

# metconnexion

WINTER 2017/2018 | COVER PRICE £2.50

## FEATURING

LORAIN MELLOR, JILL BAKER, ANDY FROST, GRAHAM HORSLEY, ED MACKENZIE,  
IAN HENDERSON AND TIM WOOLLEY

Give thanks  
Keep Silence Pray  
ACT read & reflect

*Living the Faith (Part 1)*



# EDITORIAL

Anne Middleton

This is the first of a special two-part edition which aims to get us thinking about and discussing important topics. When I commissioned the articles for this edition and people discovered that it was a two-parter, of course everyone wanted to write for the Spring edition! So, many thanks to all the contributors for agreeing (with a little encouragement!) to take on the task of writing for the first part!

MET is seeking to provide resources to encourage people of all ages across the Connexion, to discuss topics that are key to the Christian life. This two-part edition of MET Connexion is the first step, but the project will continue through a variety of other formats, including video resources for young people.

This edition of MET Connexion is packed with the first half of our key topics. Loraine Mellor challenges us to play our part in the mission of the church. Jill Baker teaches us about engaging with the rhythms of discipleship. Andy Frost urges us to make sharing Jesus a priority and not an added extra. Graham Horsley explores what it means to be church in the 21st Century and Ed Mackenzie guides us in our interaction with the living and active word of God. Ian Henderson has written on the largely unspoken, though prevalent, subject of pornography, with a view to encouraging us as a church to speak about and be equipped to support people with such an addiction. And, finally, Tim Woolley has thoughtfully tackled the issue which is probably the most difficult subject for the Methodist Church at present - Marriage and Relationships.

This edition also sees the third and final of Howard Mellor's wonderful Bible Studies on Grace. The depth of content has been inspiring and I know from feed-back that readers have found them to be extremely helpful. MET hopes to work with Howard to produce a new resource which will include the set of three Bible Studies. On the subject of MET's Bible Study resources, rather than the usual Resource Reviews, for these two editions, I have decided to feature some of MET's resources. Our Development Worker, Paul Wilson takes these with him on his journeys around the Connexion and for this edition, he has helpfully put together a summary of the Bible Studies available.

Finally, I just want to thank those who have shared their testimonies for the Good News section. I have been inspired by the honesty and vulnerability shown by several of the contributors and am grateful for their courage in sharing their stories. I hope that you find this edition helpful and pray that, as a church, we will strive to tackle the difficult issues in love. I also pray that we will get better at sharing our stories - even the painful and less glamorous ones - to encourage each other as we live out our stories in the light of His story...

*The Editor welcomes articles and Good News stories for future issues. The Spring edition will continue the special focus on evangelical perspectives on a range of issues; authors for these have already been approached. The deadline for submission is 19 February but items can be submitted at any time to be included in future editions. 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*

## FEATURE ARTICLES

- 3. **WHAT'S OUR MISSION?**  
By Loraine Mellor
- 6. **THE RHYTHM OF DISCIPLESHIP**  
By Jill Baker
- 8. **SHARING JESUS - NOT AN ADDED EXTRA**  
By Andy Frost
- 10. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHURCH?**  
By Graham Horsley
- 12. **HANDLING SCRIPTURE WELL**  
By Ed Mackenzie
- 14. **PORNOGRAPHY - THE NAKED TRUTH**  
By Ian Henderson
- 18. **A LIFELONG ENCOUNTER**  
By Tim Woolley

## REGULARS

- 16. **GOOD NEWS STORIES**
- 20. **RESOURCE REVIEWS**
- 22. **FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER**
- 24. **BIBLE STUDY** By Howard Mellor
- 29. **PRAYING ALWAYS**
- 31. **FROM THE CHAIR**

## CREDITS

Editor: Anne Middleton  
Designed by:  
danielwatsondesign.co.uk  
Printed by: cliffe-enterprise.com

## PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: © Detail from the 'Five-a-Day' postcard (from the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, 2017-2018), Methodist Publishing / TMCP; page 2: © Anne Middleton; pages 3-5: © Anne Middleton / Alex Baker Photography / TMCP; pages 6-7: © Jill Baker; pages 8-9: © SJI / Great Commission; pages 10-11: © Graham Horsley; pages 12-13: © Ed Mackenzie; pages 14-15: © Naked Truth / Ian Henderson; pages 16-17: © Frances Ballantyne / Mark Lawrence; pages 18-19: © Tim Woolley; pages 20-21: © Paul Wilson; Jacqui Parkinson; SJI; page 22: © Paul Wilson; page 23: © Joanna Williamson; pages 25-26: © Ruth Field / Howard Mellor; page 28: © Cliff College; page 31: © David Hull; Back Cover: © Jacqui Parkinson.



# WHAT'S OUR MISSION?

Loraine Mellor

**LORAIN MELLOR URGES THE METHODIST PEOPLE TO BUILD ON THE TEACHING OF ACTS AND TO PLAY OUR PART IN ENABLING PEOPLE TO ENCOUNTER GOD - BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.**

On being designated to be President, at the London Conference, many former Presidents and Vice-Presidents offered helpful advice about the role. They all said one thing which has proved to be true, and it is that I would 'know and feel the prayers of the Methodist people'.

As I have travelled in just a few short weeks to a number of Districts, Uganda, Isle of Man, Hong Kong, Fiji, to my own synod and to the Liberal Democrats conference in Bournemouth, I have without exception been aware of people's prayers for Jill and me. I am reminded of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, who asked his disciples to stay awake with him to pray; there is no doubt in my mind that the Methodist people have not been sleeping when praying for and with Jill and me. We both use the 'Prayer Handbook' every day and join with the Methodist people in praying around our Connexion. This idea of daily prayer and devotion and following a regular pattern made me reflect on what I was actually praying for.

None of us can have failed to be moved by the latest report on statistics for mission, where we see some startling figures: 4552 places of worship, 1600 ministers - of which 180 are in chaplaincy - around

188,000 members. Our church is obviously in decline - but what do we pray into that situation? I also wonder what has to happen to our beloved Methodist Church before there is a recognition that something has got to occur to reverse this trend of decline. I believe it starts with God - and those moments of revelation in our worship when we encounter God - and it's in that place of encounter, of prayer, when the heart of God is revealed. This challenges me further: how focused are our prayers; how often do we pray asking God to reveal to us people with whom we can talk to of God; how often are our prayers focused so that the Lord will add to our number daily those who are being saved?

### MISSION STARTS WITH PRAYER

Jill and I chose a passage from Acts 2 this year, to focus on and to develop as part of our theme:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their*

food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47 NRSV

This passage depicts within it our two passions – my passion is mission and evangelism, and you can read about Jill’s later in this magazine. I wonder as you read this passage, which is so familiar to us, do you pray as the disciples prayed? Mission starts with prayer and in worship. The passage tells us that they devoted themselves to prayer, and that word ‘devoted’ is an interesting one; it actually means very loving or loyal and is synonymous with words like loyal, faithful, true, staunch, steadfast, constant, committed, dedicated and devout. Do those words reflect your prayer life? I am not sure that they reflect mine; if I am very honest, I have found prayer hard at times, not because God has moved away, but because I struggle to know what to pray for. My prayers seem like a very long list of requests: bring peace to this situation, relieve that burden, heal him, release her, feed the hungry, care for the homeless, stop that war... You get my drift of course – and then I read the statistics for mission report. What do I pray?



“  
*How focused are our prayers; how often do we pray asking God to reveal to us people with whom we can talk to of God; how often are our prayers focused so that the Lord will add to our number daily those who are being saved?*  
 ”

I have been vocal this year and I have said publicly, not just in my presidential address, that I am not ready for the Methodist funeral – and I mean that. Why not? Because I believe that as Methodists we have much to offer our communities when you think of our emphasis on holiness, social action and on mission. I am not naïve – I know that it’s about building the kingdom, not the denomination. However, for me the denomination is important; if we were lost from the ecumenical arena, our partners would be diminished, as we bring much to the ecumenical landscape. If we build on what was achieved by our ancestors, it will not be lost: they met in small groups studying the Bible and were accountable to one another; they could be found looking



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION | GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What can the Methodist Church do to reverse the decline in numbers?
2. Do we actively pray for our mission?
3. Do we actively pray that God will reveal to us people we can talk to about him?
4. How can we play our part to enable people to encounter God?

after the poor, feeding the hungry and being alongside those who were sick; they worked in the workhouse and the school, and they protested at the rally; and above all, they prayed together for each other and the church. So, we must be called to prayer.

### WE ALSO HAVE TO PLAY OUR PART

I have also said that we don’t have too many churches, we just don’t have enough people in them. This is because many of us in my age group, fifty plus – which is the demographic in many of our churches – have never had to be (or not wanted to be) missionaries and evangelists; we have been devout, we have worshipped, we have prayed, but for some reason we have been reluctant to share our faith – to ‘talk of God’. Now in 2017, we have to be missionaries and evangelists, especially if we want to see the church not just survive but grow. I am not ashamed of my God, I am not ashamed of the church; I love the church which has nurtured and educated me to be a disciple, and I believe that every person on this planet has within them a God-shaped hole just waiting to be filled with the overflowing, abiding, precious love of God. However, I have to play my part, not just in praying, but also enabling people to encounter God.

Have I been too reluctant to pray that the church might be renewed and revived? I devote myself to the apostles’ teaching and to prayer; I do that in my house group, when faith can be unpacked and I can learn more; I do it in worship when I crave that deep, deep encounter with God, be it in stillness and silence or in the spoken, or in the praise and the worship; I do it when I pray, when I set time aside to be with God – when we

encounter God, that is where our prayer life starts. Then we pray that renewal and revival will come to our land, that people will come to know Jesus.

As the Methodist people, inspired by the Holy Spirit, let us give thanks and let us pray that renewal and revival will come to the Methodist church. Let us be silent and wait on God, let us read and reflect on his holy word, let us act and change the world, or at least our part of it, let us be radical in our mission and take some risks. This is no more than our great and mighty, ever-loving God deserves. Time is running out. So, what is your mission?

*The Revd Loraine Mellor is a Presbyter and, when not the President of the Methodist Conference, is the Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District.*



Methodist Evangelicals Together

met

## EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY WEEKEND 2018

*A MIXED-UP MINISTER?*

Led by the Revd Tom Stuckey, a former President of the Methodist Conference.

Friday 2 March – Sunday 4 March 2018

Swan Bank Methodist Church, Swan Square, Burslem, Staffs ST6 2AA

A time for teaching, rest, and mutual support for those in ministry for less than 5 years, and student ministers.

(Where applicable, spouse / children welcome for free.)

Details and booking form are available on the MET Website: [methodistevangelicals.org.uk](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

# THE RHYTHM OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jill Baker

**VICE-PRESIDENT OF CONFERENCE, JILL BAKER, ASKS HOW DISCOVERING AND SUSTAINING A RHYTHM OF SPIRITUALITY MIGHT HELP US IN OUR JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP.**

Spending eight years as a mission partner in the Caribbean was a great introduction to rhythm! Hymns which we had been singing all our lives sounded very different when accompanied not by the organ but by young members of the church on drums or, if no drums were available, someone beating a wooden chair. The singing was transformed as people caught the beat and clapped along; spirits were lifted, worship was raised, we left still humming or tapping. Rhythm is powerful.

Rhythm is all around us - breathing out and breathing in is the most basic (and essential) rhythm, a rhythm we engage with automatically most of the time. In August, I travelled to Ethiopia to see some of the work of 'All We Can'. Several of our visits were to farmers high up in the mountains; as I walked uphill at heights nearing 3000 metres I was suddenly very conscious of my breathing; the thin air at that altitude didn't seem to be sustaining me adequately. The words used for 'breath' in Scripture are the same as the words for Spirit; 'ruach' in Hebrew, 'pneuma' in Greek. As we seek to be filled with God, we adopt the natural rhythm of breathing in the Holy

Spirit of God and breathing out the love and compassion of Christ. This kind of breathing will sustain our walk with God; without this regular, constant breath of life our discipleship soon dies.

## OUR DAILY PILGRIMAGE

In recent years, pilgrimage has played an increasingly important part in my own spiritual life. Pilgrimage does not have to be physical, but it very often is and there is something special about walking in the open air (rain or shine) along an ancient path in the company of others. Over time, the body adopts its own rhythm of walking, sometimes enabling the pilgrim to achieve a greater distance than they had anticipated, or to keep going in poor weather or difficult terrain. Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot... the longest and hardest journeys are only negotiated by allowing that simple rhythm to take over and even to carry us. It is so obvious, but so true that every destination is only reached by taking those small repeated steps. If sainthood and perfection are the goals we would like to reach in our Christian journey, it is what we do in the next few minutes, and the ones after that, and tomorrow and next week which shape our pilgrimage and take us closer to those destinations (or not).

## OUR SPIRITUAL FIVE-A-DAY

During this year, Loraine (Mellor) and I are encouraging the discovery - or rediscovery - of a daily rhythm of spirituality. We have been inspired by the

account in Acts 2:42-47 of the earliest Christian gatherings and their emphasis on daily rhythm. 'Day by day' they met together for prayer and fellowship; 'day by day' they grew - it sounds as natural as breathing or walking. So, we are suggesting a 'Spiritual Five-A-Day' which might give health and strength to our discipleship, just as our five portions of fruit and vegetables keep our bodies in good condition. The five disciplines are: Give Thanks, Pray, Keep Silence, Act, Read & Reflect. We hope and pray that as each of us (and we too are learning) try to build these practices into our daily lives, we will be refreshed by the Holy Spirit and will overflow with a faith which is renewed and enthusiastic and attractive.

Writing this, however, I am aware of two possible dangers in this approach. Firstly, I know that there are times in our lives when rhythm can become menacing, threatening, or deadening. The fourth century desert fathers and mothers had an understanding of what they called 'acedia', a deep inner listlessness, even apathy, where the idea of doing the same things every day, day in day out, can be oppressive to the point of destruction. (To hear my address on this subject at the Methodist Conference on 24 June 2017, visit: [methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-2017](http://methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-2017).) If our discovery of rhythm is to be life-giving, perhaps we need to recognise that there is also a greater rhythm at work in our lives, which means that we will all pass through times of struggle and barrenness. Some days we can't 'get

“

*As we seek to be filled with God, we adopt the natural rhythm of breathing in the Holy Spirit of God and breathing out the love and compassion of Christ. This kind of breathing will sustain our walk with God; without this regular, constant breath of life our discipleship soon dies.*

”



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION | GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Breathe deeply in, breathe deeply out. Still your mind to focus on the way in which our lives are constantly surrounded by the Spirit of God and give thanks.
2. Are you aware of a rhythm of spirituality in your own life? Has it changed over the years?
3. Have there been times in your life when you have needed to focus on each breath, each step? Can you share these times with anyone?
4. How might you go about discovering, or rediscovering, the rhythm of spirituality in your own discipleship and within your church or fellowship group?



going'; that's okay. Some days we can't pray, or open our bibles or give thanks; that's okay too - the rhythms of joy and sorrow, laughter and lament, peace and pain are natural rhythms too. They do not mean that God is absent or that we have failed God and are being punished. At times like these we fall back to that most basic of rhythms, where I began, we just keep breathing and try to hold onto the hope that things will change again.

Secondly, I don't want to suggest that in our search for a rhythm of discipleship 'one-size-fits-all'. Rhythms vary - the strong reggae beat with which we were joyously surrounded in the Caribbean is very different from the delicate, lilting

rhythm of Scottish folk songs, or the haunting, compelling patterns in some classical music. The worlds of music and poetry and literature, as well as the worlds of sport and risk and adventure, or the worlds of design and style and art are all full of rhythms and each of us is on a journey to discover the unique rhythm of our own life lived in harmony with God's Spirit. That is a tune worth hearing and one which only we can play.

*Jill Baker is the Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. A lay Methodist living in Glasgow; she is a Local Preacher, a tutor and a pilgrimage leader and her chief therapy is working with the rhythm of the year through gardening.*

*Jill blogs at: [northoftheborderblog.wordpress.com](http://northoftheborderblog.wordpress.com)*





IT'S EASY TO GET BUSY WITH URGENT ACTIVITIES AND LOSE FOCUS ON OUR MOST IMPORTANT CALLING. ANDY FROST, DIRECTOR OF SHARE JESUS INTERNATIONAL, OFFERS ADVICE ON HOW TO AVOID THIS COMMON PITFALL.

It has become known as the Eisenhower Matrix after the President's speech in which he explained, 'I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent {problems} are not important, and the important are never urgent.'

It seems that most of our churches believe that sharing Jesus is important, but have a massive to-do-list of urgent things; these range from planning weekly worship to raising money and from updating the church website to finalising the coffee rota. So, evangelism can often get side-lined as important but not urgent. Sharing Jesus can become a yearly event when the drawbridge is lowered, and we host a community fun day or start an Alpha course, rather than exercising the driving force behind all that we do. Still, I believe we need to be reminded of the urgency of sharing the Gospel and here are three myths that I think will help us do that!

#### MYTH 1: OUR CHURCH HAS A DIFFERENT FOCUS

I regularly come across churches that have a specific focus. For example, a church focused on caring for the needs of the community that is wary of being seen as proselytising, or a church focused on personal discipleship that is known for its Biblical teaching.

I love the fact that each church has a unique flavour brought about by its calling, its leadership, its members and its specific context. However, as we celebrate the different focus that each church has, we need to be

reminded that evangelism is integral to everything else. If we truly love people in our community and want to serve their needs, then Jesus is the only answer to their spiritual searching. If we truly want to be good at discipleship, then well-disciplined people will go on to make disciples as they live out and share their faith.

#### MYTH 2: OUR CHURCH HAS PROFESSIONALS

I remember preaching at one church about the role each of us has in sharing our faith. After the meeting, a very cross lady complained to me that this was not her role as she was not 'an evangelist'.

Although this kind of reaction might be rare, I think there is sometimes an undercurrent of belief that evangelism is best left to the professionals. In part, I think this is because we have not made the distinction between evangelists (those with a specific call to bring people to Christ) and evangelism (the generic call for all of us to share Jesus). To enable our congregations to share their faith better, we need to encourage them to be like Jesus and tool them up with the language to share Jesus well. Too often we have failed to model how each of us will share our faith differently. We don't all need to have the humour of J John, the confidence of Joyce Meyer or the statesmanship of Billy Graham. Instead, we need each member of the congregation to discover how to share their story well.

By regularly creating space to share people's experiences of sharing Jesus, we model different approaches and take the fear out of evangelism as it more naturally becomes who we are.

“  
*Our inspiration is Jesus. Whoever came to him, whenever and wherever the location, he shared grace and truth.*  
”

#### MYTH 3: OUR CHURCH HAS TO GROW

There is a danger that we live compartmentalised lives, where our faith activities are separate from other aspects of our lives - our work and our social lives. This is exacerbated by the fact that more people than ever either work in one area but attend church in another, or commute several miles to a Sunday congregation. Sometimes we can live under the idea that sharing Jesus has to build our local church. Therefore, if the people we encounter during the week live too far away, then we have a great excuse to do nothing. Or if we can't see how the young person on the bus could ever fit into our church that has no youth work, then we don't have to share Christ.

Instead, we need a bigger vision of the Church. We need to help our congregations discover that we may be a God-incident in someone else's faith story. Joining the Church is essential but joining our church is not.

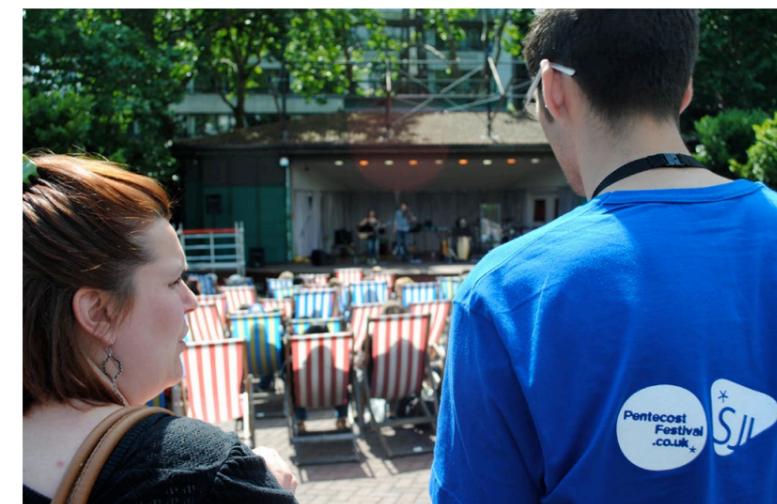
Let's make the important urgent. Let's make faith-sharing central to all we do. Let's equip our congregations better. And let's capture a bigger vision of church than merely our Sunday mornings. Our inspiration is Jesus. Whoever came to him, whenever and wherever the

location, he shared grace and truth - from the religious elite through to the social outcast. Even the interruptions were opportunities. Let's do likewise...

Andy Frost is Director of Share Jesus. He is passionate about communicating the life transforming message of Jesus. He is based in London, a Methodist Local Preacher and married to Jo with two young daughters.



Note from the editor: Thanks to the Evangelical Alliance for permission to use this article, which was originally published at: [greatcommission.co.uk](http://greatcommission.co.uk) - an online evangelism hub bringing you stories that inspire, resources to equip, articles that encourage, and prayer tools to empower.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION / GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What focus or activities take priority in our church?
2. What could our church do to prioritise evangelism?
3. What stops us from sharing our faith in our personal lives?
4. Who could we share our story with?
5. Do we welcome unexpected conversations about our faith? How could we turn 'interruptions' into 'opportunities'?

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHURCH?

Graham Horsley

GRAHAM HORSLEY, THE CONNEXIONAL FRESH EXPRESSIONS MISSIONER, EXPLORES THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

What does it mean to be Church? To answer this question, we need to ask first 'what is Church for?' John Wesley saw his purpose quite clearly 'to reform the nation and in particular the church to spread scriptural holiness across the land' ('Wesley's Works 10', 845) It is important to see this big picture - Church is not there simply to help us to feel good (though that's not unimportant - see below), it's purpose is nothing less than to bring the Kingdom of God into being where we are.

From a biblical point of view, my starting point for understanding the nature and purpose of the church is Ephesians 3:14-19 - Paul's wonderful prayer that the Ephesian church would truly understand how much they are loved by God. My own story is that I came to Christ as a teenager because I met some Christians who knew that they were loved in a way that I desperately needed. When we truly know that we are loved (which paradoxically happens when we die to self and live for Christ) all sorts of things find their proper place.

## SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

We know we are loved when God reveals his love to us. It's entirely God's initiative. When that happens, we can love God in return - not in our strength, but in his. We can choose to turn away from God's love, but we can't even do that until he reveals it to us. This is the heart of worship, an intimate encounter with God that takes our breath away, that leaves us speechless. It can happen in many different ways, but one of the important components is music that touches the heart (for me that's mostly rock/blues style - it may be different for you) and especially that touches the hearts of those who aren't yet followers of Jesus. The church has too often stuck with its own heart music and ignored the spiritual seekers outside. Gospel proclamation should be done the way that Jesus did it - parables and questions that leave people thinking rather than sermons that tell us what we ought to think.

## CAN DO CULTURE

Because God has revealed his love to us in Christ, and we've been transformed by it, we are no longer limited in what we can achieve for him. Healthy churches create a culture where people are encouraged to find and exercise their ministry. Unhealthy churches exercise tight control over decision-making and participation. I vividly remember praying about my ministry at South Chadderton Methodist Church (a brilliant 'can do' church) and hearing God say, 'don't

say no for the first year'. It was the most exhausting time in my ministry, but the most fruitful. One of the lessons we've learnt through the Fresh Expressions movement is that there are lots of gifted lay people with vision and passion, who can achieve enormous fruit for the Kingdom of God once they find space to work with freedom to do what God tells them to do. When we know that we are loved and valued by God, we are not threatened when others discover their gifts and do great things for God.

## SMALL GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY

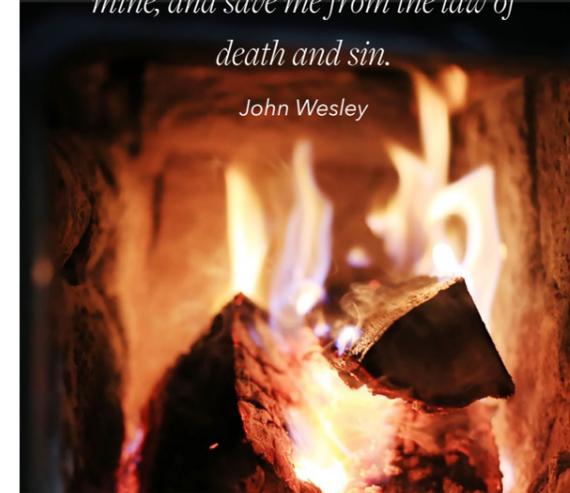
When individuals commit themselves to help each other to live well and have a framework in which to do it, change happens powerfully. Methodist band meetings and class meetings were the engine of the 18th century revival. The times that I've grown most as a Christian in my life, are when a small group of trusted friends have encouraged me, prayed for me and challenged me to be who God made me to be.

## 24-7 DISCIPLESHIP

If we measure discipleship in a 'churchy' way, we're missing the point. True discipleship equips us to be good partners and parents, good workmates and good neighbours. The reason that too many people have drifted away from church is that church was only equipping them for church - not for the rest of life. When our meetings are focused on us becoming who God created us to be, they're so much more attractive.

*I felt my heart strangely warmed.  
I felt I did trust in Christ,  
Christ alone, for salvation; and  
an assurance was given to me that  
he had taken away my sins, even  
mine, and save me from the law of  
death and sin.*

John Wesley



## PASSION FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT YET FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

This begins with a natural sharing of love with the people we meet and a willingness to bless them (in ways they understand to be a blessing). Love people until they ask why, then share the love of Jesus with them. It's important to think about how attractive our church activities are to those who are not yet Christians and to put stepping stones in place to ease them in gently. It's also important that members regularly share what God is doing in their lives - this is even more powerful than evangelistic preaching (though this should happen several times a year).

*It's important to see this big picture - Church is not there simply to help us feel good (though that's not unimportant...), it's purpose is nothing less than to bring the Kingdom of God into being where we are.*

## PASSION FOR KINGDOM VALUES

Methodism can rightly be proud of the part it has played in the Trade Union movement, in local and national politics. The number of Methodists in serving professions is also disproportionately high. I'm glad that the divide between evangelism and social action, that characterised our worst period in the 1970s, has gone and that evangelicals recognise the need for political action and liberals recognise that it's important that people become followers of Jesus. Wesley's original goal to reform the nation through the spread of scriptural holiness is still vitally important. Church



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION / GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Where have you had your most profound spiritual experiences? How can we be a church that expects and encourages these experiences?
2. How do we respond to new ideas? How can we create a culture in which they are encouraged and supported?
3. Is accountability for the chosen few or for everyone? How can we find the level of trust required to be open about our dilemmas, doubts and failures?
4. What are the issues we face outside church that we need equipping to deal with?
5. How do we increase our passion for those who are not yet followers of Jesus? How much do we need to change our existing church activities, and what do we need to add, to be more welcoming to spiritual seekers?

must always seek to bring healing to those who've been hurt by injustice as well as working to remove the source of the injustice.

*Graham was led to Christ as a teenager by students from Cliff College. Ever since, he's had a passion for creating the sort of Church that people who don't yet know Jesus would want to join. He was called to the Methodist ministry whilst a student and has worked in a number of churches as well as resourcing evangelism, church planting and Fresh Expressions from within the Methodist Connexional Team.*



# HANDLING SCRIPTURE WELL

Ed Mackenzie

## ED MACKENZIE EXPLORES KEY PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR READING OF SCRIPTURE.

How do we handle scripture well? How should we approach it if we confess it to be 'living and active' (Hebrews 4:12), able to shape our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ? We begin by trusting that scripture really is God's word to us. Despite being separated from the biblical world in time and place, despite the effort and discipline required to read it regularly, and despite those times when it appears that the text fails to connect with our hearts, we approach the Bible trusting that God speaks through it.

When we approach the Bible this way, we follow our Lord's example. Jesus assumed that the Old Testament scriptures were God's Word. He cited them in his teaching (Mark 10:2-9), relied on them in his temptations (Matthew 4:1-11) and pointed to them as uniquely authoritative (Matthew 5:17-20). Moreover, just as Jesus trusted these words, so too did his earliest followers. Open up any book of the New Testament and you will find citations or allusions to the Old Testament. The New Testament writings were soon recognised as equally inspired (2 Peter 3:16), part of God's providential plan to build up his people.

Searching the scriptures is a 'means of

grace,' as Wesley put it, a way in which God changes us. Encountering the Bible means that we meet the God who breathes through it, the God who makes known his face in Jesus Christ. The Spirit speaks through these words.

But when we hold closely to that trust, what do we need to bear in mind as we seek to read the Bible wisely?

### READING CAREFULLY

Firstly, we read scripture carefully. I begin with this point because all too often we allow our own questions, our own agendas, and our own assumptions to shape what scripture means. We move too quickly to the question 'what is God saying to me now?' While that's an important question, a careful reading of scripture begins by asking, 'what was God saying then?'

A careful reader takes time with the text, time to really grasp what it's saying. Careful readers think about the main point of the passage, identifying its key words and themes. They seek to trace the flow of the story or the argument. When we seek to dwell under God's Word, we need to make sure we've heard it correctly. We need to listen to it carefully.

### READING CONTEXTUALLY

Secondly, we read Scripture contextually. This, of course, is a dimension of careful reading, since careful readers always make sure that they place the text in

the right context. Focusing on literary context is often a good place to begin, asking questions like, 'what appears before and after this passage?' and 'how does this text fit within the flow and the structure of the book?' We also need to consider the genre of the text we're reading. We interpret a proverb differently to a prophetic oracle, for instance, and a letter differently to a lamentation.

Thinking about the historical context is also important, and here Bible dictionaries or commentaries can be helpful. It can also be useful to have a rough mental map of key events within biblical history, such as the exodus, the exile and the fall of Jerusalem.

### READING CANONICALLY

Thirdly, we read scripture canonically. The canon of scripture, the sixty-six books that make up the Bible, shape the interpretation of any single book, and of any single text within it. The canon, if you like, provides the overall God-given context in which we consider any biblical passage in any biblical book. By reading canonically, we pay careful attention to the way in which the New Testament alludes to and cites the Old Testament, and explore the way in which both Testaments contribute to the life of the church.

We also recognise the progression of the biblical story from scene to scene and book to book. To read canonically means that we note where we fit within

the narrative. The majority of us will be gentile Christians, grafted into God's people (Romans 11:11-24). As such, we are freed from the law of Israel (Galatians 5:2-6) but shaped by the 'law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2), seeking to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24).

### READING FOR CHRIST

Finally, we read scripture as centred on Christ. Jesus read the Old Testament in such a way on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:27), while Paul similarly sees the scriptures as finding their fulfilment in Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:11). As Martin Luther once put it, the Bible is the cradle in which Christ lies.

This means that in the Old Testament, we can find figures or images of Jesus, whether in the Davidic king, the high priest, or the suffering servant. Such images shape the New Testament depiction of Jesus as the climax and fulfilment of the law and the prophets. While we should first read scriptural passages in their immediate context, a Christ-centred interpretation can also be part of the interpretive process.

Since we're not the first disciples to read the scriptures, listening to other readers - past and present - can also help us to grasp more fully how the Bible reveals Jesus. Interpreting the Bible well is the call of the whole church. There is no greater task for the church than to rest under God's Word to us in scripture, guided by the Spirit into willing obedience to Christ. As we seek to read the Bible well, God meets us there. So we experience the gift and the light of his Word to us.

*Dr Ed Mackenzie is a Discipleship Development Officer in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network and an Associate Lecturer at Cliff College.*



“  
*Encountering the Bible means that we meet the God who breathes through it, the God who makes known his face in Jesus Christ. The Spirit speaks through these words.*  
”



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION | GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How have you experienced God speaking to you through scripture?
2. In what ways can you learn to listen carefully to what the scripture is saying?
3. Why is knowing the context so important in approaching scripture?
4. How does the canon guide our reading of any particular biblical book?
5. How can we read Old Testament passages in the light of Christ?
6. How can listening to others help us read scripture well?

# PORNOGRAPHY — THE NAKED TRUTH

Ian Henderson

## IAN HENDERSON SHARES HIS PROBLEM WITH PORN, TO OPEN THE EYES OF THE CHURCH AND TO FREE LIVES.

I loved my old job. I was part of an incredible and inspirational group of people who were making a difference for the Kingdom across the world. Honestly, it was the kind of job people dream of. Yet in 2014 I left to set up Naked Truth, a project that aims to open eyes and free lives from the damaging impact of pornography. Yes, pornography! To be honest, that had never been part of my plan, and I certainly didn't sit down with my careers advisor at school and tell her that in my forties I hoped to start a porn project.

A few years later and I still get the question, but only from the brave ones. 'So, did you start Naked Truth because YOU had a problem with porn?' I love that kind of honesty, so I try and be honest in my reply. 'I STILL have a serious problem with porn, but not in the way that you think I do.'

### MY PROBLEM WITH PORN

The birth of the internet followed swiftly by its big fat brother broadband, were game changers both for those making and those looking for porn. Then in 2007, Steve Jobs introduced the world to his new invention - the iPhone. It was a revolutionary idea and great news for Apple fans like me, but also the beginning of a huge shift in our culture.

The internet is great, and I can't imagine trying to end a 'family discussion' without getting out my phone for Google's final say. But also, we have become the 'porn in our pocket' generation, with anytime, anywhere access to unregulated content. Arguably never in history has pornography been more accessible, affordable, anonymous or potentially addictive. **That's a problem.**

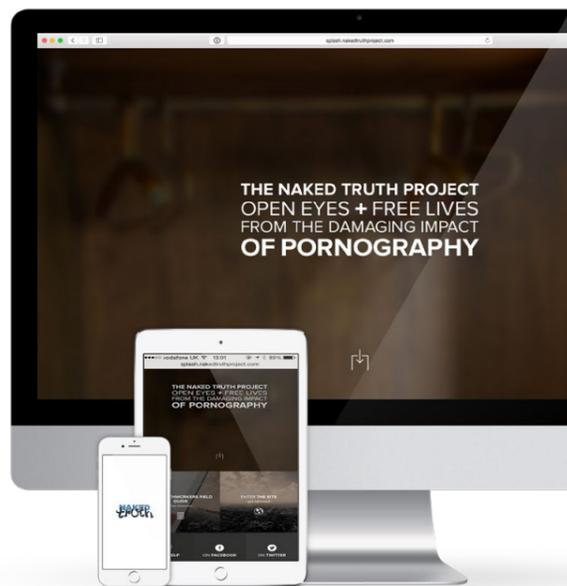
In 2016 ONE pornsite reported 23 billion visits a year ('Pornhub', Year in Review, 2016); that's 1.9 billion a month - over seven times the monthly visits to BBC iplayer (downloads. [bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/iplayer/iplayer-performance-apr17.pdf](http://bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/iplayer/iplayer-performance-apr17.pdf)). That pornsite's top five search terms include: Teen, Step Sister, Step Mum ('Pornhub', Year in Review, 2016). **That's a problem.**

After analysing top-selling porn content, 88% of the scenes contained physical aggression ('Aggression and sexual behaviour in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update,' 'Violence Against Women 16,' Ana Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Chyng Sun and Rachael Liberman, Oct. 2010, 1065-1085). **That's a problem.**

An association of lawyers reported 56% of their divorce cases involved one party having an 'obsessive interest'

in pornographic websites (American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 2002). And in a study of 800 regular porn users, 20% said they prefer the excitement of viewing porn to being sexually intimate with a partner (Katie Szittner, 'Study exposes secret world of porn addiction,' 2012). **That's a problem.**

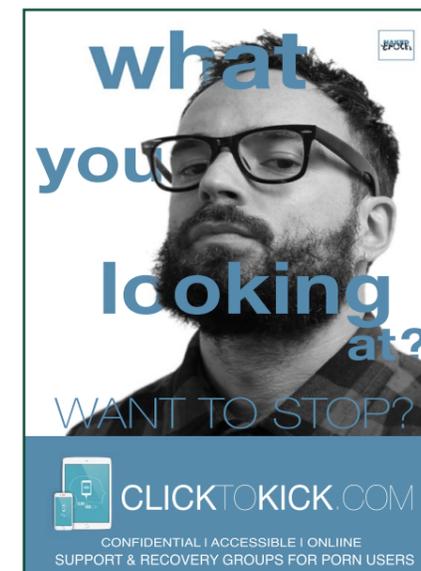
In a recent government report 94% of teens said they had seen porn by the age of fourteen (taken from a sample of a thousand teens - 'Dare to Care' report, 2016). In another report, 40% of 11-14 year-olds have used their mobile phones or computer to send pictures of themselves or receive naked or topless images of friends ('SW Grid for Learning,' March 11). **That's a problem.**



41% of Christians admit to being addicted to pornography (PremierChristianMedia 2015). Only 7% of Churches have programmes to help those struggling with porn ('Covenant Eyes,' 2016). **That's a problem.**

Porn use leaves individuals broken and beaten down with shame and self-hate, feeling disconnected from God and community. Spouses and partners feel betrayed, isolated and to blame. Young people's expectations of sex, intimacy and self-image are being shaped by profiteers and porn use. Porn performers speak of being coerced and controlled with some even the victims of trafficking. **That's a problem.**

I think you get the picture. Things have drastically changed in the last 10 years. Porn is no longer an issue that some people struggle with sometimes. Porn has become a problem for all of us. It may not be because of our own personal porn use, but because of its impact on our friends, our partners, our children, our pastors, our churches, our culture. An issue so immense and so destructive for so many, shouldn't be ignored. That's why we provide lessons in schools, anonymous online recovery groups for adults (clicktokick.com), workshops for parents and support for spouses. THAT'S why I started Naked Truth.



### WISDOM & FOLLY

Proverbs 9 famously personifies both Wisdom and Folly as women calling out to passers-by in their city. Folly, who

lives in the busiest part of town (v14), simply sits in her doorway and entices all who, as the Message translation puts it, are 'confused about life' (MSG, v16). But listen to her words, they summarise so much of the power and pull of pornography. 'Come into my house... Stolen water is sweet, food eaten in secret is delicious' (v17). There is a whole sermon in that verse alone, but I am going to focus on the next one. 'But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead' (v18). Talk about bait and switch. This isn't a case of over-promise and under-deliver. This is a case of promising satisfaction and delivering desperation and destruction. Folly will always maximise the impact and minimise (or even hide) the implications.

“  
*Porn is no longer an issue that some people struggle with sometimes.*  
*Porn has become a problem for all of us.*  
”

### WISDOM'S HOUSE

In Proverbs 9, Wisdom also shouts out an invitation, she also wants people to visit her house. She has prepared a feast of meat and wine there and everyone gets an invitation (v2). (This idea of a meal is rich with the language of God's Kingdom - look at Isaiah 25:6.) Finally, she makes her way to highest point in the city; I imagine her standing outside Folly's house, crying out 'Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live' (v5&6). There is something better, something beautiful, something more.

The other day I was sitting at an event listening to one of the Naked Truth team tell her story. Bethany was describing her time at university where she was studying Theology but would run home from her lectures to watch

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION | GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Did any of the statistics shock or surprise you?
2. In what ways do you think Folly's invitation resonates with the 'pull of pornography'?
3. What are some of the do and don'ts for churches that wish to support porn users and partners?

porn. Or how she would lead worship on Sunday, exhausted and crippled with shame, because she had watched porn all of the night before. But she also described the moment she broke the secrecy and told someone in her church. The day she started the journey to Wisdom's house and the forgiveness, hope and freedom that she feasted on. That's what Naked Truth is all about. Open Eyes and Free Lives.

*Ian Henderson is the CEO of Visible Ministries and Founder of the Naked Truth Project. He lives in Manchester with his wife and two daughters. You can find him on twitter as @hende. To find out how to get help or give help, visit: [thenakedtruthproject.com](http://thenakedtruthproject.com)*



# GOOD NEWS STORIES

## THE GOOD NEWS STORY I NEVER THOUGHT I'D WRITE

*Elaine*

I'm writing this testimony in the hope that it will encourage others out there who are struggling with the same thing. I want to tell you that you are not alone and that there is hope. To be honest, I didn't think I'd have to be writing a testimony about this topic. I always imagined it would happen to others but never to me. However, little did I know the impact a simple advert would begin to have on me.

I would watch TV with my husband in the evening. In between his programmes, there were 'dirty' adverts. Little by little I would find myself entranced by these images. I was then tempted to start to watch pornographic films - eventually, I realised that I was addicted. This addiction lasted for about five and a half years. Every time I gave in to the temptation, I would feel dirty and ashamed; towards the end, I didn't even have the courage to ask God for forgiveness. I tried to stop, but eventually I realised that I needed help of some kind. One day I was viewing pornography once again, and there was a pop-up on the screen for a 'sex chat'. At this point, fear came over me, and I cried out to God for help. Then I came across the testimony of a Christian woman who was freed from porn addiction. If it could help anyone, I'd recommend 'Women and porn addiction: Amy's story' ('Walking in Freedom,' Amy Riordan). At the end of her testimony she gives the name of an organisation ([settingcaptivefree.com](http://settingcaptivefree.com)), whose course on 'Purity' I am presently following. This has been the start of my deliverance.

The emphasis of the course is on the cross. I didn't realise just how powerful the cross is. I knew that we were saved through grace, but I didn't really take on board that the cross doesn't just save us for eternity, it also sanctifies and transforms us. Jesus, at the cross, didn't die just to forgive us. He also killed our sin on the cross. He gave us the means necessary to be freed from sin - the freedom not to sin.

I'd just like to point out here that pornography does not start at the viewing stage. It starts in your mind and heart. Over the past two months while doing the course, I've been 'soaking' myself in Christ's love through prayer and worship. Instead of giving in to Satan, I've been asking for the Holy Spirit to come into my life. I've been filling the 'vacuum.' Impure thoughts can be so strong at times; it's impossible to get rid of them unless we replace them with something even more powerful - in this case, the cross. I get excited now about feeling God's presence instead.

*At the time of writing this, Elaine hadn't viewed porn for about two and a half months and is trusting in God that one day she will be totally free. (The author's real name has been withheld due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.)*

## MY GOOD NEWS STORY!

*Frances Ballantyne*

I wrote this at the Methodist Conference in Birmingham. I have experienced other Christian traditions in the past, such as Open Brethren and Free Evangelical and had already been ordained within the Congregational Federation in 2004, but at this Conference, I was welcomed into Full Connexion as a Methodist Presbyterian!

My journey of adventure and exploration, of letting go and trusting that God had a plan and purpose for my life, began in 1989. It was at this time that I saw a video about keeping children safe; this brought painful memories alive of the sexual abuse that I had experienced as a child by an elder in the Open Brethren. It took time to disclose my story, and often I would feel re-victimised as, in that era, there was little pastoral care. I read my Bible from the perspective of suffering and found God's heart for the victim; I particularly loved the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4). After years of memories and nights of tears, I eventually discovered a Christian tradition that helped me to recognise that God had a purpose for my life. So, I completed ordination training and also served as a Mental Health Chaplain in the NHS.

It was when I got involved in the Emmaus Walk leadership programme that the Methodist tradition showed me God's grace. My story has experience of forgiveness and justice, rejection and loss, but above all a formidable confidence and passion in the God who redeems evil and brings forth good. My past had little grace, but my present and future are filled with hope. I pray that my story will give hope to others and offer them encouragement of another human being who has embraced suffering and yet rejoices in resurrection. This is my good news story!

*The Revd Frances Ballantyne lives in Spalding with her retired husband. She enjoys reading books and writing poetry (some of which is included in Geoffrey Duncan's Anthologies). She has appeared on Kilroy as a speaker on child-abuse and has contributed to 'Thought for the day!' on Radio Leicester. She enjoys holding quiet days and sharing stories of hope.*



## PARTY IN THE PARK

*Mark & Carolyn Lawrence*

We give thanks to God that he blessed us with glorious sunshine for our Ivybridge 'Party in the Park' (Plymouth & Devonport Circuit) on Sunday 17 September. Phil Blunt, our youth and children's worker presented his vision for an outreach event about a year ago. The church council agreed, and last Sunday was the culmination of much planning and faith.

A team started work on the set-up from 6 am on Sunday and by 10.30am we had family worship together and cancelled our morning chapel-based service. There were 90 adults and 20 children present for the live worship. After the service, we provided a free barbecue with a team of willing volunteers who cooked for several hours. With bouncy castles, an evangelistic escapologist and the Ivybridge Youth for Christ team, many good contacts were made with young and old alike and fun was had by all. The Revd Mark Lawrence, Minister of Ivybridge Methodist Church, who led the morning service in the park, was delighted with the day's events and the 'can-do' attitude of the hard-working members of the congregation in making it such a blessed event. We hope to go for it again next year - once we've all recovered!

*The Revd Mark Lawrence is Minister to Ivybridge Methodist Church, Plymouth. Amongst her many roles, Carolyn has worked in a voluntary capacity within the Methodist Church both locally as a preacher and leader, and nationally as a representative on the World Methodist Council.*



## PRESENCE AND PEACE THROUGH PAIN

*Kevin D Jones*

I arrived in Gornal, last September, having spent the previous week in hospital - gallstones have put me in hospital several times. Due to moving house, my operation was postponed until April 2017. Sadly, this was too long; the pain was intense, and I arrived in hospital in a very bad state. The surgeon had performed over five hundred keyhole operations without incident; two hours into the operation I needed major surgery - the gallbladder and liver were fused. I woke in high dependency and came home after six days.

Totally unable to sleep, or pray, I simply lay in pain singing hymns. As I lifted my voice in song, on the third night, the presence of the Lord filled the room and peace filled my wife and I as we received his beautiful presence. The pain remained, but the fear was gone.

Later I asked the Lord if I was dying. In my mind he imprinted a picture of a 400-metre track - the runner was on the top bend; the answer came, 'You're not even on the home straight yet.' Greatly encouraged, I made prayer a priority, and each time I pray, the presence of the Lord is rich and real. I'm 57 and asked the Lord why I couldn't have found this rich presence when I was younger. His reply was swift; I had to overcome my major fear, (death) before I could overcome my smaller fears. I realise fear has held me back for years, fear of people and fear of being openly Spirit-filled.

Six months on, I am still in pain daily, but my ministry and life have been enriched immeasurably, by finding his presence. I have joy and peace I never knew, and a new sense of purpose.

*The Revd D Kevin Jones has been saved for 38 years. His passion is to see the word of God come alive in the minds and hearts of God's people, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is Superintendent Minister of the Gornal and Sedgley circuit.*



## 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!

# A LIFELONG ENCOUNTER

Tim Woolley

*TIM WOOLLEY EXPLORES HOW A CLASSIC BRITISH FILM OF THE PAST MIGHT HELP US IN OUR CURRENT REFLECTIONS ON MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS.*

A few years ago, while on holiday I went on a pilgrimage to Carnforth railway station. Old film buffs will recognise the station as the location for one of the most enduringly popular British films, 'Brief Encounter'. For anyone who has never seen the film (and you really must!), 'Brief Encounter' is a 1945 British romantic drama directed by David Lean about British suburban life on the eve of World War 2. The story centres on Laura, a married woman with children, whose conventional life becomes increasingly complicated because of a chance meeting at a railway station with a stranger, Alec. They fall in love, and begin to meet regularly in the refreshment room of the station (where you can now enjoy a sumptuous lunch, hence my pilgrimage!) At the end of the film, realising she can't continue the subterfuge, Laura returns to her husband Fred, who suddenly shows that he has noticed her distracted manner in the past few weeks and has perhaps even guessed the reason. He thanks her for coming back to him and she cries in his arms.

The film is beautifully shot and very evocative of its period: indeed, the viewer can almost taste the smoke as trains pass through the station and smell the brewing tea in the refreshment room! It is a testament to great film-making and to an era long past. Moreover, it could never be made today. The primacy of marital fidelity which Laura precariously, but ultimately successfully, clings to was widely shared and respected at the time the film was made, but now society has largely left such values behind and with them vanishes the credibility of the plot to many modern viewers. Today Alec would simply jump into bed with Laura and the tension, if there was any at all, would be in how they would keep the affair from her husband. This is because the 'right' of Alec and Laura to the self-expression of their own passions would take precedent over any wider responsibilities.

There is a danger of course in nostalgia, and the film challenges us to reflect on what has been gained, as well as what has been lost in the intervening years. Laura's is a routine but loving marriage;

plenty of women, though, were trapped in abusive and damaging marriages and with divorce regarded as scandalous they lived miserable, unfulfilled lives. Noel Coward, who wrote the play the film was based upon, was a homosexual at a time when to be so was illegal and could be punished by prison. No one who worships a God of grace and truth should ever wish for a return to times when people lived in fear if their lives did not match up to societal norms enforced with little compassion or understanding.

We are not supposed now to find Laura, with all her struggles and contradictions, as heroic in the way that those who saw the film in the immediate post-war period did. Yet I still do; because it seems to me that at the core of the film is something rather profound and ultimately deeply Biblical. The idea that a loving marriage - the sacred contract between a man and a woman made before God and fulfilled by both partners - takes precedent over self-expression and that, when things get merely stale, trying again is preferable to seeking excitement elsewhere. This echoes down the years through myriad social changes, its relevance undiminished.



*In our current debates about the nature of marriage and relationships reflecting on 'Brief Encounter' reminds us that human life and its passions are messy and complicated.*

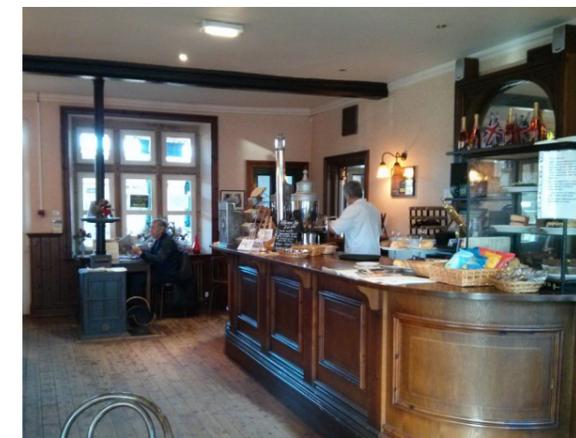


The Church of which I am a minister still stands with Laura. 'The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a lifelong union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman' (SO 011A (1)). Such a position, of course, predates Laura by quite a long way; marriage as a public declaration of vows between a man and a woman before God has been a part of church practice since at least the 12th Century and Methodism's first authorised liturgy, 'The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America' (1784), was an abridgement of the Anglican 'Prayer Book' (1662), which recognised the same understanding. Such an understanding is based upon a reading of the Bible in its totality. From beginning to end, the overarching biblical pattern for marriage is one of a lifelong union of one man and one woman, and as such is therefore the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy. It is a pattern built into creation itself and is symbolic of God's own relationship with his people, depicted as the culmination of God's creating and redeeming work. It is an understanding which is modelled in the person, life and teaching of Jesus. Christ affirmed the vocation to and lifestyle of singleness; permitted divorce in particular circumstances whilst upholding the Jewish understanding of marriage as part of the created order; and reaffirmed God's original purpose in marriage, namely the lifelong faithfulness of a man and a woman united by God, a gift from him to be cherished and celebrated.

In our current debates about the nature of marriage and relationships reflecting on 'Brief Encounter' reminds us that human life and its passions are messy and complicated. It enables us to see that societal norms change and that those norms which were merely judgemental and intolerant in the past are best left there, un lamented. It also enables us to see that if a norm is rooted not in prurience or narrow-mindedness, but rather in a deeper, older biblical tradition which mirrors something of God's gracious, faithful relationship with humanity and his continuing desire for human flourishing, it should never be cast aside lightly or so altered as to change its fundamental meaning. Marriage, written into creation as the lifelong union of one man and one woman and as a symbol of the union between God and his people in the new creation, is a gift from God himself to be cherished and celebrated. I hope and pray that we, as God's people called Methodists, will continue to stand with Laura, and, more importantly, on God's word.



*The Revd Dr Tim Woolley is Vice-Chair of MET and Superintendent Minister of the Hinckley Circuit in Leicestershire.*



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION | GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Watch Brief Encounter (ITV Studios Home Entertainment, 2008). How are themes of sin, forgiveness, and faithfulness dealt with in Laura's story?
2. Reflect on the changing understanding of marriage and relationships in our society. How might the central premise of Brief Encounter - that faithfulness and responsibilities to family are more important than individual freedom and self-expression - be conveyed in a loving and compassionate way today?
3. Read through Methodism's authorised Marriage Service in 'The Methodist Worship Book' (367-383) and the suggested additional Scripture readings (398). How does the marriage relationship between a man and woman in our understanding mirror God's relationship within the Trinity and with humanity?

### FURTHER READING

'A Christian Understanding of Family Life, The Single Person and Marriage': [www.methodist.org.uk/media/1245111/meth-statement-family-life-single-person-marriage-1992-0714.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1245111/meth-statement-family-life-single-person-marriage-1992-0714.pdf)  
'Statement on Marriage & Human Relationships,' Methodist Evangelicals Together: [www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/resources/met-statement-marriage-and-human-relationships](http://www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/resources/met-statement-marriage-and-human-relationships)

# RESOURCES

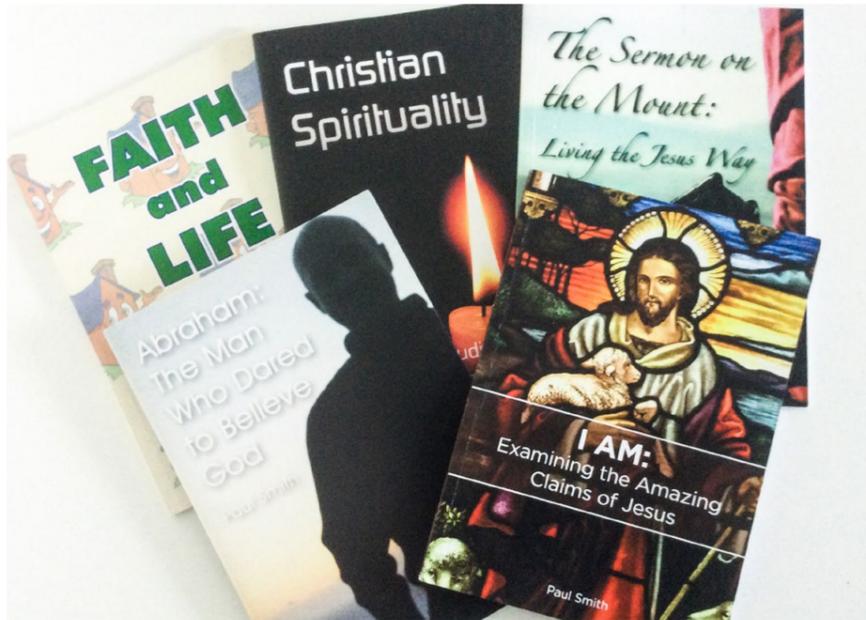


THE REVD PAUL SMITH HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS FOR SMALL GROUPS. THESE RESOURCES HAVE HELPED MANY TO ENCOUNTER THE LIVING WORD THROUGH THE WRITTEN WORD.

## CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

£3.50

This is a series of group studies which starts from the recognition that the way in which Christians express their devotion to Christ differs according to their personality and convictions, and that these different expressions make up a rich pattern of Christian spirituality. Seven different streams of spirituality are explored, each providing explanatory notes, biblical teaching, and suggestions for group discussion.



## FAITH AND LIFE

£3.50

A series of twelve easy-to-use house-group studies on Christian belief and behaviour. This course has been used widely as a discipleship course for new Christians.

for study in a home group, or could be used devotionally by an individual Christian seeking God's way for their life.

## ABRAHAM: THE MAN WHO DARED TO BELIEVE GOD

£5.00

This study of Abraham's life and faith is suitable for both private and group use. It is offered in the hope that the reader will find their own faith strengthened by reflecting on the life of 'the friend of God.'

*These resources can be ordered online from the MET website or by email from [development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk).*

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: LIVING THE JESUS WAY

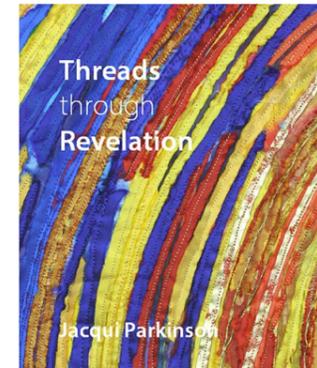
£4.00

Following Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount this book examines the teaching of Jesus as a blueprint for Christian living in every generation. Split into helpful sections it can form the basis

## I AM: EXAMINING THE AMAZING CLAIMS OF JESUS

£5.00

This series of studies is for individuals and groups to help them study the Bible and St John's Gospel in particular. They are offered in the hope that through them the reader will encounter Jesus again and, encountering him, follow him, and following him, discover life in all its fullness.



## THREADS THROUGH REVELATION

Jacqui Parkinson

£20.00

This beautiful book explores Revelation in great depth, giving detailed insight into Jacqui's textile art exhibition touring British cathedrals. Over 400 photos over 266 pages. To order a copy visit: [www.revelation-threads.co.uk](http://www.revelation-threads.co.uk)



## PROMPT

A thought and a question each week for a year! Each Monday, there will be a weekly challenges that promotes and inspires conversations about Jesus. You can receive the challenge via text, email or our new app! Prompt challenges you to listen out for the prompting of the Holy Spirit and see what happen's next.

Sign up now at [www.sharejesusinternational.com/prompt](http://www.sharejesusinternational.com/prompt)

Methodist Evangelicals Together  
**met**

## OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET MET MEMBERS

*MET RECEPTION @ ECG 2018 (3-8 April)*

4 April at 2.00pm

Music Room, Scarborough Spa

*MET AGM & RECEPTION @ CLIFF FESTIVAL (25-28 May)*

28 May at 3.30pm

Cliff College, Calver

For details and booking form please visit: [methodistevangelicals.org.uk](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk)



David Hull, during the AGM, reminded us that MET is a river of renewal with three tributaries:

- Prayer for Revival (Methodist Revival Fellowship)
- The Authority of Scripture (Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism)
- Charismatic Renewal (Dunamis)

This is reflected in our strapline: MET is a renewal movement which is Bible-based and prayer-focused. This leads to action in making Jesus known as we engage, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in mission and evangelism.

During 2018, we can participate in several Methodist and ecumenical initiatives, which share these emphases.

#### MISSION AND EVANGELISM

The Revd Loraine Mellor, President of Conference, in her presidential address, shared her concern about the state of the Methodist Church and her vision for taking risks to change its culture. Loraine said, 'I know I am part at present of a declining Church, but I am not part of a declining gospel.' We must take up Loraine's challenge of having confidence in the life-transforming good

news of Jesus. We need to talk about God. Hope18 and other evangelistic initiatives offer an opportunity for us to make Jesus known as we share our faith stories with family, friends, neighbours and strangers. In community activities, God's love is revealed in action.

2018 is a year of opportunity to develop a rhythm of mission in our churches.

#### DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

The Methodist Conference encouraged the Methodist Church to engage in days of prayer and fasting. At the start of the Connexional year, many churches participated in this initiative. Several churches have shared with me how God spoke to and guided them during this time. Throughout 2018, we can encourage people to pray together, to seek God's will and blessing locally, regionally and nationally.

The Five-a-Day initiative also enables us to encourage daily prayer and Bible reading within the life of the church. Jill Baker, Vice-President of Conference, shares about this in this edition of MET Connexion.

#### THY KINGDOM COME (MAY)

The Methodist Church has become a partner in this exciting initiative to pray for the evangelisation of Great Britain. During the ten days between Ascension Day (10 May) and Pentecost (20 May), we are invited to engage in prayer for



our communities. Resources will be available on the Thy Kingdom Come website. Our experience of leading prayer in innovating and exciting ways will enable us to lead our congregations in this initiative.

#### BIBLE MONTH (JUNE)

During June, we are encouraged to spend a month with the book of Jonah. (We can be flexible in the month depending upon local needs.) It is suggested that preachers collaborate in circuits to preach on Jonah through the four Sundays of June. This is an opportunity to provide expository preaching, exposing the truth of the nature of God and his mission, in contrast to Jonah's reluctance to engage in God's mission to the Ninevites.

Small group leaders, youth and children's workers are also encouraged to engage with Jonah in fresh and exciting ways. There may be the opportunity to lead small groups in conversation about mission and evangelism, to discover ways in which people can share the gospel with those around them. The Methodist Church website already has resources available.

2018 promises to be an exciting year for us all. We pray that this will not only be the year of sowing seeds but also reaping a harvest for the Kingdom of God.

Thank you for your prayers and donations as you enable me to strengthen congregations and champion these initiatives around the Connexion.

God bless,

The first one-day mini retreat run by Shelives took place in Plymouth on the 7 October. The event was hosted by Anne Middleton, with help from Cathy Nurrish and was held at Methodist Central Hall in Plymouth. 21 ladies attended and represented the Methodist Churches in the area, as well as a Baptist Church and a Pentecostal Church. We are especially grateful to Methodist Central Hall for all their support.

The event was much smaller than we had envisaged, but God brought the right women and it was a very special and meaningful day. Cathy Nurrish, who helped so much in the organisation of the day, shared the following:

*'I was so blessed by the first SheLives mini retreat for women - it was a real encouragement to 'live our best stories in the light of Jesus's story...' I loved that it was about sharing stories...and supporting one another in the next chapter... I think we need to do a lot more of this - sharing our stories - in order to build our ministry among women and to encourage one another... I think this is the beginning of something special...'*

We are now praying for the 'next step'. We hope that the women who came were encouraged to live their best story in the light of his story. For Joanna, one of the highlights was

praying with a young girl from Belarus afterwards, who is searching to discern her vision and in need of community her age; she has since attended a One Rock Academy in London. We were touched by how many women are not living their best stories. The feeling was that the women who attended appreciated the reflective nature of the day and that having a small group of women was key. Moving forwards, we would like to rethink and redesign the structure of the day and introduce more time for reflection and prayer.

*Joanna Williamson is the Founder of SheLives and Co-Founder of One Rock Academy. Anne Middleton is an author and storyteller - as well as the editor of MET Connexion!*



## DEVELOPMENT WORKER FUTURE APPOINTMENTS

Please pray for Paul Wilson, our Development Worker, as he ministers around the Connexion. Please consider how your church or circuit could be encouraged by his ministry.

#### January

- 6. MET Trustees meeting (Westminster)
- 7. Formby Methodist Church
- 14. Whitchurch Methodist Church
- 20-21. Trent and Dove circuit weekend
- 22. Wesley Guild, Farnworth
- 26-28. South West Prayer Conference

#### February

- 2-4. Altrincham circuit weekend
- 11. Bolton Road Methodist Church, Bury
- 25. Heath Street Methodist Church, Golborne
- 26-28. Rotherham Circuit Staff Retreat

#### March

- 2-4. St Andrew's Methodist Church weekend, Basingstoke
- 8. Liverpool Presbyteral Synod
- 18. To be confirmed
- 25. To be confirmed
- 29-1. Hope@Hexthorpe

#### April

- 4. MET Reception at ECG, 2pm
- 4. 2pm MET Reception
- 8. Scarborough Circuit Study afternoon and Circuit Service
- 28. Liverpool Representative Synod

# SANCTIFYING GRACE

Howard Mellor

CONSIDER   
REFLECT   
THINK 

This is the third and final interactive Bible study about Grace. One of the gifts of the Wesleyan heritage to wider Christian thought is an understanding about the way grace works in the life of the Christian believer. That can be summed up in this way: Grace is God influencing, wooing (prevenient grace); God rescuing, redeeming (saving grace); God shaping, empowering (sanctifying grace) – so that we may be mature Christian people fitted for service.

Throughout his life Wesley spoke of sanctifying grace. His reading of scripture led him to believe that the person who finds faith in Christ is filled with the love of Christ. This divine love, he argued, would bring them maturity, to be 'perfect'. He urged people to long for, to pray for, the love of Christ to fill their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine was discussed at the first Methodist Conference in 1744 where the question (set by Wesley) was raised, 'What is implied in being a perfect Christian?' The answer given (by Wesley) was, 'loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and soul, and strength' (Deuteronomy, 6:5; 30:6; Ezekiel 36: 25-9). In a letter to Hannah Ball, the pioneer of Methodist Sunday Schools, Wesley wrote, 'All that is necessarily implied therein (i.e. in Christian perfection), is humble, gentle, patient love, love regulating all the tempers and governing all the words and actions' ('Letters,' Vol 6, 65).

Wesley commented on the use of the word 'perfect' in the letter to the Hebrews (e.g. Hebrews 10:14; 11:40; 12:23): 'But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the same' ('The Scripture Way of Salvation,' 1765, 'Sermons,' Vol.2, 448).

Wesley makes the same emphasis in a letter to Walter Churchey in 1771: 'Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love – love expelling sin and governing both the heart and life of a child of God' ('Letters,' Vol.5, 223).

So, for Wesley, sanctifying grace, or Christian perfection, is the operation of God's love in the life of the Christian in such a way that the love of God is fully alive in us. 'Love' – 'pure love' – 'love expelling sin' – 'perfect love': these were the descriptions, which Wesley employed to express the heart of what he meant.

## LOOKING AT SCRIPTURE

There are two groups of words in the New Testament translated as 'perfect': *teleios* and *katartizō*.

**Teleios (Ephesians 4:13)** – referring to the goal of Christian discipleship – maturity in Christ. It refers to: being complete, mature; to make perfect by reaching an intended goal; a full complement of sailors on a ship, to bring to a full end.

(See also: John 17:23 – Jesus' prayer that we would be 'completely' one; Matthew 5:48 – being mature and complete as is 'your heavenly Father'; Colossians 4:12 – behaving in a mature way, 'toward outsiders'.)

**Katartizō (Matthew 4:21)** – referring to the mending of nets and is often used in practical ways such as repair, fit, frame, mend, restore, complete.

(See also: 1 Corinthians 1:10 – restored believers who are of the same mind and judgement; Galatians 6:1 – call to restore other Christians, 'in a spirit

of gentleness;' Colossians 3:14 – made to be in harmony with God and each other; 1 Thessalonians 3:10 – to supply or complete what is lacking.)

Look at these texts and consider what they say to you. What other Bible themes or verses would you add?

## SANCTIFYING GRACE SHAPES OUR LIVES

Holiness or sanctification is NOT for personal consumption and personal delight. God fills us with his love so that we may express outwardly the life of Christ in our lives. Sanctifying grace by the power of the Holy Spirit is very positive – it introduces a radical difference to us – a life that has quality.

The letter to the Ephesians exhorts Christians to express the life of Christ:

- 'be imitators of God' – being a mirror image of Christ. This is why the fruit of the Spirit are so important, because they are the expression of the life of God brought to our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:1).
- putting off and putting on – the language of baptism, putting off the old life and taking hold of a new way of living (Ephesians 4:2).
- it is a deliberate act of will, an attitude of the mind which affects behaviour, values, relationships (Ephesians 4:23).
- it affects our relationships with others, and highlights the close relationships, the way we treat others, and love others as Christ would do (Ephesians 5:3).

- behaviour and purpose – we are created for 'good works' (Ephesians 2:10).



If you were to describe a person who 'expressed Christ' in their lives, what would you expect to see? What sort of evidence would you find in their lives?

## HOW DOES THIS WORK?

This experience is, according to Wesley, both gradual and instantaneous. The Aldersgate experience on the 24 May 1738, we sometimes call a 'conversion', but so much led to it and followed from it. Moments of sudden disclosure are normally preceded and followed by the work of God's Holy Spirit in our lives.

Wesley considered the question of whether sanctification or holiness occurs suddenly in a crisis experience, or as a maturing process. To one of his preachers, George Gibbon, he wrote, 'It is our duty strongly and explicitly to exhort the believers to go on to perfection, and encourage them to expect perfect love by simple faith, and consequently to expect it now' ('Letters,' Vol.7, 267). But to his brother Charles on another occasion, he wrote, 'Go on, in your way, what God has peculiarly called you to...Press the instantaneous blessing: then I shall have more time for my peculiar calling, enforcing the gradual work' ('Letters,' Vol.5, 16).



The work of sanctifying grace is a dynamic relationship with God in which there are moments of disclosure, realisation and other times of development and growth. Ephesians has the same notion about a dynamic life of the Spirit: That we should 'be, being filled' (a continuous flow is assumed in this text) with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).



What about your spiritual journey? Have there been moments when you knew God particularly close, transforming your life – times of slow and steady development and growth?

## THE RESOURCES OF SANCTIFYING GRACE

There are two factors which empower our Christian lives and they are intertwined. First our relationship with God, and second our openness to the empowering, equipping and enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctifying grace:

- assumes that we are in a right relationship with God, that we are 'grafted' into Christ, the vine (John 15:1-17).
- assumes that we know, as Wesley knew, that we are pardoned and have peace with God (Romans 5:1-11).



- 'perfects' – makes us fit for purpose in life.
- gives us power for witness (1 Corinthians 10:13; Acts 1:8).
- is a dynamic process – we need to keep on being filled with God's love, with the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

However, Christian perfection is not:

- absolute (God's perfection is unequalled).
- sinless (only Jesus is without sin).
- infallible (not free from ignorance or mistakes to which no blame is attached).
- free from temptation (even Jesus was tempted).
- free from infirmities (such as dullness of thought or slowness of speed).
- final (there is always room for growth).
- inviolable (it can be lost).

## HOW CAN WE SPEAK OF PERFECTION?

There is another element found in Wesley's doctrine, which needs to be understood. Henry Rack highlights the paradox of Wesley's doctrine of a 'perfection which was not perfect' ('Reasonable Enthusiast,' Epworth, 1992, 399). Rack indicates that Wesley's doctrine is only understandable and plausible because he operated with two definitions of perfection which



in turn related to his doctrine of sin. Christian perfection was attainable in this life as long as the believer had not committed a known transgression. Wesley had defined sin as a 'voluntary transgression of a known law.' He considered that 'involuntary transgressions' did not undermine the relationship of a 'person filled with the love of God' and he did not identify this as sin. 'Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use' ('Wesley, Entire Sanctification,' Kelly, 1898, 53).

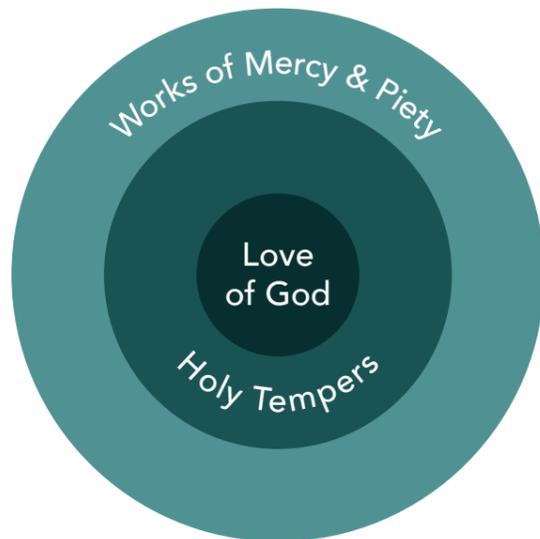
### SANCTIFYING GRACE AT WORK IN US!

Wesley, when writing about the effect of salvation in the inner character of the believer, used the term 'Holy Tempers' to describe the innermost response to the love of God. Wesley was convinced it was the love of God which brings about sanctification. The love of God, alive in the believer flows to every part of our lives transforming values, attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

Therefore, he focusses on the inner person (Holy Tempers) before highlighting the outward effect in terms of Acts of Piety and Mercy. He sets this out clearly in his sermon 'On Zeal'.

*In a Christian believer love sits upon the throne which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers; - longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in 'the mind which was in Christ Jesus.' In an exterior circle are all the works of mercy, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers - by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed works of piety - reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, the church, dispersed all over the earth - a little emblem of which, of the church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.*

*'On Zeal,' Sermon 92, 'Works 7', 60*



*I have set out Wesley's description in the form of a diagram to clarify visually the illustration he gives.*



Draw your own diagram of the circles of your spirituality:

- Where do you place the love of God?
- What are in the circles around it?
- Are they describing 'being' - or 'doing'?
- Does anything need to change?

Discipleship, Wesley knew, was a dynamic process and not just an instantaneous experience which remained constant. Christian faith was a relationship with God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and like any other relationship it needed to be nurtured and developed to be fresh and alive. So, he spoke of the 'means of grace' as the way to keep our discipleship alive and a proper expression of God's love in our lives. He wrote and preached about 'works of mercy' and 'works of piety'. By piety he meant being in worship, receiving Holy Communion regularly, personal and corporate prayer, reading the scriptures and being in fellowship sharing about faith and life.

With this he urged Methodists to live out the love of God by acts of kindness to others in what he called 'works of mercy'. Throughout his life he gave generously to help those in need and started schools, orphanages, established groups to serve the poor and visit those in prison. The early Methodists were noted for their commitment to Bible study and fellowship and at the same time to activism in community issues.

These Means of Grace are also vital for a deepening spirituality. It will be readily assumed that the works of piety are those which bring spiritual depth and growth. But Wesley also thought of the practical works of mercy as also achieving this. When Christians practise the works of mercy in love, their love increases, their holy tempers (patience, gentleness, etc.) are exercised and improved and they grow in grace.

I pray that in sharing in these three Bible studies on grace, you too have grown in grace. God bless you,

*Howard Mellor is a Methodist Minister who has recently returned from Hong Kong, where he and his wife Rosie have served the Methodist International Church for five years. Howard was formerly Principal of Cliff College and is now working out what 'retirement' means! He still drives a 2CV - slowly!*



*Note from the editor:*  
Many thanks again to Ruth Field for supplying more 'Images of Grace' - photos © Ruth Field - from her photos featured on Paul Field's 'Piano Blog': paulfield.com. For more information and to see more of Ruth's work, please visit: ruthfield.com



PRAYER

# GIVE ME A NEW, A PERFECT HEART

Charles Wesley (STF 498)

Give me a new, a perfect heart,  
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;  
The mind which was in Christ impart,  
And let my spirit cleave to Thee.

Cause me to walk in Christ my Way;  
And I Thy statutes shall fulfil,  
In every point Thy law obey,  
And perfectly perform Thy will.

Within me Thy good Spirit place,  
Spirit of health, and love, and power;

Plant in me Thy victorious grace,  
And sin shall never enter more.

O that I now, from sin released,  
Thy Word may to the utmost prove!  
Enter into the promised rest,  
The Canaan of Thy perfect love.

Now let me gain perfection's height;  
Now let me into nothing fall,  
Be less than nothing in Thy sight,  
And feel that Christ is all in all.

Methodist  
Evangelicals  
Together

met

## MET SOUTH WEST CONFERENCE 2018 THE LAMB OF GOD

Speaker: The Revd Paul Smith  
Friday 26 - Sunday 28 January 2018  
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.

The booking form is available at [methodistevangelicals.org.uk](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk)  
or from Tony Wragg: [wraggster1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wraggster1@hotmail.co.uk) / 01392 466129

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS



26-28 January 2018  
SOUTH WEST PRAYER CONFERENCE

Speaker: The Revd Paul Smith  
Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay

28 May 2018  
RECEPTION AND AGM

Lecture Room 1, Cliff College, 3.30pm

2-4 March 2018  
EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY CONFERENCE

Speaker: The Revd Tom Stuckey  
Swan Bank Mission, Burslem

6 October 2018  
DIGGING FOR TREASURE

Speakers: Jonathan Lamb, Amy Orr-Ewing, Derek Tidball  
Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

4 April 2018  
ECG RECEPTION

The Spa, Scarborough, 2.00pm

2-4 November 2018  
MET PRAYER CONFERENCE

Speakers: Nick and Linda Holt  
Willersley Castle

FULL DETAILS AND BOOKING FORMS AVAILABLE ON MET WEBSITE:  
METHODISTEVANGELICALS.ORG.UK

We offer a wide range of

part-and full-time courses  
at undergraduate and  
postgraduate level.

Call us on  
**01246  
584200**

For more  
information  
about our  
courses  
(validated by  
The University  
of Manchester)  
plus our  
Short Course  
programme  
and other  
training that  
the College  
offers, please  
contact us.

admissions@cliffcollege.ac.uk  
www.cliffcollege.ac.uk

## SO WHAT'S ON OFFER?

- BA Theology
- BA Mission and Ministry specialising in Children, Youth, Third Age, Family, Sport and Creative Arts
- MA Mission
- MPhil & PhD Research degrees

Cliff College, Calver  
Hope Valley S32 3XG

MANCHESTER  
1824  
The University of Manchester

CLIFF  
COLLEGE  
www.cliffcollege.ac.uk

met  
Methodist  
Evangelicals  
Together



# PRAYING ALWAYS

An old minister and mentor of mine used to say, 'It was not the hour spent in prayer that was valuable, but the five minutes during that hour when the Lord was present, that changed and sustained us.' More and more, I am finding that prayer is about entering into the holy place and finding God's beautiful, matchless and holy presence. All right decisions and anointed ministry come out of our inner court ministry, where we are surrounded by and filled with the presence of the Lord. Our ministry is first to the Lord. It is only when we know his presence that we are able to carry his beauty to a dark and hurting world. 'Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord' (Psalm 89:15).

- Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8) // Methodist Council // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Over all the earth you reign on High.'
- Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) // Chairs of District // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Our / My eyes have seen the Glory.'
- Saviour (Matthew 1:18) // President Loraine Mellor // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah.'
- Holy One (Proverbs 9:10) // Vice-President Jill Baker / Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'
- Almighty / Omnipotent (Psalms 24:10) // Conference Secretary Gareth Powell // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'All to Jesus I surrender.'
- Jehovah-Rohi - Jehovah the Shepherd (Psalms 23:1) // Connexional Secretary Doug Swanney // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'The Lord's my Shepherd (I will trust): Jehovah-shalom - Jehovah sends peace (Judges 6:24) // Conference decisions on unity and the recognition of Anglican / Methodist Ministers // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'When peace like a river.'
- Jehovah-tsidkenu - the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:4-5) // Conference decision to discuss same sex marriage // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Purify my heart.'
- Jehovah-elohim - the Lord our creator (Genesis 2:4) // Scriptural holiness // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Search me O God.'
- Jehovah-jireh - the Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14) // Forgiveness // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Jehovah Jireh my Provider.'
- Jehovah-rapha' - I am the LORD that healeth thee (Exodus 15:26) // Salvation by faith // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Be still and know that I am God.'
- Jehovah-nissi - Jehovah the Victor (Exodus 17:15) // Revival // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Blessed by your name.'

Holiness does not spring from following rules, but from an intimate acquaintance with the Holy One, from a love of his presence and a love of his word.

This Praying Always follows a simple concept; each day pray into 4 areas.

1. To centre our thoughts on the nature of God (look up). 2. To pray for a specific need of our Methodist Church (look in). 3. To pray against terrorism and ask God's blessing on three towns or cities near you or in the day's news (look out). 4. To lift our voices in praise (look forward). Here I have chosen a wide selection of evangelical hymns which are in most hymn books.





# FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd David A. Hull*



Dear Friends,

As you can see from the photo, the Hull family has grown since I last wrote. Baby Susannah was born on 23 August. Thank you very much for all the kind messages and the assurance of prayer. Susannah is growing well and is now much bigger than she was in the photo!

When I was growing up, we used to joke as a family about a prayer found in one of our children's books, the prayer of a child who was struggling to keep going in a race. Praying about his legs that were becoming increasingly tired, the child repeatedly said to the Lord as he ran along, 'You pick 'em up and I'll put 'em down'.

Running the race is, of course, a favourite New Testament image of living the Christian life, which is likened more to a long-distance marathon than to a short-distance sprint. It is the same image that comes to mind as I write for this edition of MET Connexion, along with an oft-repeated phrase of the much-loved Methodist Minister, Rob Frost who died ten years ago this past November. He used to speak of the 'daily plod' of discipleship. Though it can feel hard going at times, the Christian life is simply a matter of walking faithfully day by day, step by step, in the way of the Lord.

This year's President of the Conference writes of 'devoting ourselves to the Apostles' teaching and to prayer'. There is much material in this edition to help us with both. It was a great delight to be able to write to the President and the Vice-President, as they began their year of office, to assure them of the prayers of many MET members throughout the year. As we continue to devote ourselves to prayer, please do pray for Loraine and Jill, for the work of MET, and for the world in which we seek to live out our Christian faith today, grappling with the issues raised in this edition. Not least, please pray for the requests highlighted in Praying Always.

As well as seeking to encourage us in prayer, the articles in this edition seek also to equip us in devoting ourselves to the Apostles' teaching. They explore in practical ways how we can live out, in the contemporary world, the teaching of the Bible day to day.

These articles are the first part of a new resource we are developing for use in small group discussions. Do you have a group with which you could use this material as a trial? We would be delighted to receive feedback from any 'field testing' you are able to do to help shape its development. We particularly hope to make the resource accessible to youth groups, so if you are able to try the material with that age-group, we would be especially grateful! Please send any feedback to Marian (admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk).

As one year ends and another begins, the time comes for me to ask all those who renew their partnership at the beginning of each year to do so once again. The enclosed renewal letter gives more information, as well as celebrating some of the highlights from the past year and looking ahead to the future. In whatever way you continue your partnership from one year to the next, thank you for all your support. It has been a wonderful year and we rejoice, as the New Year dawns, that the best is yet to be!

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,

*David*

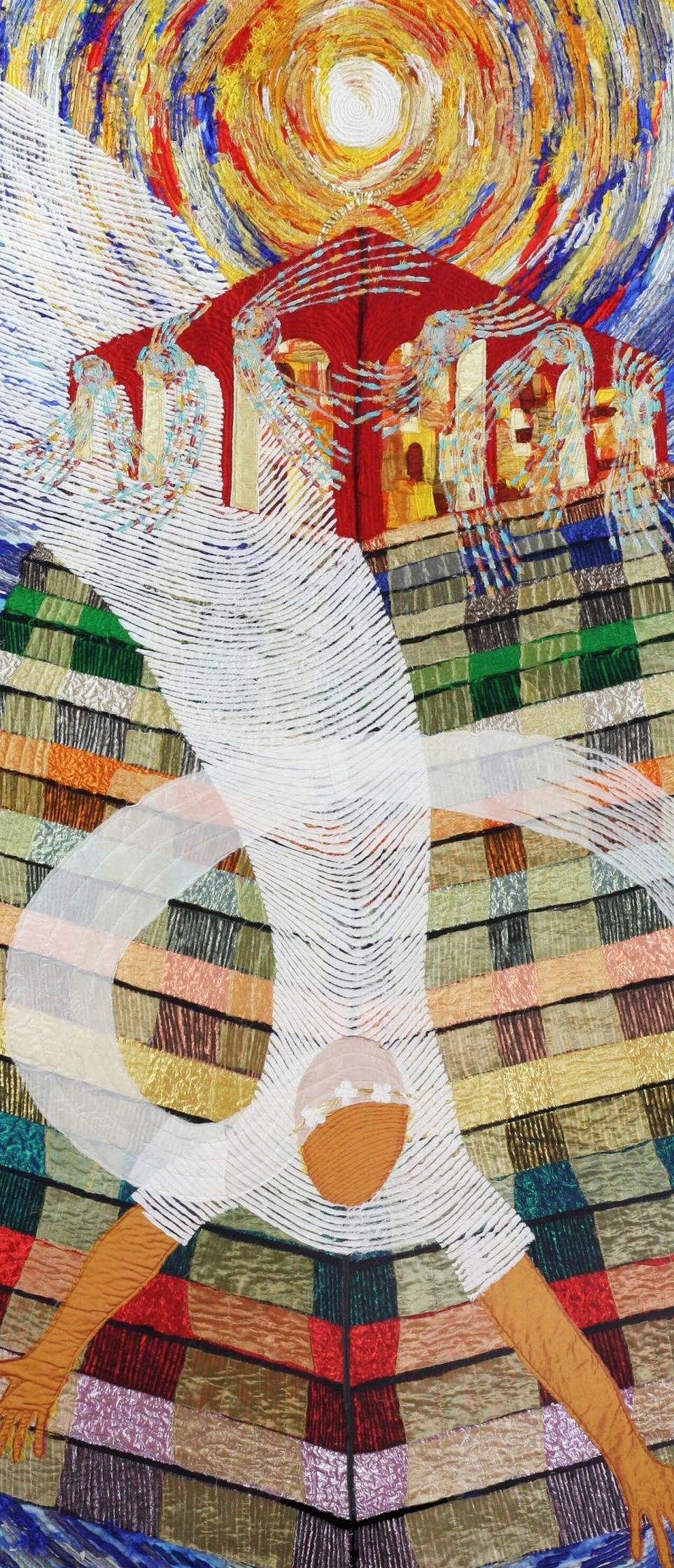
# met

Methodist  
Evangelicals  
Together

# PRAYING ALWAYS

- 13  Jehovah-shammah - Jehovah the in-dweller (Ezekiel 48:35) // the work of MET // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Holy Spirit we welcome you.'
- 14  El Shaddai - Lord God Almighty (Genesis 17:1) // MET Chair David Hull // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'El Shaddai.'
- 15  El Elyon - the Most High God (Daniel 4:2) // MET Development Worker Paul Wilson // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour.'
- 16  Adonai - Lord, Master (John 20:28) - MET trustees and executive members // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Before the throne of God above.'
- 17  El Olam - the Everlasting God (Isaiah 40:28) // Renewal by the Holy Spirit // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Spirit of the Living God'
- 18  Yahweh - Lord, Jehovah, 'I AM' (Exodus 3:14) // Wisdom in the church's decisions // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Lord of all being.'
- 19  'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35) // Church growth & church planting // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Revive thy work O Lord.'
- 20  'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12) // Cliff College / Queen's College // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Light of the world you stepped down into darkness.'
- 21  'I Am' (John 8:58) // God's restored presence // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'There is a name I love to hear.'
- 22  'I am the door' (John 10:9) // Guidance and open doors // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Jesus name above all names.'
- 23  'I am the good shepherd' (John 10:11) // Your Presbyter / Deacon // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Seek ye first.'
- 24  'I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11:25) // New life in the church // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Jesus the name high over all.'
- 25  'I am the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6) // The love of Truth // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Love Divine.'
- 26  'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser' (John 15:1) // The Church local and national abiding in Christ // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Father God I wonder.'
- 27  Lamb of God (John 1:29) // Understanding of the blood of Christ // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'And can it be.'
- 28  Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) // God be with us, our churches and preachers // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.'
- 29  The One Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) // Students and places of education // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Led like a Lamb.'
- 30  Omnipresent (Ephesians 1:23) // Brexit and Government // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'Let earth and heaven agree.'
- 31  King of Glory (Psalm 24:8) // Living in the light of Christ's return // Pray for 3 towns / cities // 'My heart and voice I raise.'

If you have any requests for 'Praying Always', please contact me at: [kevtherev34@hotmail.com](mailto:kevtherev34@hotmail.com) or write to 101 Viewfield Crescent, Sedgley, DY3 3UL. The Revd Kevin Jones.



'The Bride of Christ'  
Panel 13  
Jacqui Parkinson  
Threads through Revelation  
[www.revelation-threads.co.uk](http://www.revelation-threads.co.uk)

**met** | Methodist  
Evangelicals  
Together

**MET Connexion** is the magazine of  
Methodist Evangelicals Together  
Registered charity 298087  
[methodistevangelicals.org.uk](http://methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

Chair: The Revd David A. Hull  
[david.hull@methodist.org.uk](mailto:david.hull@methodist.org.uk)

Development Worker: The Revd Paul Wilson  
01744 342337  
[development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk)

Administrator & General Secretary:  
Marian Izzard  
01983 642024  
[admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk](mailto:admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk)  
50a Castle Road, Newport, PO30 1DP