

metconnexion

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FEATURING

THE LATE DAVID WHITE, TIM WOOLLEY, RACHEL JORDAN-WOLF, BART WOODHOUSE



*Offering
Christ*

MISSION & EVANGELISM IN CHALLENGING TIMES



EDITORIAL

Marian Izzard

The theme and focus for this edition is on mission and evangelism, particularly in the troubling times that we are facing. We've entitled this edition 'Offering Christ' as it resonates with John Wesley's desire to 'Offer Christ' in the proclamation of the gospel to all people; whenever and wherever.

The Late David White, a former Anglican clergyman who was very much inspired by the Wesleys and for many years an Associate Member of MET, presents an inspirational call for the re-envisioning of the church; acknowledging the rich heritage of God's work that has already taken place, with a call to evangelism to be presented within the full mission of God in Christ.

Tim Woolley, Tutor to Evangelists- in-Training for Church Army in Sheffield, and Superintendent of the Hinckley Circuit in Leicestershire, reflects upon the life and ministry of Hugh Bourne, the founder of Primitive Methodism, and shares useful insights for today.

Rachel Jordan-Wolf, Executive Director of HOPE Together shares exciting opportunities for evangelism in these challenging times for individuals and churches to reach out to their communities with hope in 2023 and 2024.

Bart Woodhouse, Pioneer Missioner in the North Kent Methodist Circuit explores ways to engage evangelistically, whilst remaining faithful to biblical truth, in contemporary culture.

Our Bible Study on Micah is Part 3 and is the concluding section of this study. We are most grateful to Catherine Hutton for her insightful and challenging studies on this minor prophet.

Praying Always is compiled by our Prayer Coordinator, Roz Addington and provides us with a weekly focus for prayer over four weeks featuring: The Church, Great Britain, World Issues and The Natural World and Climate Change.

The next edition of MET Connexion will be the spring edition.

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THE RE-ENVISIONING OF THE CHURCH

David White

THE LATE DAVID WHITE PRESENTS AN INSPIRATIONAL CALL FOR THE RE-ENVISIONING OF THE CHURCH, SETTING OUR HERITAGE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GOD'S WORK, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE, AND SETTING OUR EVANGELISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE FULL MISSION OF GOD IN CHRIST.

Epworth Old Rectory - Aldersgate - Bristol New Room - Hanham Mount - Gwennap Pit: how these places stir the blood! We love them because of their connection with our beloved Wesleys. We trace their steps in loving pilgrimage; we spend time hoping something of their zeal will rub off on us through the very hallowed walls and stones of the buildings used by them. We seek inspiration from those who are dead, yet still speak. We look back over our history and cry out, 'O Lord, [we] have heard the report of you, and your work ... In the midst of the years, revive it.' (Habakkuk 3.2, ESV) What we would give for God to raise up folk like the Wesleys now! Or like John Cennick! We'd love a Donald English or a Rob Frost to lead us out of the mire of moral compromise we find ourselves in and bring us to the sunny uplands of assured convictions and Spirit-honouring evangelism. We'd love to see our church grow.

In 2 Kings 2:1ff, we read these moving words, 'Now when the Lord God was about to take Elijah up to heaven'. But before he goes Elijah, accompanied by his disciple, Elisha, decides he must visit all the old places (Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, the Jordan)—all his old haunts: one last long lingering look at the

places God came to him and used him to spread the fame of his name. In these places resided 'schools of prophets': Gilgal was the first stopping place after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan under Joshua's leadership (Joshua 4:19-24); Bethel was the place where Jacob first encountered God (Genesis 28:10-19); and Jericho was the first city that Joshua and the Israelites conquered (Joshua 6:1-21). The trouble was, some of these holy places (Bethel especially—see 1 Kings 12:28-29) had been given over to false worship and idolatry. Even the best of places in our history can become corrupted. History doesn't guarantee continuity of blessing; places where the Lord's praises were sung heartily can all too readily become sites filled with the excesses of Baal worship. Was Elijah coming face to face with his failures? And yet there are places in the earth that will always move us more than others because of their associations; but soon it comes to pass that 'behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated [Elijah from Elisha] and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven' (2 Kings 2:11).

So Elisha is left, alone on the banks of the river Jordan. He is desolate. He looks down and sees the cloak of Elijah lying at his feet. He has a choice. Perhaps he could wave the cloak above his head invoking its owner. Perhaps he could wear it as a badge of office to the waiting prophets observing his every move. This is the decisive moment of his life: he has to face the indifferent, the cursed Jezebel, the wretched pagan society all around him. I am sure he feels inadequate, even though he has received a double portion of Elijah's spirit. So much is against him. He looks at the mantle again - is this where Elijah's power lay? Could he kid others that he was just like Elijah - after all he had his cloak?

Director of Ministry post

Thank you so much for all of the generous gifts that have already been received for this appeal, we are most grateful. We are hoping to appoint someone to this post in September.

We apologise that it has not been possible to reply to each donor individually on this occasion. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to make a contribution, then it's not too late!

We really appreciate your support and prayers.

To make a gif visit: methodistevangelicals.org.uk/DoM

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or make a cheque payable to 'MET' and send to: **The Administrator, 50a Castle Road, NEWPORT, PO30 1DP**

Methodist Evangelicals Together
met



But no! Not for him a dead memory! Not for him a dead prophetic tradition even! Instead, bravely, he doesn't invoke Elijah but the God of Elijah! 'Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water saying, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' (2 Kings 2:14) That's it, my brothers and sisters: we don't need John or Charles, or any other luminary - we need their God! We are not locked into the past. We need to know the power of their God visiting us once more, restoring and revitalising the church, till it become again 'terrible, as an army with banners' (Song of Solomon 6:10). This is what the Lord wants from his battered and besieged people: to trust him that what is impossible with humans is possible with him; to know that, though the forecast is bleak, even then our faith in the risen and reigning Christ will change everything; to realise that Christ our Lord has promised to build his church (see Matthew 16:18) and nothing will stop this desire of his. The powers of darkness cannot prevail against this church that our Lord is building - a very real expression of his body, animated with the Holy Spirit, sent into all the world to bring earth and heaven together in such a glorious demonstration of transforming, triumphant reconciliation that the Lord God who once walked in the cool of the garden, seeking the company of those he had created, may once again have a people he can call his own - after which the whole world will be as filled with the knowledge of his glory as the Atlantic is wet.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

It is a huge and common mistake to think that the church emerges from its past. That way we are more interested in resuscitation than resurrection. When a church tries to be contemporary it usually arrives ten years late! No, the renewed church, the church that Jesus is building, emerges into the present from its future. It was Barth who helpfully explained this: since God is the measure of all reality, we see eternity exists before time, and therefore the future before the present - just as the Creator comes before the creature (see his Church Dogmatics, Volume 1, part 1, page 53 trans GW Bromiley 2nd edition). Surely this is why we pray, in part, that 'As in heaven so on earth' in the prayer that Jesus taught us: since there is no sin, sickness, demons, death, disaster, disunity in heaven, and since we are going to know all this fully, can we have some of it now? The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said it like this: 'we have tasted ... of the powers of the age to come' (Hebrews 6:5). The church, just like the 'called-out ones' who make up its members, is in a state of becoming. You can cheekily say from this perspective that we have read the end of the book and we win!

Very well then, the church is the ekklesia of God, the called and summoned ones, whom God is gathering into his family. We are those who have been called out of death, darkness, and sin to have a relationship with the Father and the Son by the Spirit; we are those who, having been called by Jesus, are to spend time with him, before we go from him, only to come back to him to spend time with him in a continuing cycle of discipleship. We are called to a future and glorious inheritance. We are God's special people for his own possession (1 Peter 2:9; John 17:3; Mark 3:14; 1 Peter 5:10; and Deuteronomy 7:6)



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That's it, my brothers and sisters: we don't need John or Charles, or any other luminary - we need their God!
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According to John 17, this church has an eightfold purpose: 1) to glorify God; 2) to keep God's Word intact so as we can pass it on to others 'undiluted'; 3) to be united in love; 4) to be filled with joy; 5) to overcome Satan; 6) to be in the world but not of it; 7) to bring others to Christ through the sharing of the gospel; 8) to be with Jesus in his glory for ever. And if we ask how this is all to come about, we need look no further than the staggering last verse of John 17 where Jesus prays to the Father that we might actually know, experience and enjoy the same love that he, the Father, has for the Son. Astonishing! Such an incentive to enter into all the riches God has for us.

THE TRINITARIAN AND CHARISMATIC NATURE OF THE CHURCH

God is Trinity, in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in an eternal companionship of giving, sharing and preferring each other above self. We are made in this God's image, and through the reconciling work of Christ, we are destined to share the very life of the Trinity. It follows, then, that the church, Christ's body on earth, should reflect this reality. It is a high and exulted call; and it is not always easy to grasp. But much flows from it:

The church is oriented to the other both in fellowship and mission, seeking to express the outgoing love of God for the least, the last, the little and the dead. We exist to see the lost gathered safely home. As Charles Wesley wrote, 'The arms of love that compass me would all mankind embrace'.

We are the anointed herald of God's kingdom, of God's right to rule over sin, sickness, demons, death, disaster and disunity - so much so that wherever we find such, we know what God's will is; and, praying and acting in the opposite spirit, we seek God's kingdom to come on earth. We heal, cast out demons, feed, house and clothe the poor, and we preach the great good news of Christ's saving rescuing love because all of these are what defines the Father's business, and our Lord and Master has made it clear for all time, 'As the Father sent me, so I send you' (John 20:21).

In our fellowship we are dynamically structured, making room for all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit. We see the gifts of the Spirit not as badges of maturity, or impressive awards, but as tools to get the Father's will done. We cry out for conformity to Christ our Saviour and long for his character - 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5: 22,23) to grow in us - the proper sign of maturity, the harvest of his gracious work in us. We practice the priesthood of all believers recognising that all leadership is about the betterment of God's people.

Knowing that we cannot do this on our own, knowing that we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit daily we cry out with Charles Wesley, 'Come, Almighty, to deliver / Let us all thy grace receive.'

And we recognise that when Jesus set us free, forgiving the very sins our consciences were afraid of, clothing us in his righteousness, he did not set us free to do what we like. It's his church and we are members of his body, and he is the head. We are held captive to the word of God - we are set free to do

what he wants – and in the Bible we have God’s word written. John Wesley said it like this:

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. He hath written it down in a book. Give me that book; at any price give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end to find the way to heaven.

From the Preface to John Wesley’s Sermons on Several Occasions

Worship is our delight and praying our fuel. But how thrilled we are to know that, within the Trinity itself, we have One praying for us, who not only perfects our prayers, but our praises too. In a staggering insight, the writer to the Hebrews describes the church as being led in worship of Jesus by none other than Jesus himself (Hebrews 2:12) – and this assembly is surrounded by ‘innumerable angels in festal gathering’ (Hebrews 12:22).

THE NEWNESS OF THE CHURCH

In this company of ‘the-born-again-into-a-living-hope’ (1 Peter 1:3) who seek to follow Jesus for the good of the world, there is a delightful sense of newness. In John’s first epistle, the apostle reminds us:

- We have a new obedience
- We have a new love for God
- We have a new hatred for sin
- We have a new love for our brothers and sisters
- We have a new peace
- We have a new enemy
- But we have a new power over evil

(1 John 2:3; 2:15; 3:9; 3:14; 3:21; 5:18,19; and 5:4)

Much of our knowledge and experience of church life (let’s be honest) doesn’t reflect this. We live in a grey world, whereas God wants a multicoloured polychromatic universe, restored to glory. We settle for a dull predictability, whereas God wants his Spirit to break out all over the place in exuberance and creativity. We glibly pronounce the blessing at the end of our services, not expecting much to happen, whereas God wants heaven to touch earth. We have never come to terms with what God has promised – that he wants to accomplish infinitely more than we can ask or think ... where? In the church and in Christ Jesus (see Ephesians 3:20, 21). It has made shocking little difference to us that the risen triumphant Christ lives in us. There is often nothing about the church which leaves the non-Christian guessing, nothing that strikes him or her as remarkable. There is little in us that he or she doesn’t feel equally capable of being and doing. It is only when the quality of our life baffles the non-believing world; when what is in us can only be explained by the power of the Living Christ living in us that the world’s interest is aroused. Do you remember the glorious sense of newness you experienced when first

you came to Christ? We were new creations revelling in our recreation and renewal. From what heights we have fallen! Lord, renew us again for Christ’s sake!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER IN FAITH

In Wesley’s journal we read the following

About three in the morning as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.’

From John Wesley’s Journal, 1 January 1739

I confess to having a real bugbear: it’s when I sit in meetings and hear someone say, ‘Be with us’ or ‘We come into your presence’. I wonder where they have been, as my Bible says we can’t go anywhere without God already being there waiting for us (Psalm 139:7-12). You see, the Lord can’t help being with us! I know what is meant, but such poor theology will rob us of enjoying all that God has for us. God is with us – and he is with us unalterably, inalienably, gloriously, and completely.

This is more than the mere recognition of God’s omnipresence. The Spirit has come to stay. And when he stays he stays not as something static (like a battery which runs down) but as someone dynamic—as living water, as blowing wind, as soothing oil poured out, and as burning fire.

Think of the image used by Ezekiel, in Ezekiel chapter 47. There he talks of the Spirit being like a river. It’s deep water, he says, to swim in. Stand by any river, and which ‘bit’ of the river remains static? You can’t remain by the same ‘bit’ of river – the water moves and hurries past you. Likewise with the Lord, the Spirit: it’s not in his nature to lie low. You can’t have a dormant Holy Spirit! The river of God is full of water. If the wind of God doesn’t blow, it’s not wind. If the fire doesn’t burn, it has no flames and it’s not fire!

My brothers and sisters, it’s just a little bit ludicrous to think of God as being anything but at the height of his powers. He is always hot, never lukewarm in his affections. We talk of the Wesleyan Revival as if it is an extraordinary work of God. Well, that only makes sense if we look at it from a human point of view. It makes no sense to think of God in his very nature as sometimes exerting himself; and at others, because he is tired for example, to be just ‘ticking over’. But he does nothing by halves. He always acts in the full zest of his boundless love and his energetic power and his changeless character. The problem with so-called ‘dead’ churches is not that God has failed to keep his promise, but that dead people don’t recognise his presence with them. Jacob woke up and exclaimed, ‘God is in this place and I knew it not.’ (Genesis 28:16). If you read carefully the account in John’s Gospel, you will see that Jesus is actually listening when Thomas said he didn’t believe Jesus was alive (John 20:24ff).



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*The Resurrected Christ is here, always here.
Reckon on that fact. Step out in it.
And his life is moving among us.
God will move as we move out in faith.*
”

As much as he ever was with the Apostles, or as much as he was with the Wesleys, he is with us. As much as he is manifested in the greatest revival, he is with us now. Whatever we feel—it is not our awareness that brings Jesus near.

Where is the God of Elijah? Where is the God of Charles Wesley? Where is the God of wonders who is always calling the lost home? He is right here – when will we trust he is always the same for us and act upon such knowledge?

I began this section with a quotation from John Wesley’s Journal. Six months later we read,

We met at Fetter Lane to humble ourselves before God ... we acknowledged we had grieved him by our manifold divisions ... In that hour, we found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate upon the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this since January the first preceding.

From John Wesley’s Journal, July 1739; my emphasis.

The Resurrected Christ is here, always here. Reckon on that fact. Step out in it. And his life is moving among us. God will move as we move out in faith.

CONCLUSION

A dear old saint once said that 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6 are some of the happiest words ever written. He went on to say that there would be no troubles in the church or the world if we emulated the Thessalonians in their ‘work of faith’, ‘labour of love’ and ‘patient hope’. This gospel that the Thessalonians received came to them not only in word ‘but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.’ The result was that the fact that the Thessalonians had ‘turned to God from idols’ became well known ‘not only in

Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place [their] faith in God [had] gone forth’. That’s what God wants to see happen in our churches too.

How hope-filled are you that God can change the church so that it resembles a glorious bride, without any blemish (see Ephesians 5:27 & Revelation 21:2)? I once saw a cartoon which exactly described the power of biblical hope (believing that God, who is good, and only good, will keep to his word, and bring about his purposes). There were three frames: in the first, there was just a picture of a snail; in the second, a picture of a huge boulder falling from the sky, about to crush the snail to pieces; and in the third, it is the rock that lies in smithereens as the snail just gets on with its snailish life.

No matter how dark it gets, no matter how hard the forces of darkness press on us, the Lord will build his church. Alleluia.

The Revd Canon David White, who died of Pneumonia with Covid in December 2021, was an Anglican Clergyman who served a number of parishes, including St Michael le Belfrey, York; Holy Trinity, St Austell; and St Andrew’s, Chorleywood. Deeply inspired by the Wesleys, he was for many years an Associate Member of MET. He is survived by his ‘best-beloved’ Ruth, their three sons, two daughters-in-law, and six grandchildren. His writing continues to be made available on his website, OfferingTheLight.com



SEE HOW GREAT A FLAME ASPIRES

Charles Wesley

See how great a flame aspires,
kindled by a spark of grace!
Jesu's love the nations fires,
sets the kingdoms on a blaze.
To bring fire on earth he came;
kindled in some hearts it is:
O that all might catch the flame,
all partake the glorious bliss!

When he first the work begun,
small and feeble was his day:
now the word does swiftly run,
now it wins its widening way;
more and more it spreads and grows
ever mighty to prevail;
sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,
shakes the trembling gates of hell.

Heirs of God, your Saviour praise!
He the door has opened wide;
he has given the word of grace,
Jesu's word is glorified;
Jesus, mighty to redeem,
he alone the work has wrought;
worthy is the work of him,
him who spoke a world from nought.

Saw you not the cloud arise,
little as a human hand?
Now it spreads along the skies,
hangs o'er all the thirsty land:
lo, the promise of a shower
drops already from above;
but the Lord will shortly pour
all the Spirit of his love!



BOURNE AGAIN!

Tim Woolley

TIM WOOLLEY REFLECTS UPON THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF HUGH BOURNE, THE FOUNDER OF PRIMITIVE METHODISM, AND SHARES LESSONS FOR TODAY.

Last year, Methodists celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birth of one of the most influential figures in our history; indeed, in terms of the spread of Methodism as a movement and its formation as a church, arguably the second most influential after John Wesley. Hugh Bourne was born at Fordhays Farm, Stoke-on-Trent, on 3 April 1772. Throughout his life, Bourne was a voracious reader and John Wesley's sermons were instrumental in preparing him for his conversion in 1799 at a Wesleyan Methodist love-feast, after which he became a member of their Ridgeway society. He was quite shy in his youth and so needed some persuading to become a preacher. Nevertheless his first sermon, preached in true Wesleyan fashion out of doors, came in 1801. The following year he built a chapel at Harriseahead, at his own expense, which he duly handed over to the Wesleyans.

The group that met there, led in class by Bourne's cousin Daniel Shubotham, became fervent in prayer and increasingly fascinated by the reports of Camp Meetings in America which appeared in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. These protracted open-air meetings drew wagons full of campers for preaching and prayer. One of the preachers, Lorenzo Dow, visited England for a few years in 1805 and upon hearing him, Bourne, Shubotham and other Wesleyan Methodists in the area decided to hold their own meeting, at Mow Cop on the Staffordshire-Cheshire border on 31 May 1807. The meeting was a great success and encouraged the organisers to think of holding more. At this point the Burslem Wesleyan circuit forbade such unauthorised meetings taking place and they were backed up by a resolution at the Wesleyan Conference, held that year in Liverpool.

Bourne and the Harriseahead Methodists pressed on with the meetings nevertheless and he was expelled from the Wesleyan society on 27 June 1808, ostensibly because of his neglect of meeting in his appointed class owing to his evangelistic work elsewhere. Another

preacher, William Clowes was also expelled in 1810 and so reluctantly the contours of a new denomination began to take shape under the leadership of the two men. In 1811 tickets of membership were issued and a chapel was built at Tunstall. The following year the name 'Society of Primitive Methodists' was adopted, the use of the word 'Primitive' meaning 'original,' to signify that Bourne and Clowes believed they were following the practice of the early Methodists of Wesley's day in meeting outdoors. A preaching plan for the Tunstall Circuit, printed in 1812, confirmed the 'Prims' as a separate Methodist denomination. By the time of Bourne's death on 11 October 1852 the Primitive Methodist Connexion had grown into a national church of 109,984 members, 1,723 chapels, 560 ministers and 9,350 local preachers.

What can we learn from Hugh Bourne's life in terms of evangelism and mission today? No historian worth their salt would pretend that outlooks or attitudes from a life lived two centuries ago can be simplistically applied to a very different world today, but there are glimpses into Hugh Bourne's mindset which may be helpful to us in our own



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day to be faithful to his considerable legacy. Here are just three:

CONNECTING WITH CONTEXT

The gospel always has a context, whether it be Paul speaking in sight of pagan statues in Athens or us trying to wrestle with vexed questions of ‘gender identity’ today. Evangelicals have typically taken two approaches to context – either (a) ignore it and hope and pray it will go away or (b) engage with it as an opportunity to share Good News. Hugh Bourne’s approach to evangelism was very much (b). This can be seen in his scheduling of early camp meetings at the same time as ‘Wakes weekends.’ The wake was originally a Feast of Dedication, commemorating the opening of the parish church for worship, which would take place on the festival day of the patron-saint of the church. However by the early 19th century, the festival had degenerated into a riotous open-air carnival often characterised by heavy drinking and public disorder. Norton Camp Meeting, the second to be held, was timed to offer a parallel open air communal experience but with a quite different ethos and outcome. By the end of the

19th century, although camp meetings had become much more tame and regimented affairs, the wakes had almost completely died out.

Today, is our challenge to discern how we can engage faithfully with our context, including those things which may be outside of our comfort zone, such as Halloween, Reality TV, TikTok, to name just a few examples? Can we offer parallel experiences with a gospel ethos and outcome?

FAITHFULLY FLEXIBLE

Like all institutions, the Primitive Methodist Church, as it eventually became known, developed its own particular way of doing things over its 125-year life span. This shouldn’t obscure though the spirit of flexibility endured by Bourne at the beginning of the movement. A supreme example of this can be seen in the format of Camp Meetings themselves. American meetings were protracted affairs, lasting often as long as a week. Hundreds of people came along and stayed under canvas. Indeed by the late 19th century, camp grounds with accommodation provided onsite had become the norm.

With the exception of a couple of the early meetings, however, the English Camp Meetings looked quite different. A day in length, with no ‘camp’ as such, the focus was as much on prayer as on preaching, and the day usually ended with a love feast at a nearby chapel where a number of conversions often occurred. Bourne took an American form and reshaped it for a British context and climate.

Evangelism can often be neatly packaged and commodified, promising ideas that almost become the gospel, rather than vehicles for it. Today, is our challenge to discern how faithfully we employ evangelistic strategies and tools (such as Alpha, Messy Church and The Wellbeing Course, to name just a few examples), to work in our context without losing their potency? Can we make them our own, and use them to make disciples of Jesus?

EYING THE PRIZE, NOT THE PERIPHERALS

The Primitive Methodist Connexion came into being because Bourne and others did not take their eye off the prize, despite opposition from

Wesleyan authorities. Bourne refused to stop holding camp meetings, since he saw they resulted in people coming to faith and this was his *raison d’être*. Everything in his early organisation of the movement was arguably focussed on this aim. Sadly, no historical figure (except Jesus!) can function as a flawless exemplar, and we learn from historical failure as well as success. Bourne regrettably fell out with William Clowes during the 1830s over the question of teetotalism, of which Bourne was an enthusiastic supporter. Things deteriorated so badly, that Bourne made a scurrilous allegation that Clowes was a drunkard during one Primitive Methodist Conference (of which there was not a shred of evidence). Whilst things seemed to calm down between the two men in the last few years of their lives, it is not clear by the time of Clowes death in 1851 that the breach had been completely healed.

We face perpetual challenges as evangelicals within British Methodism at the current time, with the ethos of our beloved church seemingly becoming more world-affirming at the expense

of a clear gospel witness, especially in the area of human sexuality and relationships. How we deal with this and stay faithful to the task of making more followers of Jesus has and will lead us to a variety of responses both within and beyond the Methodist Church in Britain.

Today, is our challenge to discern how we remain focussed on being faithful witnesses to the gospel whatever the cost, and discerning what is important, but peripheral; and what is at the core of the Good News we seek to share?

Hugh Bourne was a leader of great significance whose passion for evangelism and organisational acumen has much to teach us today. Perhaps what continues to inspire me most about his life is summed up well in H B Kendall’s monumental two-volume: ‘The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church’:

It was Methodism as it had been and as it ought to be again, rather than the particular Methodism of the Burslem Circuit or of the Annual Conference that attracted Hugh Bourne

Holliday Bickerstaffe Kendall. ‘The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church’. Edwin Dalton: London c. 1905 vol 1 p. 88

Methodism is an enduring evangelistic ideal then, before it is an institution. Amen to that.

The Revd Dr Tim Woolley is Tutor to Evangelists-in-Training for Church Army in Sheffield and Superintendent Minister of the Hinckley Circuit in Leicestershire.



OFFERING HOPE IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

Rachel Jordan-Wolf

RACHEL JORDAN-WOLF SHARES EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANGELISM IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES TO REACH OUT TO OUR COMMUNITIES WITH HOPE IN 2023 AND 2024.

'Will everything be OK?' was the question that most resonated with the UK population at the beginning of 2022. With the continued twists and turns of events as we begin 2023, it doesn't look like that question is going to go away.

This response was part of the latest 'Talking Jesus' research, helping us to understand more about those outside the church and how people come to faith. The research in 2022 was done in partnership with The Evangelical Alliance, Alpha, The Luis Palau Association, Christian Vision Global and KingsGate Community Church. You can find all the research at www.talkingjesus.org.

One of the discoveries of the research was that the biggest influence in bringing adults to faith (23%) was a life event - either positive or negative. Last year, as a nation, we went through several collective negative life events. The pandemic, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the death of the Queen, the rise in fuel prices and the economic storm: all this means that right now people in the UK are asking questions and seeking reassurance about life. Along with the practical needs that they face, they are also more open to finding spiritual and religious answers to help them in life.

Here at Hope, we have looked at this season and have gathered leaders from across the denominations and organisations to

initiate a united year of mission and evangelism at this crucial time: 'HOPE 23-24'. The goal of the year is to bring churches together to reach out in refreshed, renewed mission and evangelism in towns, villages, and cities; all of us coming together under the umbrella of the word 'HOPE' - our prayer is for everyone, everywhere to know Jesus.

Dr Amy Orr-Ewing, a leading Christian speaker and evangelist who came to the launch and is part of the steering group for Hope 23-24, said: 'Mission has never been more important or urgent than it is today in this season that we find ourselves in. I look forward to joining in and strongly endorse the vision and momentum of 23-24.'

HOPE 23-24 is an invitation to reach out with the love and message of Jesus to our villages, towns, and cities. We can do this through what we say, speaking clearly about the hope we have in Jesus, and what we do, sharing the love of Jesus with practical actions and support. Above all, we need to do this together: to 'hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful' (Hebrews 10:23).



Archbishop Justin Welby, one of the patrons of Hope Together, said at the launch: 'Every moment, every day we are called to speak confidently and humbly about the news of the gospel. These are the conversations that have eternal significance. We must spur each other on to good works, working together with love and honesty as a united church'. He encouraged everyone to unite for HOPE 23-24.

We have some key stages to HOPE 23-24.

Join the united year of mission
www.hope2324.com

SHARING THE VISION

We are sharing the Talking Jesus research everywhere, explaining why now is the time for mission and evangelism and encouraging people to get on board with HOPE 23-24. If you would like someone from the team to come and share the key messages from Talking Jesus to help people catch a vision for Hope 23-24 where you are, get in touch with us at the Hope office.

The simplest thing is to run the Talking Jesus course which is developed with KingsGate Community Church and the Church of England. The course will help everyone get involved as the Talking Jesus research shows that we are the right people in the right place to help our friends and family find out about Jesus. Dave Smith, Senior Pastor from KingsGate Community Church, Peterborough said about the course that 'we wanted a video-based course to prepare each member of our church

to make the most of every opportunity to share their faith. This creative and engaging course fits the bill.'

PRAYER

Pastor Agu, one of the patrons of Hope Together, focused on prayer at the launch event of HOPE 23-24. He said: 'The two major precursors to the revival we desire are prayer and the unity of the church. As patron of Hope, I believe HOPE 23-24 will be significant in the purposes of God to unite us to serve our communities.'

That's why we're calling Christians to pray and to do it together. We're looking to see every home and street prayed for. It's a big task, but united across the nation we believe it is possible. Would you join us by praying for the streets and homes in your community? We have a simple app, the Oikos app, which you can use to mark the places for which you have prayed. Together we can see that every street in the UK is prayed for by the Church. We've also just released new resources to help us all listen and pray. One of these is '3 in 23' - go to www.hopetogether.org.uk to find out more.

IDEAS

We're creating a portal full of helpful ideas and stories for churches and Christians to get inspiration for mission and evangelism during HOPE 23-24. The dream is that Christians across local churches in villages, towns or cities will unite and dream dreams together.

The portal is super practical with stories to help you imagine what you could do in your community and area. For example, setting up a Hope space either for a day, a week or like the Christians in Bedford who ended up running a Hope space for

“
The two major precursors to the revival we desire are prayer and the unity of the church.
”
Pastor Agu



over a year! They worked together to rent a local shop, next to Primark and Costa, with the aim of creating a space where people could come to experience God themselves – and they did! When they were able to open the space to the public, this particular young woman got talking to a church volunteer, who then arranged an online Bible study with her, which led to the woman giving her life to Jesus.

The idea for Hope spaces came out of the Talking Jesus research that told us 20% of practising Christians who came to faith as adults said that a spiritual experience was a key influence in their journey to faith. A Hope space enables people to pray and be prayed for to experience God for themselves; it also helps them go further on their journey by making sure there is plenty of material that they can take with them to read. This is especially important as the Talking Jesus research also showed that 19% of adult converts were influenced by reading the Bible for themselves and 10% by other Christian printed media. However, you don't have to have a shop to set up a HOPE Space. Your church could run one in a gazebo in a garden, a park or on a high street, or in a place of work or a school – anywhere in your village, town or city that is easily accessible to members of the public.

To find out more visit our story page on the Hope website and sign up to e-news so that you don't miss the portal launch in Spring 2023.

PLANNING AND EQUIPPING

Here at Hope, we want to help people pray and plan for turning those dreams into reality. Getting together, gathering resources, training the team, commissioning everyone and making sure everything is ready to GO! Whether it's just a couple of people together or whole areas involved we want everyone to feel ready. Our new website www.hopetogether.org.uk is packed full of great resources to help your church now with mission and evangelism, from the magazines to beautiful gospels that people will want to pick up and take away! Come and visit and see how we could partner together.

MISSION MOMENTS

We will be going out as harvesters into the harvest field together, reaching out with the love and message of Jesus throughout the year of mission. Some churches will just do one thing, and that's brilliant; others might have a whole programme of events, which is excellent. We will be encouraging everyone to make Easter 2024 a special time of mission. This is because the Talking Jesus research shows us that 45% of the UK population believe in the resurrection. This was the biggest stand out statistic; 16% believe it word for word and another 29% believe it, but have some questions. The Talking Jesus research also showed us that the question which resonated most across all age groups was about life after death. Easter is our moment to help people know that there is eternal hope because of Jesus. So don't miss out on the resources for this – make sure that you are signed up to e-news to find out and receive everything you need to join in the ALIVE project for Easter 2024.

CELEBRATION

We want to mark the end of the year of mission with celebration! Thanking God for all that he has done through his Church at this time. We're so excited about celebrating together!

We would love to partner with you next year for this year of united mission, Hope 23-24. Join in as together we offer hope in Jesus Christ. Find out more www.hopetogether.org.uk

Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf is the Executive Director of HOPE Together. She has always been passionate that others meet and come to know Jesus Christ. She has worked with YWAM amongst prostitutes in the red-light district of Amsterdam and has done a PhD at Kings College London. She leads the HOPE together team as they equip and inspire local churches to reach out with the good news of Jesus. Previously she was the Church of England's National Mission and Evangelism Adviser and is still connected to the Anglican church as her husband Darren leads a church plant in East London where she is actively involved.



ROMANS 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

HEAR THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

*Stuart Townend, Keith Getty
& Kristyn Getty*

Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King,
Let His song rise within you as a fragrant offering,
Of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to be children of light,
With the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ.
Walking justly before Him, loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through Him.

King of Heaven, we will answer the call,
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to reach out to the lost,
With the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross,
Bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to come;
Let the nations put their trust in Him.

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Bible Study

MICAH PART 3

Catherine Hutton

THIS IS THE CONCLUSION OF A THREE-PART BIBLE STUDY ON MICAH

STANDING FOR HOLINESS

The pursuit of holiness is a most Methodist activity. Engaged by the Word of God, we are transfixed by the gift of Jesus on the cross for our sins and this secures our salvation. What the specifics of sin are is not the subject of this study, but it has long been clear to me that when we stand in the shadow of the cross, and let the gaze of Jesus fall onto us, the sins, guilt and shame of our actions and introspections are brought into the light. It is here that we do the business of salvation through confessing, repenting and receiving forgiveness. Holiness is the growing outcome of sins forgiven. Holiness is then the way by which goodness is spread throughout our locality; loving 'because God first loved us.'

- Take a look at 5:7 for a view of the holy remnant of God:

The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for anyone or depend on man. (NIV)

I love this verse. It sparkles in the text and is dripping with hope. The structures may be corrupt, the world's orders may

be in wrack and ruin, but the 'remnant' of people - which we looked at in more detail in the previous issue - remain holy, and grace the land with refreshing. This could be a text for you to write out and place in significant places as a reminder of the importance of your holiness and holy response.

- Consider 5:7 and your role in church and community. How do you, your group or your church sparkle and refresh with the Lord's news of goodness?

As you read on through to the end of Chapter 5, you will note the Lord's destruction of idols and the hand-made gods, evil-based spiritualities and his response to disobedience. It is not comfortable reading and maybe warrants our return to the cross of Jesus for further soul searching ...

STANDING UNDER THE LORD'S ACCUSATIONS

Chapter 6 returns to the courtroom setting. It is clear that Micah is walking only under the Lord's direction and his call is not an easy one. The emphasis on justice is something that is appealing on its own to certain parts of the church. However, without the holiness of God working through the lives of the people in every aspect: life, worship, campaigning and activity, it is not the whole of what

is 'required'. You may recognise Chapter 6 from the Good Friday 'reproaches of God' in the Methodist Worship book, pages 256-7.

Chapter 6 falls into 3 sections and is set out like a court hearing. It contains the basis for the charge, presents the evidence and pronounces the judgement. In their previous behaviour, the people of Israel have made their own judgement against Yahweh as a response to his faithfulness. Now Yahweh will make his pronouncement against their rejection of him and his laws.

- Look at the charges in 6:1-5.

In answer to the people's charges against Yahweh, he now brings his own charges. Yahweh outlines his faithfulness in providing redemption, leadership, protection and adventure. He is reliable and not boring. The Exodus is an iconic marker in the history of Israel. It is the One Thing that they could look back on and remember confidently that God's power is 'mighty to save'. It was now being viewed with complacency and as 'out of touch' with the current state of the world.

- Consider the power of God which has saved you and how your testimony is still vibrant with faith. What things have been factors in reducing the 'joy of your salvation' over the passage of time?

- Reflect on how God's greatness is shown in your story.
- Note down the people who have led you in your faith - both ministers and friends. How does this show you God's faithfulness?
- Look up the story of Balaam & Balak in Numbers 22-23. Talk about God's protection.
- Look up the references to Shittim & Gilgal in Joshua 3 & 4, discuss the adventure and delight in being present to see God's actions.

6:6-8: THE WAY OUT.

The response here is one that shows an extravagant and over-the-top approach to sacrifice and offering. The calves were costly and their offering is plural. Verse 7a looks like a royal offering such as King David would have made, extravagant and rich. Verse 7b is horrible, but is not an unprecedented action from the Kings of Israel (see Manasseh; 2 Kings 21:6).

- Talk together about offerings that are showy in their extravagance and in their extreme. How does God respond to such offerings?
- With a gospel lens attached, what areas of the New Testament are still addressing the show of the sacrifice?

In 6:8 are the much-quoted words of requirement for a faithful life of walking in step with the Lord, keeping to the relationship spelt out in the Law and Prophets. Keeping this covenant relationship is the way out of the mess. Verse 8 reminds us that they have already been told this by the prophets and Law. They are in possession of the knowledge and evidence that kindness and justice are key to living the Godly life.

- What does 6:8 teach us about the kind of love God has for his covenant people?
- How is that love to be reflected in the actions of the people?

6:9-16: THE JUDGEMENT.

Yahweh's requirements have not been met. There will be consequences. Of course, as Micah spells out the issues that are besetting the people of Israel; that they have thrown out a God-

honouring and holy loving-kindness and justice in favour of deceit and wickedness; they are past the point where returning to God will seem like an attractive option.

Look 6:9-12 and talk about the depth of sin that the people of Israel have fallen into. Name the different charges and talk about how the same evils affect us today. How is Micah relevant in your culture in the 21st Century?

The consequences will be that they will be overrun by their enemies and their land will be taken from them. 6:13-16 shows how all the city will suffer - the city meaning all the people who had fallen from God's rule. The judgement of God falls on all the people and not just on the few.

- Look carefully at the nature of the punishment. Consider how it ties in with the nature of the offence, for example current greed will lead to constant lack of satisfaction, etc.
- Consider and pray about how you and your group - or your church if possible - can be more proactive in the things of Micah 6:8.

WAITING FOR A HOLY RENEWAL

In Chapter 7 we note that these crimes are firstly against God even though they are also against other people. The crimes are committed because of a failure to stand in God's ways of holiness. The business is God's business and it is of no consequence that the nations who are enemies of God are laughing. Chapter 7 is about getting the priorities sorted out again so that the people of God stand in a holy place and give precedence to God even when the ways of the world are strongly advocating another, seemingly good direction.

- Look at 7:7 and speak it aloud. What hope does it offer you even now?

Getting the focus right is necessary for holy living. We will naturally concern ourselves with the specifics of Micah 6:8 when we are right with God and looking at God alone to shape our thinking and direct our paths. There is a challenge in verse 10 that can serve as a reminder



that God is present, even when the desolation of the present moment leaves others to wonder and mock the faithful who are seemingly abandoned by God.

- Prayerfully ponder on this verse. Is it speaking to the faithfulness of God's people who remain holy and seek God's righteousness above all else when all around them have abandoned God's holy ways and are seeming to prosper?

Rising is God's business. Living with the knowledge of God's ability to resurrect is deeply prophetic when all around there are the agonies of hope's death. It is prophetic to live, waiting and trusting for the Lord to bring life to the desolation.

- Recall biblical examples of this. Do you have stories to tell of this in your personal or church experience?

GOD'S HOLINESS IS UNASSAILABLE

God's law and God's character are unchanged by the impact of popular culture and 'enlightenment' which in its current iteration is the term 'woke'. While we must always embody the heart of flesh, living and responding with softened hearts, God's holiness and laws remain unassailable. Instead of approaching any situation with the loving conviction of those 'who we are under the gaze of God', the prevalent culture erodes this. Soft-hearted people are convinced to eschew holiness in favour of either complete removal of God from their thinking (de-ology). Or a 'we-ology' where God, the 'Theo' of Theology, is removed from the situation and is re-invented in the image of the culture of the gathered people. The danger of this approach is that the unchanging nature of God has been exchanged for the changeability of the minds of people and the passing of popular culture. There are no checks and balances to the system as it is constructed within an echo chamber which bounces around approval to behaviours, attitudes and policies that are not 'of God.'

The courtroom drama of Micah relies on a constant understanding of who is on trial. We are reminded that it is God who is bringing the charge against his people. We are reminded that God's

holy rule is absolute and will require satisfaction.

- Look at 7:18-19. There is hope. God will always call sin what it is and iniquities remain iniquities. These will all be destroyed for the good of God's people.

To stand with Micah is to live a holy and righteous life that makes an impact on the world around us.

The Revd Catherine Hutton is Lead Minister for Epsom and Cheam Methodist Churches. She has a passion for building the church in discipleship for true evangelism, Scriptural holiness and missional engagement with the local community. She lives in Epsom with her husband Gavin, two sons - Aidan & Joel - and Rocky, the ministry Chihuahua. She is partial to a sparkly manicure and a good Marvel movie.



THE COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen



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www.christianpersecution.co.uk

The Lindisfarne Centre aims not just to describe WHAT is happening, but also explain WHY it is happening, as well as seeking to predict WHERE it is likely to spread to.

The Lindisfarne Centre for the Study of Christian Persecution exists to help governments, international bodies, the legal system and media - as well as other Christian organisations, understand both the nature and the causes of the persecution of Christian minorities in the Islamic world. Because only when we understand why persecution is happening, can we see how it is likely to spread - and what can be done to stop it, or at least reduce its impact.



THANKS

From Derek Balsdon

I want to take this opportunity to give very grateful thanks to all those within MET who have kindly contributed towards a farewell gift to me, including a generous financial gift and a beautiful picture of Mow Cop. The last circuit I served in included Mow Cop, and it is just a few miles from where we live. I have visited there and prayed for a fresh revival, and having that picture in our lounge is a prayer prompt. It has been a privilege to serve God through MET over the past 4 years, and Hilary and I are so grateful for all the support and encouragement we have received from the MET family. I was commissioned as the Development Worker at REVIVE 2018, so it was fitting that my farewell took place at REVIVE 2022. Hilary and I greatly appreciate the thanks we have received, although the glory goes to God.

COME, SINNERS, TO THE GOSPEL FEAST

Charles Wesley

Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,
let every soul be Jesu's guest;
you need not one be left behind,
for God has bidden all mankind.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call,
the invitation is to all;
come, all the world; come, sinner, thou!
All things in Christ are ready now.

Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
ye restless wanderers after rest,
ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
in Christ a hearty welcome find.

His love is mighty to compel;
his conquering love consent to feel;
yield to his love's restless power,
and fight against your God no more.

See him set forth before your eyes;
behold the bleeding sacrifice!
His offered benefits embrace,
and freely now be saved by grace.

This is the time; no more delay!
This is the Lord's accepted day;
come in, this moment, at his call,
and live for him who died for all.



Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

ENGAGING WITH CULTURE; STAYING FAITHFUL TO TRUTH

Bart Woodhouse

BART WOODHOUSE EXPLORES WAYS TO ENGAGE EVANGELISTICALLY, WHIST REMAINING FAITHFUL TO BIBLICAL TRUTH, WITHIN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Many volumes have been written over the years about mission and evangelism; much of this has been very helpful, but some has been less so. What follows here is not an attempt to present some finished strategy or comprehensive understanding of these huge topics, but rather a brief glance at some specific areas I feel need highlighting. In our current cultural and domestic ecclesial climate, we need to affirm our faithfulness to the foundational doctrines that are the very *raison d'être* of evangelism. Firstly, that of sin, where grace is the divinely generous response to our desperate need; secondly, that this grace is a costly and demanding 'free gift'; thirdly, that we must surrender to the Lord's pattern of mission; and fourthly, that holiness keeps us distinct and yet 'fragrant' in a post-truth society. This list is far from exhaustive, but reclaims the idea of sin, judgment, and righteousness, and that the Holy Spirit

takes the lead in revealing these to the world, just as Jesus taught (John 16.13).

SPEAKING OF SIN ...

The central message of the gospel remains the gracious forgiveness of our sins through faith in Jesus, his atoning death on the cross, and his authenticating bodily resurrection, making a way for us to enter a new, transformed and transforming, present and yet eternal life. This core message hinges on the issue of human rebellion and sin, and the desire of an eternally loving God to restore both humanity and creation to its divinely intended function and relationship. Sin, therefore, is the problem that needs to be acknowledged before the news of 'Easter' becomes authentically 'good'.

There is, in some quarters, a tendency to make the news 'good' by other means, which avoids, or seeks to reframe, the challenge of sin. This is motivated in part by our current cultural milieu, where sin is a difficult concept to grasp and carries a huge amount of negative baggage which most people choose not to unpack. (See Alan Mann's *Atonement for a 'Sinless' Society* (Paternoster:2005).

Much of our recent missional thinking and strategy has consciously or unconsciously sought to downplay, distort, or even erase, the notion or sin. This has been motivated, with much integrity, by a desire to see people discover the love of God in Jesus, but it has also served to undermine the nature of that love and the way in which the gospel functions as 'Good News'. Often the gospel is recrafted as a palatable, attractive, consumable, spiritual 'self-help' strategy competing within the malaise of a consumerist culture. This thinking seems to demonstrate a perceived need to simply outwit culture and present an acceptable God with a familiar message, using trigger words of 'love', 'inclusive', 'welcome' and 'affirming'. All these terms are not out of place within the New Testament and the gospel, but they arrive divested of their biblical roots and instead champion another meaning, one which the dominant culture has crafted.

Our language is always on the move so to speak, but the gospel remains eternal and universal. We need to learn how to stay afloat in the flow of our cultural environment without being carried

downstream, and this requires effort and imagination. Sin and its consequences remains the key understanding that frames the gospel that follows; here we need to push against the cultural flow with honesty and humility, so that the cross is encountered as meeting a devastating personal and corporate need before a holy God.

Without doubt, sin has lost its potency as a term in both our mission and our post-Christian society, and yet 'sin' remains the central human problem that can only be addressed by the work of the cross. Whilst 'sin' may not communicate the seriousness of the human condition in a way it once did, human depravity, anxiety, aggression, emptiness, loneliness, and shame are as evident and pressing as ever. The Enlightenment fuelled a 'progressive project' which has sought to address these conditions of humanity with the secular diet of science, education, and social reform. However, as Mark Sayers develops in his recent book, *Reappearing Church*,

The West's crude secularist-progressive map contains a post-Christian revivalist framework, one in which Christianity itself is the heresy needing to be jettisoned before we can be revived as individuals and culture ... built around the belief that history will end with a human-powered social utopia and the potential of human perfectibility. Yet this post-Christian revivalist belief is having its own moment of doubt. (Mark Sayers, Reappearing Church (Moody: 2019), p.27)

It is this 'moment of doubt' in the secular project that creates a renewed search for a satisfying and authentic antidote to the root cause of human disfunction and regression, or theologically speaking, sin. As Sayers goes on to argue, we may on one level live in a tumultuous and hostile society within the west, but on the other hand we are seeing the secular project begin to fail in its promise, becoming instead a source of deep social anxiety and division.

The task of the evangelist is to throw the seed of the gospel on this newly broken soil, reintroducing individuals and society to the notion of God, supreme and sovereign, of human purpose

and identity in the light of God, and that the cause of our longing, anxious, and dysfunctional inner-self is the outworking of our disconnected nature, primarily from God, and symptomatically from each other.

We are back at the simple evangelist's line, 'We all have a God-shaped hole in our hearts that only God can fill'; that our sin is a symptom of our broken relationship with God, brought about in all humanity by a universal and intrinsic rejection and rebellion against him.

The news becomes 'good' because our denial and rebellion against God, and the myriad of spiritual, human, and material consequences have been taken up by Jesus on the cross - our sin as both cause and symptom is painfully endured and conquered by God incarnate. What the secular post-Christian society has failed to deal with, Jesus already has, and the reception of this cross-won reality is ours in as much as we exercise our freewill, in the sacrifice and vulnerability of choosing a relational, trusting, faith in this self-giving act of Jesus. This surrendered moment of accepting the work that Jesus has done 'in our place', brings the inner realisation of sin's true destructive and toxic nature and the Holy Spirit making our repentant transformation a real and authentic ongoing experience. This transformation then spills out collectively as we 'incarnate' the redemptive presence of Christ acting in the world through us: co-labouring with Christ in love of our broken world in the power of the Spirit.

We may be entering turbulent times for a variety of reasons, but despite the stormy cultural waters, this may prove to be the first crack in a fragmenting secular social progressivism that has dominated our society for many decades. Is this moment ripe for revival? A surrendered, repentant, and prayerful church sharing a simple gospel with confidence and authentic love will find out. A gospel that speaks to human need, to human brokenness, to the sin that we can escape no other way, only by trusting (believing) in the work of Jesus on the cross and choosing (repenting) to walk his path.

GRACE IS COSTLY ...

We also need to communicate and affirm an appreciation of the mystery of 'Holy Love': making clear that it is not merely a reflection of human love; it will surprise and shock us. It will not be tamed and become a servant to our wants and socially expedient demands. 'Holy Love' eternally remains a holy expression of God's nature (Deuteronomy 33:3; Psalm 25; John 3:16-21). Indeed, human notions of love are but a dim reflection (1 Corinthians 13:12) of the love of God, revealed in Christ and made manifest through the Holy Spirit.

As some have said, John's epistle teaches us 'God is Love' (1 John 3:16), not that 'Love is God', and in the current cultural climate we need to be mindful of the difference. Grace is not our servant, but the means of entering a renewed covenant of love with God, and by this covenant, promises are made, and hearts exchanged, as we become a new creation and adopted children of God.

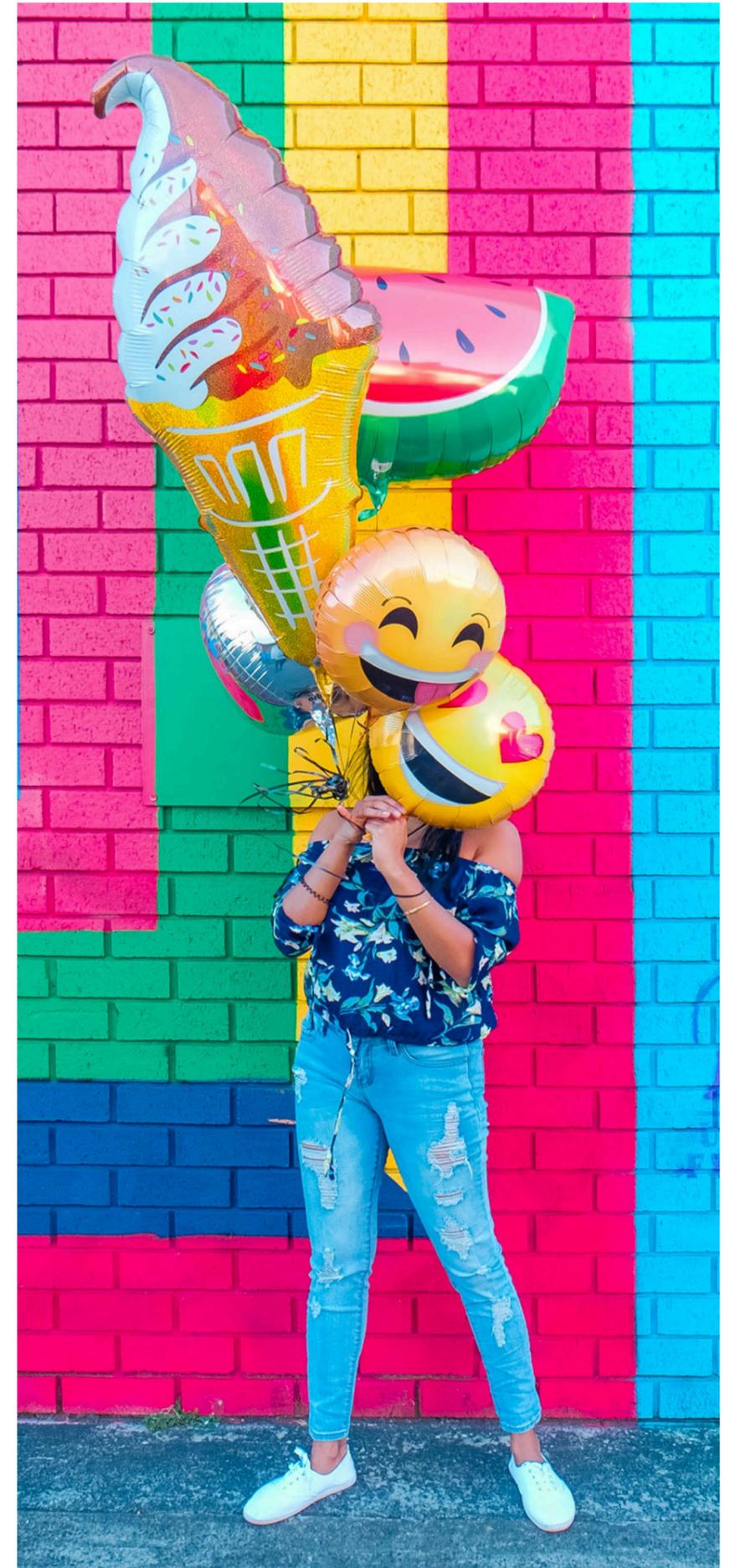
As Paul had to remind those in the church at Rome (Romans 6:1-7), grace brings a new identity and not a blank cheque to excuse our persistence in an old way of life, although as Paul also said (Romans 8:1-4; Colossians 2:13-15 etc.), grace is an infinitely deep resource through the complete work of the cross. But, we cheapen it disgracefully when we live off its wealth to support aspects of our old, dying selves and the cultures we inhabit.

Our evangelism needs to articulate, carefully and clearly, that the grace of God is made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, that though him and his action on our behalf we can become a new creation and adopted children of God. This framework, rooted in the New Testament, speaks of a costly grace and goes on to describe the fruit of its work within us; as the Methodist Covenant Service puts it we are 'no-longer our own but thine'. Again, Paul reminds us we have been 'bought with a price' (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); that we put down an old life in order to take up a new self in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Grace has value or meaning only within the context of the human condition, expressed as sin and its manifold symptoms, in contrast

to a holy God and a divine standard of intention and potential for humanity.

In a 'post-truth' culture we need to reveal the mysterious truth of grace, with articulate humility, that it is both an experiential relief and embrace, but also a costly surrender. The encounter with Christ through the Holy Spirit connects us with both the attractiveness of a new, shame free, and meaningful life, and the dwarfing sense of awe at the nature and power of the giver and the gift. Grace understood correctly is both a free gift and an eternally captivating mystery, in that our freedom from sin is entered into by surrendering ourselves to the covenantal love of God - we are no longer our own but belong to him. In the afterglow of the postmodern revolution, and the strange vacuum of meaning left in its wake, we have an obligation to manifest in action and words the nature of truth, purpose and identity as revealed by Christ's 'resurrection life' within us, and his death on a cross for us. In that, we are now able to become the children of the living God, complete with a deep sense of hope, assurance of identity, an empowered purpose, humble authority, and being held by a captivating love. We become as we belong, we triumph as we surrender, we live as we die, and we receive as we give. Grace is a costly adventure that cannot be tamed or understood by the conventions of our culture, and it remains uniquely attractive as a result.

A final warning. The church has played its part in distorting the potency and mystery of grace by either edging towards a dead orthodoxy or by making it the grounds for unrepentant freedom. Both have their distinct idol-making capacity, and both result in a dying church. The pursuit of good doctrine can unconsciously begin to use man-made 'bricks and bitumen' in its unintended tower building, and our desire for God's love can take a less mysterious and costly route, as we are unwittingly guided by our own reflection in the dim mirror (1 Corinthians 13:12). Our evangelism must again be founded on the Wesleyan development of grace as prevenient, saving, and transforming, with each divine move requiring only an ever more surrendered heart!





GOD IS IN CHARGE

This is God's mission. We have often given lip service to this truth, whilst developing our next clever and culturally literate strategy, retrospectively acknowledging the Holy Spirit's role in the process! God is gracious and meets us in all our efforts to live out the command to make disciples, but I sense that revival demands a repentant and surrendered position towards the Holy Spirit. After all it's the job of the Holy Spirit to convince the world with regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16.8), not ours! Leslie Newbigin helpfully points out:

God opens the heart of a man or woman in the gospel. The messenger (the 'angel' of Acts 10:3) may be a stranger, a preacher, a piece of Scripture, a dream, an answered prayer, or a deep experience of joy or sorrow, of danger or deliverance. It was not part of any missionary 'strategy' devised by the church. It was the free and sovereign deed of God, who goes before his church. And like Peter, the church can usually find good reasons for being unwilling to follow. But follow it we must, if it is to be faithful. For the mission is not ours but God's. (Lesslie Newbigin, The Open Secret (1995: Eerdmans), p.64)

The humbling supernatural reach of God's voice in his prevenient grace should be magnified in the focus of our prayer life as we partner with him, adding our hearts and voice to his. Revival is a spiritual atmosphere created mysteriously in the weaving together of our surrendered hearts and voices in prayer with his heart and voice over our communities and nation.

We follow his lead in mission, which will likely be counter-cultural and costly, although as we are led by the Spirit we will undoubtedly discover him in places and contexts we never expected. Effective evangelism is born out of prayer not strategy; it is the Holy Spirit who

prompts the human heart to consider sin, righteousness, and judgement (John 16:8) and to be opened to his voice speaking through us and his powerful love shown in our witness.

RELEVANT HOLINESS

Since the command of Jesus was first given to 'go and make disciples of all nations' the complexities relating to language and culture have both informed and distracted the church in its mission. As we take this opportunity to rediscover and affirm a 'Wesleyan' and evangelical pattern of mission and evangelism, we need to be mindful of the dangers present in attempting to engage with culture; as Lesslie Newbigin

The humbling supernatural reach of God's voice in his prevenient grace should be magnified in the focus of our prayer life as we partner with him, adding our hearts and voice to his.

famously stated, 'In the attempt to be 'relevant' one may fall into syncretism, and in the effort to avoid syncretism one may become irrelevant' (Lesslie Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks (1986: SPCK), p.7).

Wesley's development of 'holiness' or 'entire sanctification' provides a useful foundation to help us navigate between these two dangers. On the one hand, Wesleyan holiness expects Holy Spirit inspired transformation, changes in behaviour and attitude, that reflect the nature of Christ in us, and this process often has a radically 'counter-cultural' flavour. On the other hand, the dynamism of, and dependence on, grace rather than any form of religious self-righteous practice, generates an infectious lived witness and authentic expression of God's love. The Holy Spirit overtaking, overcoming, both working in us and through us, to reveal an irresistible Kingdom. Holiness, expressed as our gracious acceptance in Christ producing the transformative outworking of grace by the Holy Spirit, must be continually affirmed as the foundation of our gospel as we engage in evangelism.

Our evangelism needs to hold confidently to the truth of a wholistic gospel, that both offers the wonder of God's love and grace, and the restoration of our identity as a holy people. Our witness then becomes an expression of holiness in the everyday of life, joy in the face of difficulty, love in the face of hate, integrity in the face of temptation, displaying the nature of our relationship with Jesus in context. Our behaviour reveals the inner glow and attractiveness of the Holy Spirit shining through a person's life in a way that language cannot compete with. The effects of light and salt are difficult to argue with, and so is the witness of 'love without sin' (John Wesley, Sermon - The Scripture Way of Salvation).

This manner of witness can bridge some surprisingly wide cultural divisions, challenging and overcoming the limits and transgressions of cultural translation in the immediacy and integrity of a Holy Spirit filled life bearing witness to Jesus and the gospel. Holiness expresses the uniqueness and sovereignty of the

kingdom whilst displaying the universal attractiveness of God's holy love in the outworking of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying and affirming presence. A strangely relevant voice of witness, challenging yet affirming all who are open and seeking something beyond the fray of competing truths and abyssal anxiety.

We haven't the space here to explore this in any detail, but the recent explosion of interest in Jordan Peterson's work regarding purposeful meaning, responsibility, and the personal need for connection to a bigger story demonstrates something in our culture that hungers for what we might describe as 'relational holiness'. As Peterson lays out, in a world of growing complexity and confusion, there is an increasing thirst for something both transcendent and secure, but also deeply intimate and relationally satisfying - a connection with a sense of purpose and love that transforms our worldview by both making sense and drawing us beyond cultural norms and limits into another deeper reality (Jordan Peterson, 12 Rules of Life: An Antidote to Chaos (Allen Lane Publishers: 2018)). Peterson reflects a mode of thinking that questions postmodern culture, and thereby also raises questions of our well-meaning missiology. Indeed, a missiology that has cleverly placated our emerging culture with a pseudo-native 'Good-News' narrative that merely echoes the ideological values and hopes with which it's being presented. Indeed, we could note with some irony that Peterson has won, with a direct and uncompromising tone, more 'converts' to a broadly biblically-informed overview of life's purpose and meaning than any of the church's 'pioneering' attempts.

In this brief glance at how best to engage with our culture as evangelists, we have prioritised the need for a lived witness of integrity, that earths holiness in the everyday. But we also need to affirm, in line with 1 Peter 3:15, the need always to be ready to give an answer to 'everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope we have'. Personal experience and testimony continue to be the most significant and potent means of evangelism, but only remain so when founded on a discipleship that reflects the light of holiness (1 Peter 2:9).

John Finney lays out a good starting point when describing a balanced and yet confident pattern of evangelism when he writes '[evangelism] goes where people are and listens, binds together prayer and truth, celebrates the goodness and complexity of life as well as judging the sinfulness of evil, and sees truth as something to be done and experienced as well as intellectually believed. It walks in humility' (John Finney, Recovering the Past (1996: Darton, Longman & Todd), p.47).

Let's stay true to this walk of evangelism in an age that that needs, as much as ever, to hear the Good News of the gospel of Christ Jesus.

Dr Bart Woodhouse is currently a Pioneer Missioner for the North Kent Methodist Circuit. He is married to Rachel, with three teenage children and a Labradoodle called Ace. Having gained his first degree at Cliff College, he went on to complete a PhD in Biblical Studies at Sheffield University. Bart is most happy when "bagging" Munros in the Highlands of Scotland or enjoying time with the family. After 17 years of Methodist lay ministry, he is now discerning a call to ordination within the Anglican Church.





THE EAGLE RETURNS:
A FRESH LOOK AT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
C. Paul Burnham

Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018,
ISBN: (978-1-5326-4200-5) pp. 64, £12.00

Paul Burnham, a close friend of the late Howard Marshall, presents us here with an extraordinary little book. As a lecturer, I have personally found it invaluable in bringing me very rapidly and easily up to date with the most significant developments in the study of the Fourth Gospel. Burnham has an eye for the authors that are truly important, especially with regards to the debate about authorship.

If, like me, you are often inclined to skim over lengthy and dull discussions of authorship when reading a biblical commentary, you will find Burnham is a breath of fresh air. He shows how vital a right understanding of the authorship of John's Gospel can be. Burnham makes no secret of the fact that he is advocating a particular view here. And his take on authorship might well be described as a turn towards a more conservative view. However, considering the way the so-called 'Johannine Community' view has now acquired the status of near orthodoxy, what Burnham says is quite radical. Yet, he's not wishing to go back to arguing that the John in question is John son of Zebedee. You will need to read it to find out who this John is for Burnham, but it is a view well supported

by some celebrated Johannine scholars and makes sense of the Jerusalem emphasis that we find in this Gospel.

Burnham nourishes us with a survey of every scene in the Gospel, showing us how it can be seen that these are all the reports of an eye witness. He concludes with an explanation for his chosen title, inspired by Augustine of Hippo's designation of the eagle as the symbol of John's Gospel:

'The eagle is uncompromising, as is John's insistence that Jesus was uniquely one with God the Father. The eagle is supremely equipped for grasping, as John's Gospel is equipped for drawing people to faith and salvation.'

He laments that, in contrast, '... the modern symbol for the Gospel of John might be a parrot, and a caged parrot at that.'

Reviewed by Ben Pugh, Lecturer in Theology and Postgraduate Research Programme Lead at Cliff College.



GROWING ON THE FRONTLINE
LICC (the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity)

Every Christian wants to live their life more like Jesus. But despite our best intentions, it can be hard to live out our faith meaningfully and consistently. What is it that's stopping us? And what can we do about it?

That's what Growing on the Frontline is about. A new small group resource from LICC, Growing on the Frontline focuses on the lives we lead when we're not in church - our workplaces, homes, and social groups. We call these places our 'frontlines': the places in which God has placed us, and where we interact with those who don't follow Jesus.

Over an eight-session course, participants are encouraged to reflect on what's happening in and around them, receive God's wisdom for their situation, invite him to renew them, and so respond more fruitfully to opportunities on their frontlines.

Focused around in-depth, presenter-led videos, each session features a combination of Bible study, real-life stories, and group discussion to help people identify what's holding them back from living like Jesus and consider how to grow more like him with God's help. The course also teaches a variety of prayer tools participants can use to help them embed what they're learning in daily life. Ultimately, the goal of Growing on the Frontline is to equip people with the practical tools to overcome barriers to fruitful discipleship in every situation.

Growing on the Frontline builds on the concepts explored in LICC's flagship group resources Frontline Sundays and

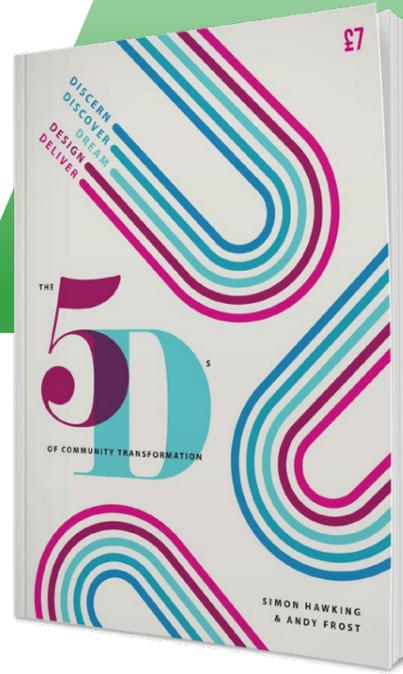
Fruitfulness on the Frontline, but it's easy for newcomers to digest. Early sessions focus on the choices we make on our frontlines - what influences us, why we make them, and what consequences they bring. The course then moves to explore how our emotions and desires affect our behaviour, before delving into what it means to go through seasons of life, and how we can be fruitful even when we feel distant from God. It ends with inviting participants to put what they've learnt into action, and gives them practical steps to sustain that growth for the long-term, so they can be consistent in their fruitfulness.

Feedback for Growing on the Frontline shows how effective it is at making a difference to how people approach discipleship.

'It's really helped to deepen the conversations we have in our home group', one participant shared. 'It's helped me realise that I need to take more responsibility for my spiritual growth. I've started to see what drives the choices I make when I'm on my frontline, and now when something happens, I stop, think, and pray before I respond, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction.'

Growing on the Frontline is perfect for anyone looking to grow in fruitfulness in everything they do. Session 1 is available for free at licc.org.uk/growing, and you can purchase the complete pack at the LICC online shop: <https://licc.org.uk/product/growing-on-the-frontline-complete-pack/>

Tim Yearsley, Presenter, Growing on the Frontline



THE 5DS OF COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION *Simon Hawking and Andy Frost*

London: SJI self published, 2022 pp. 138, £7

In these financially constrained times, we need to have our eyes peeled for a bargain. Here it is: for £7 you get so much for your money with this little gem of a book! Seriously, it's much more than that. This is a well-researched book which is a real 'go-to' manual for community transformation. It is clearly presented by two experienced practitioners - Simon Hawking based in Lincoln and Andy Frost, Director of Share Jesus International.

If you're wondering what the 5Ds are - buy the book! However, to whet your appetite they are: Discern - Discover - Dream - Design - Deliver. The first three themes are focussed on exploration and the final two are mobilisation.

Excellent stuff! What I particularly appreciated was the inclusion of testimonies to back-up the practical teaching and systematic advice. There are insights from Christians Against Poverty, Acts Trust (based in Lincoln - which I found interesting having been stationed there for 10 years), the Gather Movement (wow-check them out at <https://gathermovement.org>) & Tearfund.

Within the five categories mentioned, we delve into:

- Understanding the needs, assets and role of the church;
- Exploring your community from different perspectives;
- Prayerfully imagining what could be;
- Creating an action plan;
- Launching, staying on track and honest reflections.

I ask you, where can you get all that for seven quid? Marvellous! As it says in 1 Corinthians 4:20, 'For the kingdom is not in word but in power' (NKJV). We are hearing a lot from certain quarters about so-called 'justice' at the moment, but here is a realistic book based on Jesus' heart of compassion. It is uncompromising and (unlike certain politicians & theologians) proven to deliver. This is a true outworking of Micah 6:8.

Well done Simon and Andy. This book is a total gem for any church that has the heart of the Lord Jesus and wants to reach out to a broken world which is just outside their chapel doors. I salute you, brothers, and pray that this little book will yield an eternal harvest.

Reviewed by the Revd Mark Lawrence, Superintendent Minister of the Market Drayton Circuit, where he ministers with his wife, former Vice President of the Methodist Conference, Carolyn Lawrence. He has been in Circuit ministry since leaving Wesley College, Bristol in 1997. They have two married daughters and are blessed with four grandchildren. They give thanks to God for nearly 40 years of marriage and for being placed in North Shropshire where the church is growing and we they oversee three new expressions of church.

PRAYING ALWAYS

*Roz Addington,
MET's Prayer Secretary*

Do not fear, be brave, have courage, do not worry, I am with you, I will never leave you, keep your eyes fixed on me: all are words which God has given me over the past months. We are living in unprecedented times and things are difficult with all that is going on within our nation. God has clearly said that things will become tumultuous, and indeed that has begun. However difficult the times are, however difficult they may become, we can always have the hope that God is with us and we will come through these difficult times. We must always keep that hope

before us, trust in the one who saves us, the one who will carry us through whatever might happen. God is much stronger than anything that can be thrown at us, and he will sustain us through it all. Beyond the turmoil, lies the promise of better times and a time of renewal and revival. God's message to us is, keep your eyes fixed on him and he will be with us.

If you wish to contact Roz with any prayer requests then please email her at: roz.addington1@btinternet.com



WEEK 1 | THE CHURCH

- 1. Repentance:** Moving away from biblical holiness; reliance on human wisdom and science; following the way of the world; denying the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 6:7-8).
- 2. Church Leaders:** the President and Vice President of Conference, Graham Thompson and Anthony Boateng; Chairs of District, Superintendents, Presbyters, Deacons and Lay Workers; Local Preachers and Leaders of Worship (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 1: 3-7).
- 3. Scriptural Holiness:** For the centrality of prayer at all levels within the church; for the wind of the Holy Spirit to fall bringing holiness, repentance and a thirst for seeking God's truth in Scripture (Ephesians 6:18; John 16:13).
- 4. Mission and Vision:** A seeking and searching for God's vision for our church; for ears to hear God speaking; an openness to, and guidance from the Holy Spirit; boldness to reach out to our communities in creative ways (Matthew 6:33; Psalm 105:1-4).
- 5. The work of MET:** For the 3R's: re-kindling the Wesleyan vision, renewing the Wesleyan mission and raising up of a new generation of Wesleys; God's provision and guidance for the future; for David Hull as Chair; the Trustees; the Executive; for MET members leading prayer meetings and Bible studies; those in the Methodist Church struggling with the God in Love Unites Us report and who are seeking a way forward (Isaiah 58:11-12; Colossians 1:9-11).
- 6. Cliff College:** The Principal, Ashley Cooper, and the staff; the launch of a new degree course; the recruitment of students, both residential and on-line; development of links with the Methodist Church in Ireland; thanks for the success of the 2022 Trek and prayers for one planned during Holy Week, 2023 (Isaiah 43:18-19; Psalm 91:1-2, 14-16).
- 7. Children and Young People:** Nathan Veall, our executive member seeking to reach out to the younger generation at university and in the workplace; youth and children's workers across the connexion; clear biblical teaching; inspiration and guidance through the Holy Spirit (Psalm 143:8-10; James 2:13-18).



WEEK 2 | GREAT BRITAIN

- 1. The Government:** Wisdom and strength for the new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt; a return to God at the centre of government and the formulating of godly policies; for integrity, justice, and courage in moving forward and working for the common good of all (Zechariah 7:8; Proverbs 29:4).
- 2. Economic Situation:** The rising cost of living; increased personal debt; those struggling to make ends meet; charities seeking to alleviate the suffering, particularly Christian organisations, and food banks; a deep hunger for seeking God in individuals (Matthew 25:34-40; Deuteronomy 28:1-2).
- 3. NHS & Social care:** Adequate resources, both in funding and personnel; the backlog of people awaiting treatment; better communication between departments and the various services; children's services; mental health provision; care packages and help for vulnerable people to allow them to return home; the homeless (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:13).
- 4. The Royal Family:** King Charles III and the Queen Consort, the Prince and Princess of Wales as they take up new roles: for wisdom as they move forward; the forth coming Coronation on 6 May; harmony within the wider Royal Family; continuation of the Christian principles of the late Queen Elizabeth II (1 Timothy 2:1-2; Psalm 2:10-11).
- 5. Northern Ireland:** Minister for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris; The Northern Ireland Protocol; the Stormont crisis and an answer to the deadlock; unity within the political parties and the will to seek a workable solution (Romans 15:5-7; James 3:16-18).
- 6. Gangs, Knife Crime and County Lines:** Youngsters caught up in gang culture and the related problems of knife crime and drug abuse; those trapped in County Lines; protection for vulnerable young people; those who reach out to these young people; the police as they tackle these situations (Psalm 107:13-16; Psalm 9:9-10).
- 7. Christians in the Workplace:** Those struggling to stand up for Christian values in their places of work, especially in Parliament and the media; for their integrity to shine out as an example to others; courage and boldness to speak out against injustices; protection against false accusations and lies (Joshua 1:7-9; 2 Thessalonians 3: 2-3).



WEEK 3 | WORLD ISSUES

- 1. Russia/Ukrainian War:** Thanks for ground regained by Ukraine; for Putin to do nothing rash in response to the retreats from ground taken; strength and resolve for Ukrainian troops and people; a stop to continuing conflict; resources for re-building the infrastructure; refugees (Psalm 55:16-19; Psalm 31:16-20).
- 2. The Persecuted Church:** Afghanistan and other Islamic controlled countries; North Korea, China, Myanmar, Belarus, Russia; basic human rights to be upheld; exposure of injustices; justice and fair treatment; release of those in unfair detention; strength and resilience for those suffering (Psalm 145: 17-20; Romans 8:35-39).
- 3. World Poverty:** People living in poverty; compassion and aid from the richer nations; provision for those facing starvation; adequate sanitation and housing; health care sufficient resources for charities providing relief (Psalm 9:18; James 2:5-7).
- 4. War Torn Areas of the World:** Innocent victims; refugee camps; adequate funding for relief and aid agencies to tackle famine and disease; safe access to the most desperate; those affected to find their hope through the redemptive love of Jesus (Psalm 46: 8-11; Proverbs 14:31-32).
- 5. Natural Disasters:** Climate refugees; those who no longer have land to make a living; aid agencies working to alleviate the suffering; finance to re-build infra structure, particularly in poorer nations; the will of world leaders to tackle underlying causes (Nahum 1:7; Philippians 4:18).
- 6. Terrorism:** Perpetrators of terror to encounter God; victims to find the peace of the Lord; change to regimes across the world which encourage acts of terror; cyber-attacks (Romans 12:19-21; Psalm 34:13-18).
- 7. The World Economic Situation:** For world leaders to seek godly wisdom rather than human wisdom and science for solutions; a working together for the good of everyone; courage for bold decisions; for world populations to seek and accept godly solutions (Proverbs 28:2-4; Psalm 2: 1-2 & 10-11).



WEEK 4 | THE NATURAL WORLD & CLIMATE CHANGE

- 1. Repentance:** Forgiveness for our abuse of the planet; our ravaging of its resources; destruction of its eco-systems; pollution of the land and sea, causing reduction in biodiversity (Isaiah 24:4-6; Revelation 4:11).
- 2. Britain:** Commitment to pledges formulated to reduce carbon emissions; our 'throw away' society; reduction of plastics; pollution of water ways - legislation to prevent sewage being dumped in our rivers; public resolve to halt the detrimental effect of litter in the environment (Colossians 1:16-20; Psalm 8:3-9).
- 3. Carbon Emissions:** An urgency among Governments to act collaboratively; new technologies to reduce these emissions; financial guarantees from wealthier nations to enable poorer nations to make greener and more sustainable choices (Jeremiah 2:7; Nehemiah 9:6).
- 4. Rising Sea Levels:** Those living in low lying coastal regions; sufficient aid for those affected; climate refugees (Psalm 104:24-25; Psalm 95:3-5).
- 5. Illegal Logging:** Financial help to tackle the problem; perpetrators to be brought to justice; prevention of loss of habitats and the extinction of wildlife, adding to the problem of increased carbon emissions and rising sea levels (2 Chronicles 7:13-14; Jeremiah 12:4).
- 6. Plastics:** Commitment worldwide to reduce, all plastics; for environmentally friendly materials to be found; political will around the world to bring in legislation and funding enabling this to happen; the clearing up of polluted habitats (Isaiah 24:4-6; 1 Timothy 4:4).
- 7. COP27 Agreements:** Implementation of the decisions made; for governments to take seriously the peril our planet is in; to become good stewards of the natural world and its resources; commitment to release finance to poorer nations; collaboration and the working together to bring meaningful change (Genesis 2:15; 1 Peter 3:8-9).

HEBREWS 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.



FROM THE CHAIR

The Revd Dr David A. Hull

Dear Friends,

By the time this issue of MET Connexion reaches you, the season of new year Covenant Services will be upon us once again. An extract from the Covenant Prayer is printed on page 20. The words are always challenging to pray. I often speak to people who question whether they can truly pray the prayer entirely wholeheartedly and unreservedly. I encourage them to use the words as an expression of their aspiration - setting out the commitment they long to be able to make to the Lord, even if they feel they have some way to go in making it.

My mind goes back to our family holiday over the summer. We had a wonderful time in Bude, on the Cornish coast. I surprised myself by swimming in the sea three times! It was all very safe. The lifeguards were there. They had put out flags to show where to swim. They were watching the water.

The water was quite rough at times with the waves crashing, so I decided to swim out beyond them to calmer waters, and it was beautiful. There were a few times, though, that I realised I couldn't easily get to where I wanted to be. I was out of my depth and when the water flowed back out to sea before the next wave came in, I couldn't easily swim against it. I realised I could either fight against it, certain I would have made it back to shore but wouldn't have enjoyed it nearly as much, or I could just enjoy the swim and allow the waves eventually to bring me back. That's what I did, and I loved it!

I knew I was safe; I knew someone had looked at the conditions and worked out I was going to be ok; I knew I was being watched. All I had to do was surrender and allow myself to be carried. The challenge of the Covenant Service each year is,

as best we can, to surrender all to the Lord, with a prayer that he will help us to surrender all the more in the coming days and months.

When I am on the Cornish coast, I often think about my friend David White who sadly died of pneumonia, brought on by Covid-19, on 16 December 2021. He loved the sea and the rhythms of grace of which the turning tides reminded him. He was a giant of a man in many respects and, although his CV read like a 'Who's Who' of charismatic evangelical leadership in the Church of England - St Michael's le Belfrey, York; Holy Trinity, St Austell; and St Andrew's Chorleywood, to name three of the churches he served - he was a humble man. He loved the legacy of the Wesley brothers and was a great support to me in ministry. I am therefore delighted that we are able to carry an article he wrote for us some time ago in this issue of MET Connexion. It is an excellent introduction to our theme of Offering Christ, holding a celebration of our heritage together with our call to evangelism, something that David himself embodied richly in his own ministry.

In this mailing, you will have received information about renewing your partnership with MET for a further year. We are so grateful for all your support and I do hope that our paths will cross in the coming year at one of our events.

Wishing you the Lord's richest blessing throughout the year ahead and rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,

David



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