll walk very slowly back to the door and hand back my service book and maybe the people on the welcome desk will say hello. Oh, they're busy talking to someone else, they do all seem to know each other. Maybe I'll just go home, this is hard work! Back to the car.'

It's difficult to go to church alone. There are so many things to think about! Often, it's easy to get so caught up in the 'where will I sit?' that you forget you are in God's house. One of the most difficult challenges I have faced was being left to join a table alone at a café style service, when all I could see were groups of people huddled around tables talking. Luckily, someone noticed me and found me someone to sit with, but had it been another ten seconds, I would have turned around and walked straight back out close to tears.

We all have a deep desire to belong. For me, it isn't about how many guitars are in the worship band or whether there are biscuits with the tea and coffee. I am looking to make a connection, for people to walk alongside as I journey with Christ.

All too often we are too caught up with our 'jobs list' ('I must just speak to so and so...') that we don't see the new person sitting on the row behind. If we want our churches to grow, then welcoming new members the first time they enter the church is vital. I was never any good at this, but I've come up with a few tips based on my experiences whilst visiting five churches to find a 'home church'. It's a fine balance between being sincerely friendly and being overpowering, but I believe a bit of practice and genuine desire to be welcoming will help us all to grow God's kingdom.



*We all have a deep desire to belong...  
I am looking to make a connection,  
for people to walk alongside as I  
journey with Christ.*



## TEN TIPS ON BEING A WELCOMING CHURCH

1. You'll be surprised how much of a hurdle it is even to get to a new church in the first place. If you're already apprehensive, not knowing where to park can make the morning very stressful! Does your church website give details on suggested car parking? (Does your website have the correct postcode?)
2. Is your front door obvious? Is it open? A door that you can't find, and then when you do find it, is closed, is perhaps the most unwelcoming start to a church service you could experience.
3. Do you have someone designated to welcome people? Are they on the lookout specifically for visitors? A smile goes a long way, but a verbal greeting and introduction goes even further. At the very least tell me your name and ask me mine. You don't have to remember it!
4. Ask me if I'm happy to find a seat by myself, or, if you're having a café style event, maybe say, 'Sarah would love to have you on her table, I'll introduce you.'
5. If there's an opportunity during the service to speak to the new person next to you, start with a brief 'we haven't met before, I'm Bob' - it opens up some dialogue!
6. Is your communion process obvious? Is it clear when to go forward and clear when to leave the rail? It is awful when receiving the body and blood of Jesus is overshadowed by worries of logistics!
7. At the end of the service, don't just say 'there's tea and coffee in the hall' to a visitor and leave it at that. Try saying 'I'm going to get a cup of tea, would you like to come too?' That eases the worry of standing alone with a full cup of tea to get through.
8. Introduce me to at least two other people. Not so many that I'm overwhelmed with names, but enough that if you're not there next week, I might recognise another face and they might notice me. We might even find something in common, such as working in the same place or living on the same street!
9. Invite me to something on during the week, whether it's a coffee morning or Bible study. Offer to meet me there if you're already going or tell a friend who is going to look out for me.
10. If you see me the following week, introduce me to a few more people and soon enough I will be confident enough to get a cup of tea by myself and start getting to know the church family.



I think we are often too nervous to approach someone new, thinking 'they look quite young, I won't have anything to say to them', or 'they look much older than me, they won't want to talk to me' or even just 'what will I say?' The key thing here is that we should remember that if we're both in church, then we have something amazing in common. We're both there because we want to get to know Jesus better. What more could you possibly want to have in common?

*'Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God'*

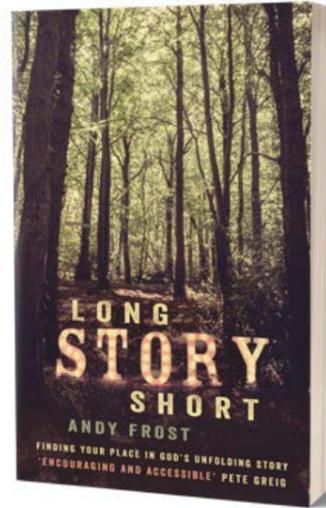
*Romans 15:7*

*Kathryn Taylor is a twenty-something on a mission to find a church to call home having moved to a new area after university. She is passionate about welcoming new people in church after she realised that if she*

*found it daunting, having grown up in a Methodist Church, how much more difficult it must be for those with no church background.*



# RESOURCE REVIEWS



## LONG STORY SHORT *Andy Frost*

SPCK Publishing, 2018, £7.99, 9780281079315

Share Jesus' Andy Frost invites readers to question the stories society tells us to live for and instead explore what he believes is the only story big enough to frame our lives: the God story.

In this fresh exploration of the Christian faith, author Andy Frost starts with a fundamental truth: every life tells a story. He then takes readers on a journey through the three main narratives society tells us we should be living for: happiness, safety and significance. Taking each story in turn, he tactfully highlights the plot holes and unreliability of these common storylines, prompting the question: What if these stories are too small to really frame our lives?

In the second part of this book, Andy welcomes readers to explore a different narrative - the God story that lies at the heart of the Christian faith - and explains why for him this is now the only story he will live for. Andy's accessible look at God, the Bible and the person of Christ, coupled with his own personal journey, will encourage Christians of all ages and stages to better understand and share their story with others.

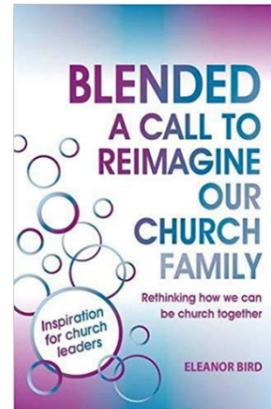
Long Story Short is age-old apologetics told in a fresh new way and will help readers find their place in God's unfolding story.

*Andy Frost heads up Share Jesus International, an organisation that exists to help the Church share the life changing message of Jesus. He chairs the London Mission Collective; is a member of the Evangelical Alliance Council and an ambassador for Care for the Family. He is a regular speaker at Christian Summer Festivals, including Spring Harvest and Creation Fest. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Neep via: eneep@spck.org.uk*

## BLENDED: A CALL TO REIMAGINE OUR CHURCH FAMILY

*Eleanor Bird*

BRF, 2015, pp192, £7.49,  
978-0857461124



In 'Blended,' Eleanor Bird invites us to reimagine a new way of being church together. A church that no longer divides by age lines, but instead embraces being a community of different generations. For too long she says, Christian communities have been separated: children, youth and adults each following their own programmes with diverse styles of worship and varying teaching themes. Her vision is one where the lines drawn between these groups become blurred, are rubbed away to become a more unified and connected body of believers.

The focus of Bird's book are the times when church communities gather for worship and her philosophy is built on four key values, outlined in the first six chapters of the book:

- Not calling church 'work'
- Giving everyone in church equal influence
- Training when apart for the times we gather as church
- Making the most of the times we gather to experiment and explain what's happening

These are 'building blocks' that underpin all that church is and does. They serve to create a community that thrives in worship when together and apart. So, the times when groups pursue their own programme are seen as vital opportunities to prepare and develop understanding for when all gather together. She advocates a model where style and content are gradually merged, helping worship times to become increasingly seamless.

This emphasis on worship (in the narrow sense of sung worship and teaching) is central in developing more cohesive church community. Bird makes the case for church to embrace its whole spectrum of family, yet the question remains what form this may take beyond Sunday services. What might the features of a blended church be outside these times is the next natural field to explore.

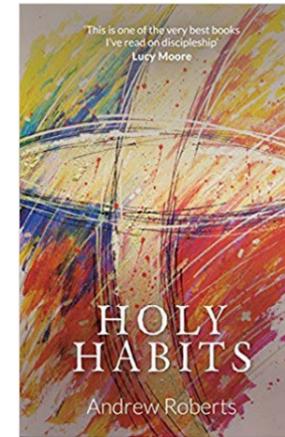
Bird's personal testimony and experience are threads throughout the book. This adds an authentic dimension when she recounts how her own faith and understanding developed. As readers we're urged to join her on this road of discovery that sees God's kingdom grow in our churches and beyond.

*Gail Adcock, Church & Community Team, The Methodist Church.*

## HOLY HABITS

*Andrew  
Roberts*

MALCOLM DOWN  
PUBLISHING, 2015,  
pp247, £8.99, 9781910786154



Holy Habits is more than a book on discipleship; it is a conversation on discipleship. Written in a conversational style, I felt I was listening to a friend sharing his thoughts, as Roberts draws on his own reading, tells real-life stories and gently stretches imaginations through his experience of Fresh Expressions. Readers are drawn into the conversation, particularly through the sections for 'further reflection and action' at the end of each chapter.

Holy Habits presents, through that conversation, a vision for whole life, full life, adventurous, big picture discipleship! Part 1, which deals with 'The Nature of Discipleship,' is broad in its scope; I particularly welcomed the chapter about 'the aims of discipleship,' making it clear that this is a focused journey, not an aimless wandering. Roberts strikes a healthy balance between the importance of corporate discipleship, when disciples meet together to 'practise the habits' and seek to be a community of transformation, and how discipleship is to be lived out when they are scattered.

Part 2 introduces the Holy Habits (Acts 2:42-47), with subsequent chapters dealing with each of the ten 'habits' in turn (Biblical teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, giving, service, eating together, gladness & generosity, worship and the making of new disciples), keeping in readers' minds throughout, the broad vision and context of part 1. Taken together, both parts dare readers not just to dream of the Kingdom of God, but also to act in ways that will enable the Spirit to fulfil our prayers of seeing God's kingdom come on earth as in heaven. Thus, the book becomes more than just a conversation about discipleship, but also a practical handbook for disciples.

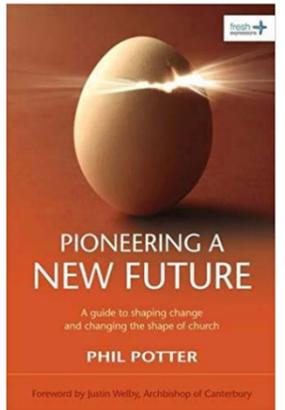
While longing for more depth of content, its great value is in its broad vision and in the drawing together and organisation of the content around Acts 2:42-47. This is the kind of book that I wish I had been given as a new Christian starting out on my journey of following Jesus.

*The Revd Rachel Deigh is the Liverpool District Mission and Evangelism Enabler and Chair of the Cliff College Committee.*

## PIONEERING A NEW FUTURE

*Phil Potter*

BRF, 2015, pp208, £7.99, 978-0857464149



Phil Potter offers this book as a guide to assist with shaping change and changing the shape of church. What is particularly heartening, is that Potter unashamedly states that change should be about becoming more mission-shaped. Amongst other things, Potter encourages the asking of ruthless questions at least once a year, regarding the pattern of services, meetings, organisation and building. To support this, he offers a very helpful list of questions. He writes as both a pastor and a practitioner, and therefore has included many questions for practical reflection (for individuals or groups) at the end of each chapter.

It feels like a book of two halves - with the first half offering a practical guide. In many ways, he does not offer anything particularly new. However, he does offer it in a practical, realistic way. Having read this book, I have subsequently found myself using some of the questions and advice with some of the churches I visit as a District Evangelism Enabler.

The second half incorporates more theological reflection. To great affect Potter uses biblical principles and stories and at times offers new interpretations to some well-known passages about being church. He also recognises that humans don't always respond as we would hope. With this in mind, he spends time working through participation and inclusion - helpful to those of us who would want to rush ahead and get the job done.

Throughout the book, Potter offers many examples and stories. Much of these come from his time as Vicar at Haydock, Merseyside, where he recalls the church's journey through the stages of change. Potter uses his own experience in a very honest and affirming way; several times he acknowledges his own mistakes and failings yet gives testimony to the grace of God. Within his writing there is a wisdom that comes from this wealth of experience.

Whilst this book carries the Fresh Expressions logo, I think it would be most helpful to those leading inherited churches through change. Potter brings helpful insights from fresh expressions - particularly with regards to building church in new places and being connected to culture. The term 'pioneering' is often glamorised - this book does not do that, so do not be put off by the title. Potter gives a timely reminder to prune and not to just keep adding more and more things to existing heavy workloads. Whilst he offers much practical advice, he also encourages the reader to sacrifice common sense occasionally in the pursuit of following God.

This book encourages change through the addressing of values as opposed to following a process. This comes with the reminder that the heart of the 'change' problem is the problem of changing hearts.

*The Revd Elaine Lindridge, District Evangelism Enabler, Newcastle Upon Tyne District.*

# THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Kevin Jones

*IN THIS SERIES OF THREE BIBLE STUDIES, MET EXEC MEMBER, THE REV. KEVIN JONES, VISITS THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST AS REVEALED IN THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS (THE SUBJECT OF THE 2019 BIBLE MONTH).*

Colossians is as much a book for our day as it was for the early church. Epaphras, the minister at Colossae, is facing enthusiastic false teachers; he realises their error but is unsure how to respond. The church is growing and grappling with its understanding of Christ. In the face of embryonic error, he seeks the Apostle's wisdom. Then, through the challenge of facing up to error, a clearer understanding of the supremacy of Christ is revealed. False teaching, in this instance, leads to a deeper understanding and expression of the truth of the person and work of Christ. Today, it can also cause us to think more deeply about what we really believe and help us express the truth more clearly.

The false teachers proclaimed that a hidden knowledge was available to the new gentile converts. They did not deny faith in Christ but argued that faith was the beginning. It qualified gentile believers to experience Jewish ceremonies and angelic authorities. Their Gospel was Christ plus angels, Christ plus circumcision, Christ plus observing Jewish laws and rituals. Paul is clear that it is not Christ plus - it is Christ alone. He outlines Christ's supremacy in four areas.

## HIS SUPREME PERSON - 'THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD'

Our image of someone reveals our understanding of who they are; often our image of Christ is as a baby at Bethlehem, a miracle worker, or a crucified saviour. Paul introduces him as supreme over the universe. Images have two functions, to represent and to disclose; an image depicts and reveals its subject - seeing the image, you understand more of the thing or person represented.

In Exodus, images of God are expressly forbidden: 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath; you shall not bow down

to them... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God' (Exodus 20:4-5). The problem with an image of God is that it debases his glory; representing his strength omits his meekness and representing his compassion omits his judgement. An image of God is at best partial and at worst deceptive. God is Spirit and a representation made by human beings cannot capture his majesty; we need the Holy Spirit to reveal to our spirit the specific image of God that we need at any given time.

Our problem is that as 'Spirit,' God is invisible. If we want to know what God is like we have no frame of reference. That is, until Jesus; as Paul tells us, Christ is the 'image of the invisible God' - God is depicted exactly in Jesus. 'God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him' (Colossians 1:19). Jesus not only depicts God to us, he reveals God to us. He is the invisible God, made visible. Only in Jesus is the full majesty of God adequately made known.

## HIS SUPREME STATUS - THE 'FIRSTBORN'

This term causes problems for some; they assume that firstborn means born or created first, thus denying both Christ's divinity and eternity. The title 'firstborn' is not always about chronology, it is also about pre-eminence. Biblically, the firstborn in a family has the right of inheritance - they inherit the family farm, name and blessing, they hold the chief status in the family. Jacob follows Abraham and Isaac in the list of descendants, but he was not the firstborn; because Esau despised his birthright, Jacob became pre-eminent. Similarly, Solomon was not a firstborn son, but held the status of firstborn on becoming King (Psalm 89:27).

The term firstborn is used of Jesus many times. In the Christmas story he is literally Mary's firstborn: 'she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:7). Here the use is chronological - she had other naturally born children after Jesus (see Matthew 12:26 and Mark 3:31-32).

'The firstborn among many brothers' (Romans 8:29) and the church belonging to 'the firstborn' (Hebrews 12:23), are titles of Christ's pre-eminence. He is the head of the family and ruler of his Church; he is the elder brother with the rights of inheritance. However, he is not the only one to bear the image of God; through regeneration we bear the likeness of God in our soul, we become his 'many brothers.' The titles 'firstborn over creation,' 'firstborn over the Church' and 'firstborn from the dead,' speak of Christ's supremacy. It is a title displaying his dignity and honour not his chronology. Christ is 'first' in status and first in authority, he is the one who has the right to rule creation, not just because he existed before creation, but because he performed the act of creation itself; 'by him all things were created' (Colossians 1:16).

The New Testament revelation depicts Christ's deity and supremacy over all created things. God, 'the Father,' created the universe, through the work of Christ 'the Son.' The relationship between designer and builder helps us; did the designer or builder make the building? The answer is, they both did. The picture we are given is of God as the designer, and Jesus as the master builder. He enacted the creation to the Father's specific design. It was made 'by him' and exists 'for him'. At the end of time, a redeemed creation will be Christ's inheritance, bestowed by the Father.

Then Paul dismisses the idea of angelic intermediaries, for Christ also created 'dominions, principalities or powers' (Colossians 1:16). Today, he sustains his creation through his active intervention, for, 'in him all things hold together' (Colossians 1:17).

## HIS SUPREME MISSION - 'RECONCILIATION'

'God was pleased... to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood' (Colossians 1:19-20). We need reconciling because we 'were alienated from God and were enemies in our minds because of our evil behaviour' (Colossians 1:21). Most people do not see themselves as God's enemies, but as basically good people who make mistakes. The Scripture is clear; we are tainted by sin and a holy God cannot overlook the sin of the human heart. So, God in Christ has

acted to reconcile us, and reconciliation is hard work; reconciliation brings together warring parties.

This is Christ's work: he came to reconcile enemies, to make peace through his blood, to cleanse and forgive, to 'present us holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation' (Colossians 1:22). God's moral laws innumerate and accuse us of sin, the law condemns, but Christ the 'lamb of God' reconciles, his blood became the price of our peace. Reconciliation has three parts: we were reconciled at the cross, we are reconciled through faith and we will be reconciled, 'blameless, and above reproach,' at his coming.

## HIS SUPREME PURPOSE - 'TO MAKE US HOLY'

Christ's supreme purpose is to 'present you holy without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel' (Colossians 1:22-23). Some believers at Colossae were falling away; Paul explains that the purpose of faith is to produce a changed life. We cannot save ourselves, but we can make sure that we continue in the faith. The sign of true faith is a renewed mind (Romans 12:2). God expects devotion to lead to holiness: 'Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth' (Colossians 3:1-3).

The false teachers preached salvation through secret knowledge. Paul explains that the secret or 'mystery...

hidden for generations... is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:26-27). If Christ lives in us, then God himself is in us; when the believer has Christ within, they will honour him as supreme above all, and walk in holiness as revealed in his word; for, 'without holiness no-one will see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14). Diminishing Christ, or indulging in sin, places us outside the faith. Only by knowing Christ, can we be rooted in worship and thankfulness: 'as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith... and overflowing with thankfulness' (Colossians 2:6-8).

*'The Revd Kevin Jones is Superintendent Minister at Gornal West Midlands. He studied at Mathersey Hall Bible College, Hartley Victoria, Manchester University and Cliff College. He is married to Anne-Marie with five children and four grandchildren.'*



“  
*Jesus not only depicts God to us, he reveals God to us. He is the invisible God, made visible. Only in Jesus is the full majesty of God adequately made known.*  
 ”

# REPORT FROM MET AGM

# SW CONFERENCE REPORT

The AGM was held at Cliff College on the Bank Holiday Monday of the Festival weekend and was attended by over forty people.

## UPDATE FROM CLIFF

The Principal of Cliff College, the Revd Ashley Cooper, shared an update from the college. He said that as a college, Cliff is exploring the future, but also looking at where it has come from, recognising that some of its original DNA has been lost. They are sensing that God is re-focussing them as a centre for Evangelism and Mission - thus holding on to the original vision of the college and developing it further. They are launching a gap year for 2018-19 for young people aged 18-30, for a 'year at Cliff' experience - called 'YES YOU CAN!'

The Chair outlined that the Donald English Young Scholars Fund [DEYSF] was available to support applicants to the YES YOU CAN! gap year at Cliff College, with a grant of up to £500 per person.

## DEVELOPMENT WORKER'S REPORT

Paul Wilson thanked the AGM for the support for him and his wife Karen over the last six years, as he has sought to fulfil the vision of MET as a renewal movement which is Bible-based and prayer-focussed. He had very much appreciated the opportunity to be released into a teaching ministry in the Word and the Spirit. Paul expressed his thanks for the opportunities, hospitality and rich blessings he had received from his role in MET and assured us of his continued prayers for God's blessing on the work of MET and the Methodist Church.

It is recognised that Paul has substantially raised the profile of MET during his time in this role as Development Worker, and for that we are most grateful. Plans are in place for a phased end to Paul's role as Development Worker during September and October.

A recruitment process is being embarked upon as we advertise this role. We are looking at employing

either a full-time worker or two part-time workers as a job share.

## NOMINATIONS

Prayer Conference: The Revd Kevin Jones; January 2019 - December 2021

Diaconal Support: Deacon Julie Morton; January 2019 - December 2021

MET Connexion Editor: Vacant 1 January 2019

These were all agreed.

## WEBSITE

A bright new contemporary website is now available, following much work behind the scenes over the last few months by Paul and Marian. It is nearly complete; transferring the resources over is one of the final tasks that need to be carried out.

## PRIVACY POLICY

GDPR had been adhered to - we had conducted a data review, ensured that we are compliant with the new GDPR legislation and that a Privacy Policy was now available on the website.

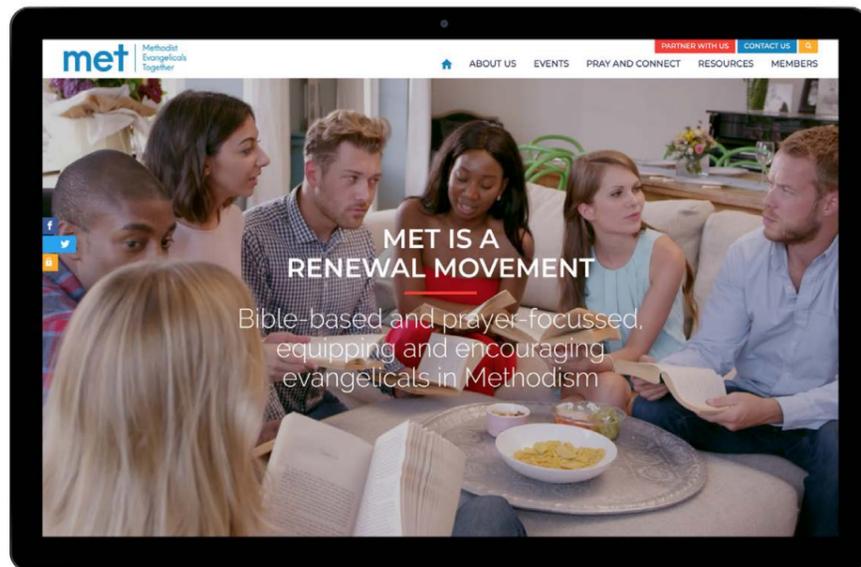
## MARRIAGE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Chair updated the AGM with the

journey to date: The decision for MET to follow the stance of biblical teaching had been fully endorsed.

MET have produced a statement which was sent to the Connexional Task Group and is also available on the MET website. The Connexional Task Group has been given permission to delay bringing their full report on Marriage and Human Relationships to Conference in 2018 and instead have produced an interim report to be discussed in small groups at Conference. The Task Group are hoping to present their full report to Conference in 2019, with a view to it being accepted by the 2020 Conference. This means a suspension of the normal two-year consultation process and the Task Group are asking for this to be granted. This issue is of concern to the MET Executive as it means inevitably that debates will be restricted and result in a lack of full consultation amongst local churches and in circuits. MET suggested that MET people speak to their Conference reps in their Districts in order to maintain the two-year consultation process. The executive committee will circulate a response to the interim report as a briefing paper to MET partners by email prior to Conference.

Marian Izzard - General Secretary: [admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk)



The key speaker was the Revd Paul Smith, who chose to expound on the subject 'The Lamb of God'. It was, as might be expected from Paul, a masterly exposition. His four headings were: 'Where is the Lamb?', 'Behold the Lamb', 'Like a Lamb' and 'Worthy is the Lamb'. I admit that I approached the conference cautiously - just how appropriate in the twenty first century is the image of a sacrificial lamb as a vehicle for understanding the wonder of the Christian faith? Paul's insight into both Old and New Testament passages on this topic left no room for doubt. It

is in the context of the ancient Jewish sacrificial system that this title of Christ can be richly understood, informing our faith perspectives and enriching our understanding. Is it an image that I would use evangelistically? Certainly not, but as believers search deeper for the meaning and significance of the incarnation, Paul showed it to be a richly rewarding study.

Put into the context of a comfortable hotel with sea views and outstanding service, lively and appropriate worship and times for quiet prayer, opportunities to share thoughts and insights and to spend time with

friends old and new I would recommend the conference to all our members.

Interestingly, one phrase stuck indelibly in my mind (from Simon Beresford, Director of Fundraising, 'All We Can'): 'There is no them and us. There are only us.' This is well worth thinking about!

God bless you and your valuable work,

*The Revd Doreen Sparey-Delacassa - Superintendent Minister to the Camelford and Week St Mary Circuit: [doreen.sd@btinternet.com](mailto:doreen.sd@btinternet.com)*

Methodist Evangelicals Together  
**met**

## MET SOUTH WEST CONFERENCE 2019 MENTORED BY JESUS

Speaker: The Revd David Coffey  
25 - 27 January 2019

Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay Seafront

A weekend of Bible exposition, encouraging worship and prayer, great fellowship and wonderful hospitality. Come for the weekend or for a day.

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## MET PRAYER CONFERENCE 2018 THE FATHER-HEART OF GOD

Speakers: The Revd Nick & Mrs Linda Holt  
2 - 4 November 2018

Willersley Castle, Cromford, Derbyshire DE4 5JH

A weekend of worship, prayer, teaching and fellowship in the comfort of Willersley Castle and beauty of the Derbyshire countryside.

Book online: [methodistevangelicals.org.uk/tpc](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk/tpc)  
or contact the Revd Kevin Jones: [kevtherev34@hotmail.com](mailto:kevtherev34@hotmail.com) / 01902 664773

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS



22 September 2018

## WORD

Speaker: The Revd Paul Smith  
The King's Cross Church, Doncaster,  
10am

13 October 2018

## BIBLE TEACHING DAY

Speaker: The Revd Leslie Newton  
Gracious Street Methodist Church,  
Knaresborough

25 - 27 January 2019

## MET SOUTH WEST CONFERENCE 2019 / MENTORED BY JESUS

Speaker: The Revd David Coffey  
Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay Seafront

6 October 2018

## DIGGING FOR TREASURE

Hosts: Marian and John Izzard  
Speakers: Jonathan Lamb, Amy Orr-  
Ewing, Ed McKenzie and Derek Tidball  
Seminar: Ed McKenzie  
Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

2 - 4 November 2018

## MET PRAYER CONFERENCE

Speakers: The Revd Nick & Mrs Linda Holt  
Willersley Castle, Derbyshire

Full details and booking forms  
available on MET website:  
[methodistevangelicals.org.uk](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

## MIND AND SOUL

### OUR AIMS

To Educate: Sharing the best of Christian theology and scientific advances.  
To Equip: Helping people meet with God and recover from emotional distress.  
To Encourage: Engaging with the local church and mental health services.

### OUR DNA

Mind and Soul is run by people with professional qualifications and/or personal experience of emotional health, ill health. We aim to provide high quality resources that are up to date, accurate and offer an open-minded and detailed exploration of that subject.

Mind and Soul is faith founded, recovery focused, jargon free, demystifying and destigmatising. We are passionate about the potential that exists within the church, and within the millions of people dealing with emotional and mental health problems. We aim to bridge the gap, integrating psychology, psychiatry and the church.

For more information, visit: [www.mindandsoulfoundation.org](http://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org)



# LIFE LABYRINTH

Louise Gough

LOUISE GOUGH SHARES A MEDITATION  
TO HELP US TO REFLECT ON THE UPS AND  
DOWNS OF LIFE'S JOURNEY.

The Revd Louise Gough is a Minister in the Bramhall and  
Wythenshawe Circuit. She has a passion for music, writing,  
liturgy and dance, and enjoys leading Quiet Days.

## BESIDE ME

Companion me God  
on this uneven journey  
called life.  
Travel beside me  
and in my heart.  
Be my destination,  
my goal,  
my every moment.

Even when I wander far from you,  
on the outside edges of faith,  
never let me out of your sight.  
When I teeter on the brink  
of rationality,  
perspective blurred,  
guide me on the paths  
that lead to life,  
that lead to you.

When I enter your gate,  
you shelter me in the tent of your presence,  
and your peace burrows deep in my soul.  
Though I long to stay  
in the still centre of your love,  
you build me up  
and send me out  
to serve you in the world,  
to companion others.

You are with me  
on the road;  
just beyond  
lie more green pastures.

## BROKEN

God  
sometimes  
I feel broken.  
Smashed up  
on the inside.  
Sometimes  
a careless remark,  
a memory's echo made vivid,  
will catch  
on the jagged edges of my heart.  
It jars.  
When I react in pain,  
crying out in protest,  
you understand.  
God  
I am broken.  
Bits of me  
are fragile,  
vulnerable,  
susceptible to damage.

But I am also  
fearfully and wonderfully made,  
your own beloved child,  
crammed with gifts,  
a unique song to sing.

God,  
in your gracious love,  
restore me.  
Show me  
your presence  
in pain,  
in the life  
that comes through  
the agony of the cross.  
In time,  
let your love  
smooth over  
my rough serrations;  
create shapes  
and patterns  
of wounds and scars.  
Where suffering  
has worn holes,  
Indwelling God,  
may your light  
shine through.

Make your glory known  
through the gashes,  
and where tears have coursed,  
may your life-giving waters flow,  
that all might know  
your life,  
your love.

## BURDENED

God  
this burden  
is breaking my back.  
I ache from the strain.  
My shoulders stoop  
and I cannot lift my head.  
This pain  
this fear  
weighs heavy  
and I don't know who I am  
without it.  
God  
my steps  
are getting slower.  
My legs are leaden.  
I cannot carry on.  
Everywhere I go  
shadows prowl,  
whispering words  
that convince me I'm worthless.  
Finally  
I slump to the ground,  
crushed under  
the bulk.

You crouch beside me  
and wipe away the tears.  
You gently prise the load  
away from me  
but I cling to it.  
You tell me it's time to look  
but I shut my eyes.

Slowly  
together  
we unpack.  
Every item  
taken out  
and placed in the sun.  
In your light  
things don't seem so dark.  
It takes time  
this unboxing  
of guilt, of fear, of shame.  
You have time.  
And compassion.  
There is no fear  
and no judgement  
in your love.  
You tend my wounds  
and begin my healing journey  
to wholeness  
to freedom  
to joy.

## BLESSED

I never dreamed  
peace like this.  
Your perfect acceptance of me,  
this weightlessness  
in my heart.  
Being here  
with you  
is all I need.  
I am complete.  
You have filled me  
with your love,  
overwhelmed me with grace  
and my battered soul sings.

I now know  
there is no fear  
in life  
in death  
because you are with me  
and love is eternal.  
You have plumbed my depths  
and waded through the murk  
of my shame.  
Through the life-giving waters of  
baptism  
you have claimed me,  
and I am yours.  
Wherever I go,  
whatever lies ahead,  
I know that you love me  
and that is everything.  
From my core  
flow prayers  
of praise and thanksgiving.  
I cannot contain  
my gratitude.  
I never dreamed  
peace like this.  
Your perfect acceptance of me.

# PRAYING ALWAYS



As we pray around issues relating to mental health, many of us will have had family and personal experience in this area. Mental health is a real, though often unaddressed, issue. In this Praying Always, for each day of the month there are four prompters for prayer, including a verse of scripture and a charity or organisation to pray for. I have tried to cover all people – as there will be needs and difficulties in all areas of life. Please add any needs from your own church and family, as they come to mind. ‘Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things... And the God of peace will be with you...’ ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen’ (Philippians 4:8-9+23).

- 1  **GENESIS 41:8** // Mencap // Those affected by suicide // Those who are widowed
- 2  **DEUTERONOMY 28:65** // Rehabilitation units // All who are bereaved // Families
- 3  **JOB 38:36** // Mental Health Foundation // Those who are unemployed // Marriages
- 4  **PSALM 26** // Together // Those in retirement // Children and Young people
- 5  **PSALM 42** // The Centre for Mental health // Full-time carers // Mothers
- 6  **PSALM 139** // Depression Alliance // Ex-servicemen and women // Fathers
- 7  **PROVERBS 12:25** // PANDAS (Post-natal Depression) // Those who are addicted to alcohol // Grandfathers
- 8  **PROVERBS 23:33** // Citizens Advice // Those who are addicted to drugs // Grandmothers
- 9  **ECCLESIASTES 2:22-23** // Childline // Medical professionals // Young carers
- 10  **ISAIAH 26:3** // Young Minds // Those who are suffering with Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease // Scout leaders
- 11  **DANIEL 2:1-29** // Age Concern // People working in retirement homes // Youth Workers
- 12  **DANIEL 7:15-28** // Night Line // Families you know who face difficulties // Teachers
- 13  **MATTHEW 6:25-24** // Refugee Council // Those who live with low self-worth // Doctors
- 14  **MATTHEW 16:23** // Headway // Those who suffer with guilt & shame // All who are displaced
- 15  **MATTHEW 22:37** // Teacher Support Network // Those who suffer from fear & anxiety // Funeral Directors
- 16  **MARK 3:21** // Retreat centres // Those who carry unresolved bitterness & resentment // Ambulance & paramedic workers
- 17  **MARK 5:15** // Hospices and workers // Single parent families // Nurses
- 18  **LUKE 21:14** // Alcoholics Anonymous // Those who have been through painful divorces // Those who live alone

- 19  **LUKE 24:38** // Anxiety UK // Those who have suffered brain damage // Clergy
- 20  **JOHN 11:33** // Samaritans // Hospitals // All who are lonely
- 21  **JOHN 12:27 + MATTHEW 14:33** // Mind // Schools and SEND provision // Fire Fighters
- 22  **JOHN 14:1+27** // Place2be (a school-based charity) // Those who are sleeping rough // Those serving the Royal Air Force
- 23  **ROMANS 1:28** // SANE // Asylum seekers // Those who serve in the Army
- 24  **ROMANS 7:23-25** // Together for Mental Wellbeing // Families who are separated // Those who serve in the Royal Navy
- 25  **ROMANS 8:6-7+27** // Mental Health Foundation // Those caught up in slave trafficking // Head Teachers
- 26  **ROMANS 12:2** // MHA Dementia Units // Councillors and those in training // Care at Home workers
- 27  **1 CORINTHIANS 2:9** // Alzheimer's Society // Those who are suffering from depression // Boys' and Girls' Brigade Leaders
- 28  **2 CORINTHIANS 2:13** // Gamblers Anonymous + Narcotics Anonymous // Those who feel of no value // Prison Officers
- 29  **EPHESIANS 6:12-18** // Christians Against Poverty // Psychologists & Psychiatrists // Police Officers
- 30  **PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9** // Acorn and other Christian Counselling Services // Healing in and through the Church // Lawyers
- 31  **COLOSSIANS 3:1** // Survivors' Trust // Those who feel discouraged in the workplace // Full-time carers

Any prayer requests for the next issue should be sent to the Revd D Kevin Jones:  
kevtherev34@hotmail.com

(Kevin is also available to lead Church groups, seminars and retreats on prayer.)



## FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd David A. Hull*

Dear Friends,

I was delighted to be able to welcome a room-full of people to our AGM in May. There was standing room only! We had just come to the end of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' global wave of prayer initiated by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for the days between Ascension and Pentecost. It has been an amazing initiative; whether or not you took part this year, I do hope you will sign up to participate next year.

As I have reflected on the original prayer meeting between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, narrated by Luke in Acts chapter 1, I have been struck by two things: how Jesus filled his time between his resurrection and his ascension, and how the disciples filled their time after Jesus had ascended into heaven. Jesus filled his time by speaking to his disciples 'about the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:3). He ended his earthly ministry in the same way he had begun, by proclaiming the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). That is the Good News, the gospel: God's dynamic rule has come to earth in Jesus and continues through the church, and we are all invited to enter in. No wonder that was how Jesus filled his time!

The disciples filled their time with prayer (Acts 1:14). They could have spent their time talking to one another – about all that had happened and all that might happen – but they chose to spend their time talking to God in prayer. It seems very fitting, then, that we are now called each year to spend those same days in prayer: 'thy Kingdom come'.

As we have reflected on these verses and others, on the situations we face in the Church and in the world, and in our conversations at our last meeting as an Executive Committee, we have sensed that the Lord is calling us to a new season of prayer. I am delighted that, around the Connexion, there were a number of 24/7 prayer initiatives throughout Conference this year as business was discussed and decisions made, and that there will be a new series of prayer events around the Connexion as we visit the historic sites of Methodism to 're-dig the wells'. Please do consider how you and your church might share in this fresh wave of prayer throughout the Connexion.

Although he will continue in role in a part-time capacity until the middle of October, we have taken the opportunities at the AGM and at our reception at Conference to say farewell to Paul Wilson, our Development Worker. After six years' service, he has now been stationed as the Superintendent Minister of the Liverpool (South) Circuit. Whilst we are very sorry to see him go, we have all sensed the Lord's hand at work in the process and are very grateful to the District Chair and Circuit Stewards for agreeing to a phased start in order to ease the transition for MET. I cannot do justice here to the gratitude we owe to Paul, and to Karen, for all they have done over the past six years in the Lord's service through MET, but I do at least want to say 'thank you' again. I know many of our readers will be holding them in prayer as Paul begins his new role.



Since Conference, a number of people have been in touch to express grave concern about the direction of travel Conference seems clearly to have adopted in the debates surrounding marriage and human relationships, concerns which I share. We will continue to contribute to the debates and provide resources as opportunities arise. Our current statements and resources are all available on our website, on the 'Big Issues' page of the resources section.

As we face these debates, and many others, we must continue to look to the Lord. Whatever is debated and whatever is decided, he continues to be at work for our good and for his glory. So, let's be joyful, let's be prayerful, and let's be thankful, for whatever else is unclear, it is clear that this is his will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Rejoicing in our partnership in the Gospel,

*David*



'She Danced'  
Rebecca Bush  
[www.artbyrebeccab.com](http://www.artbyrebeccab.com)

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