*the*LINK



The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

SPRING 2024



IN THIS MAG—Chris' time in Costa Rica—photos on this page, next page and back page.

Amnesty update
All We Can new partner
Global Relationships
Dates for March to May



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Stockton Heath Methodist Church
Charity Commission Number 1134148
Minister: the Rev Jeremy Tresise
Keep in touch on: www.shmc.org.uk;
www.facebook.com/stocktonheathmethodistchurch,
or www.twitter.com/uk_shmc









Clockwise: Chris with local children; aerial view of building; the framework for the walls goes up; the roof goes on; children with the stationery donated by Stockton Heath Methodist Church members.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this I can see blue sky and sunshine through the window, and spring flowers are appearing daily in the garden. Even the birds are getting excited! I know at least one of our church members can't wait to get out in the garden. Time is certainly marching on.

In this edition of *the*LINK we welcome back Chris who has kindly provided photos and a summary of his time in Costa Rica.

There is an increasing need for volunteers in our society today and there are 2 appeals included for you to consider (see pages 11 and 15). There are prayer requests for Haiti on page 10, and perhaps we could pray for Ahmed Mansoor who is being held in solitary confinement (page 7).

By the time you receive this magazine we will be in Lent as Easter is early this year. As usual there will be plenty going on at church and there is a list of dates on page 13 but don't forget to check the weekly notices for anything I have not included, or for anything which may have changed.

Finally thank you to everyone who sent me articles, photos and information to include in *the*LINK. I am always grateful for your contributions. And don't forget to go on our church's website if you would like to see all the photos etc in colour.

All for now and I wish you a joyous Easter.

Julia

Data Protection: personal records are kept on computer by Rev Jeremy Tresise as minister, and Chris Park as records co-ordinator. If you wish to know what is under your name, please speak to either of them.

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NEXT DEADLINE: Sunday, 5 May 2024



Contact Julia on 650237 or ewhitfield2008@btinternet.com if you wish to include anything in the next edition of *The*Link.

MESSAGE FROM THE REV JEREMY TRESISE

"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED AS WORTHLESS TURNED OUT TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL."

PSALM 118 :22



Who would want to be a stone mason? It definitely does not appeal to me!

The amount of sheer force required in the process of fashioning a large rock into a chosen shape sounds like extremely heavy and demanding work. The force at times must border on the violent and leaves a lot of waste stone rejected and discarded. However, the process also requires a high level of precision and skill as the stone is then shaped to fit the precise requirements of a design.

This verse from Psalm 118 is part of the psalm read on Palm Sunday. In it we are told that the stone that has been rejected as worthless intriguingly comes to be regarded as "the chief corner-stone". Different translations variously describe this stone as the "head of the corner", "the capstone" or "the most important of all". It refers to the coping stone of a wall, the key stone, or (my favoured image), the final stone to complete an archway, laid at its very apex, locking the whole arch together. As a building neared completion, there would be many stones which would be rejected because they did not or could not be made to fit. But the chief cornerstone is carefully chosen by the builder and is made to fit perfectly to make a building complete.

For us Jesus is the cornerstone that completes the edifice. Only Jesus can restore a right relationship between God on the one side and human kind on the other. He is the chief corner stone, "the most important stone of all", specially chosen and fitting perfectly. He (and only he) can bridge that gap and restore the relationship

between ourselves and God, to make it complete like the chief cornerstone, locking the two sides of the arch together.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the day we call Palm Sunday, and doing it so publicly, he knew that he would be fulfilling his purpose here on Earth. This was to be the climax of his story, the apex of his achievement, the fulfilment of his vocation. He knew well enough what lay ahead and yet sets his face to go and meet it head on. But for this to take place he knew he must first suffer the pain and rejection of the death of a common criminal. Obedient to his Father's will, and with supreme courage, he continues on that journey towards Jerusalem fulfilling the role that only he could fill.

He enters the city on a colt but would leave it carrying a cross.

And what of ourselves? Are we prepared to follow in the footsteps of the one who calls us? If we would share his kingly triumph, we must also be prepared to follow him in the way of the cross. We need to be willing to give what we have to God in service of him, offering it in the belief that it will be raised up and made most important when placed in his hands.

But followership is not easy - there lie too many distractions at either side of us and if we are not careful we can easily miss those times when Jesus makes himself present to us.

Discipleship means much more than being caught up in the euphoria and razzamatazz of the crowd, more than just the showy and flamboyant spreading of our cloaks on the road in front of Jesus. Discipleship means following 'the man on the donkey' into trouble, into controversy, to trial and testing and all the way to the cross - it did then and it still does today.

May you know the peace of the risen Christ this Easter.

Jeremy

CHRIS IN COSTA RICA

"Jishtö ba shkíná" would resound across the school campus as we arrived and the reply "Bäi" would soon follow it. It was the general greeting that we soon learned as we started to become acquainted with the Cabécar language. To say 'become familiar with Cabécar' is somewhat stretching the point. After 3 weeks there really weren't any other phrases that I can remember!

Our third Raleigh placement was in Shikiari, a remote village in Limon Province on the south-eastern side of Costa Rica. It took around 7 hours to travel from Raleigh HQ in Turrialba - 2 hours by road and 5 on foot. Access up to the river was possible by 4x4 vehicle but the suspension bridge restricted all but small motorbikes and horses for the last trek up to the village. We were lucky that most of the food and tools were carried to the village in this way, but as

transport was difficult and expensive we were expected to trek from the nearest point of bus access, some 5 hours or so.

The Cabécar people are one of 8 indigenous tribes in Costa Rica. The indigenous tribes represent only about 2% of the population of Costa Rica. Although they are marginalised they are proud and fiercely protect their customs. They are shy and reluctant to interact with outsiders but made us very welcome with a traditional meal of gallo pinto with patacones (rice and beans with twice fried green plantain).

Our main aim was to construct a community hall within the school campus. We had a lot of wet timber and nails but no plan or measurements. We did, however, have the services of a foreman who was essential in ensuring that the construction was correct, sturdy and aesthetically pleasing. It took a while to teach the volunteers the unusual techniques required, particularly how to knock a 6-inch nail into wet timber without bending it! (We did get through quite a lot of nails!!)

As the days passed the structure grew and I remember the celebrations as first the base was completed, then the walls and finally the roof. Like many building projects the main structural construction took just over half the time and I wondered what we would do with our remaining time in Shikiari. It wasn't long before I realised that there were still plenty of finishing touches to perform before we could truly say 'we've finished'.

We always valued the opportunity to interact with the community when not involved with the building project, and football matches and chances to share school lessons were popular. Interactions with volunteers and children at school grew and meaningful relations were built as the children became more familiar with our group. Language was a problem. Although many of our group were fluent Spanish speakers, Cabécar bears little relationship to Spanish, although body language and gestures speak a thousand words.

For us in Shikiari, 3 weeks had passed very quickly and I think we were all sorry to be leaving our isolated mountain home. We built our community hall, experienced Cabécar culture and traditions as well as living and working in our own varied international group of English, Dutch, American, Australian and German. It had been exciting and challenging but truly worthwhile.

Christianity in the tribe is evolving. 70 years ago 2 American missionaries began to translate the Bible and bring the word of God to the people. In 1997 the first New Testament was available in Cabécar. Unfortunately there were found to be grave errors in translation and the first edition was burned. Through perseverance and prayer the New Testament was re-written and completed

in 2014. It was well received and encouraged the villages to worship the Lord in their own language. The Old Testament had been started but at the time of writing I cannot confirm, or otherwise its completion.

HUGE THANK YOU FROM WARRINGTON AMNESTY

The 10th December 2023 was the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) so Warrington Amnesty was at the back of the church promoting Amnesty's biggest global campaign, Write for Rights. In practical terms this was in the form of cards to sign that were posted to individuals at risk of, or to people who are currently, suffering human rights abuses. You may have noticed that we were there the previous week as well! With 3 cases each time we collected more than 30 signatures over the 2 weeks so a huge thank you to everyone who signed cards, wrote a message and came to find out more about the campaign.

Why is it such a big campaign? Because it works. Results are not immediate and can take time but the cards of solidarity bring much needed support and hope that things can change. This is different for each individual so can be an improvement in the conditions in which they are being held, or the gaining of access to family, medical care or legal help, previously denied.

One good news story is that of Egyptian human rights lawyer, Mohamed Baker who was detained in 2019 for simply defending his country's most marginalised people. After featuring in the 2021 Write for Rights campaign, he and his researcher were released from prison after receiving a presidential pardon on 19 July 2023. In many parts of the world, human rights lawyers face aggression and detention for just doing their job so this was a day of hope for many who take huge risks to uphold human rights.



In this current campaign, one of the cases is that of Ahmed Mansoor, poet, blogger and human rights activist, being held in al -Sadr prison in Abu Dhabi. He is in solitary confinement without access to books, pens or paper. He does not even have a bed. Before his arrest he was one of the few voices providing reliable, independent information on the state of human rights in his country. In response he was arrested by the security forces in 2017 and for over a year, no one, not even his family, knew where he was. In May 2018 he was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges including "insulting the UAE and its symbols".

Ahmed Mansoor, UAE (Source: AIUK Write for rights resources)

In addition to cards with messages of solidarity, Amnesty groups sent letters to the authorities and the President of the UAE asking for his immediate and unconditional release and for his conviction to be quashed. Will that happen? Perhaps not. Maybe his sentence will be reduced. Hopefully the conditions in which he is being held will be improved. Under international law, prolonged solitary confinement – defined as a period of time lasting more than 15 days – is banned, because it is considered to amount to torture - cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Ahmed Mansoor has gone on hunger strike twice in protest at what is happening to him. Amnesty is hopeful that cards and letters from around the world, particularly from the UK, will have a positive impact on his situation. Let's give him the last word. He is quoted as saying – "The only way to counter repression is by revealing it … if activists do not talk, who will?".

Gill Hardy, Chair, Warrington Amnesty Group.

ALL WE CAN Methodist relief and development

First of all, thank you for your continued financial support of All We Can. We have received a Partner Church Impact Certificate thanking us for the £1,438.00 we raised over the past year. I hope to display this in church sometime soon.

2024 sees the start of a new 2-year project based in Liberia. I doubt if this country is on anyone's holiday destination list, and some of us may find it difficult to point it out on a map, so I thought I would write a bit about this country before introducing the new project.



Liberia
TomTom/Open Street Map

Liberia as a nation was established by freed North American and Caribbean slaves in the 1800s.

In the 1990s leading into the millennium, Liberia was rocked by civil wars which claimed the lives of around 250,000 people, and destroyed the economy.

As modern-day Liberia rebuilds its civil society and infrastructure, All We Can's partners in the country are focused on building opportunities for Liberians – especially young people – to pursue meaningful work and contribute to the future success of their communities and wider nation.

These are the local Partners All We Can has joined with:

Camp for Peace;
Rural Human Rights Activists Programme (RHRAP);
Efficient Research and Development Institute (ERDI);
The Self-Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD)

The last of these—SHIFSD—was formed in exile during the Liberian Civil War by Jeremiah and his family. I am sure we will be hearing more about him in the future.

All We Can's 2024 Lent Course, entitled 'What is Mine to Do?' will introduce us to stories from Liberia. If you are interested in following this course and have access to a computer, you can find it at

allwecan.org.uk/resources/lent2024

If you are on Facebook, you can read All We Can's latest posts there.

Julia

(Some information provided by All We Can and used with permission.)

News from the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain

Back in 2021 I wrote a series of articles about organisations associated with or run by the Methodist Church, mainly in this country. Now I thought I would look more closely at Global Relationships. If you read Connexion or the Prayer Manual, you will be aware of its work, but some of you may have missed it.

The website summarises what it is about as follows:

'Global Relationships facilitates the enriching relationships between Partner Churches throughout the world and the Methodist Church in Britain, sharing stories, resources and enabling people to move in mission partnerships.'

Information on the website covers:

Global Relationships news

People in mission

Partner churches and organisations

Opportunities, resources and twinning.

Part of our Methodist Way of Life is Caring and Serving those nearby and in the world around us. The World Mission Fund Solidarity grants are one way in which we do that with partners across the world.

Money for Global Relationships to respond to emergencies around the world is provided by the World Mission Fund.

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In August 2021 an earthquake hit Haiti, devastating the country.

The following is an article received via email from Global Relationships in January this year and reports on the current situation in Haiti..

LOCAL GANGS TAKE OVER METHODIST CHURCHES IN HAITI

Mission Coordinator for the Methodist Haiti District, David Draeger, gives us an update on the situation in Haiti and how it affects daily life.

It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone. Most days are like the one that precedes and the one that follows. The unending grief from continuous gang warfare, with murder, rape, extortion, and robbery tends to lull us into complacent oblivion. It is sad to say that I do not get as much accomplished as I would wish because hope for the future dwindles. It seems easier to just go with the flow and do nothing rather than to try and change the unchangeable.

When I stop for a moment and look around, I see evidence that the Church, specifically Eglise Méthodiste d' Haiti (The Methodist Church in Haiti) is moving forward. There are some church buildings, like St Martin and Croix d' Boquets, that have been taken over by the local gangs so that the people are unable to worship in their own sanctuary. Other congregations are unable to travel through gang-infested areas to their normal places of worship. At the same time, I see congregations like Frères and Jérémie that are relatively safe, and their worship services are full every Sunday. Throughout the whole country there is the same pattern; some churches are hampered by the gangs and others remain as a light in a darkened world.

But then I am awakened by the Hope proclaimed by Jesus Christ and my faith in the future is renewed. Throughout the year there are births and deaths, weddings and funerals, there are still confirmation classes and Bible studies where people are coming to Christ and as a result are professing their membership in the Methodist Church of Haiti.

PRAY

For peace in Haiti ;
For an end to gang violence ;
For healing for victims;
For compassionate, just and democratic governance;
For international support for Haiti to create Haitian solutions to Haitian issues.

***

Julia

(Information from website used with permission.)



KNITTING GROUP NEWS

After a long break over Christmas, we knitters met up in January and embarked on what will be our fourteenth year of knitting and nattering.

It was exciting to meet up for 2 reasons. First of all, many of us

hadn't seen each other since our Christmas Party on 7 December and secondly, we had to decide where to donate the money from our charity fund.

During 2023, we had raised an amazing £2,500 which was £800 more than the year before! Since we began holding sales of our work in 2017, the amount raised each year has steadily increased, but our foray into the Forge Precinct in November for the past 3 years has given our fund-raising a tremendous boost. People are getting to know us and so bring us repeat business and this warms our hearts…though our hands and feet might feel the cold! The solution to that is hot coffee from Esquires Coffee Shop, as well as cheese toasties… AND we get traders' discount from the nice manager there.

When it comes to donations, we try to think of different charities each year, but always in Warrington. This year we have given £1,000 to Women's Aid, and £500 each to Warrington Visually Impaired people, Warrington & District Society for Deaf People and Warrington Youth Zone.

So now we begin again. The needles are out, the wool is unravelling and together we set about continuing to knit items that we can sell and at the same time producing lots of knitting for the refugees and for Warrington Hospital Neo-Natal Unit and other organisations. We are hugely grateful for the support we receive from many of you at church and from people outside church who come along to our sales, the next one being sometime in May.

Chris Park

COULD YOU BE A VOLUNTEER CHAPLAIN?

This may be a difficult question to answer as you may not know what it involves. Try these ones instead:

- Do you enjoy a challenge?
- Are you a good listener?
- Can you engage with people from all walks of life?

I am Clare. I worship at Penketh Methodist



church and work as a chaplain for an organisation called MitE - Mission in the Economy. I am responsible for providing chaplaincy services to businesses in Warrington and St Helen's town centre as well as Birchwood business park.

I have a great team of volunteer chaplains who give their time in these areas. We are a presence for employees, customers and visitors in these places - offering a friendly face and a listening ear if needed.

As chaplain to Warrington Market, I visit fortnightly and talk with stall holders there. Sometimes this will be a quick hello between customers, other times a catch-up or a chance for them to talk in confidence to someone neutral.

The town centre chaplains in Warrington and St Helens work similarly and have developed strong connections in their areas.

The team at Birchwood Business Park meet with a variety of people too. A walk around the site can lead to some great conversations, or offer a time and space to reflect.

We are looking to grow our teams, and would love to have a conversation with you if it's something you would like to explore. MitE provides training including shadowing other chaplains, and will support you as you develop in your role.

Email: clare@mitechaplaincy.com
Website: mite.org.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2 March, 10.30 - Mothering Sunday and AAW with Jane

28 March, 7 pm - Maundy Thursday with Jeremy

29 March, 11 am - Good Friday service with Jeremy, followed at noon by a BCT service in the village square

31 March, 10.30 am - Easter Sunday AAW with Holy Communion with Jeremy

19 May, 10.30 am - Pentecost Sunday with Holy Communion led by Jeremy. In the afternoon there will be a BCT service at Hillcliffe Baptist Church.



NEXT PLAY—12, 14, 15, 16 March (see page 15)

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER—1 March

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY—8 March

UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS—20 March

WORLD FAIR TRADE DAY—11 May

ALWAYS CHECK THE CHURCH NOTICES NEARER THE TIME.

SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT
(Courtesy of ACE)

A teenager asked his father if they could discuss his use of the car. His father said "You get good A-level grades, study your Bible and get your hair cut, then we'll talk". The boy agreed. Some time later, the father said "I'm pleased with your grades and I note you've been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed with your long hair". The boy said, "OK, but I've noticed in my studies that Samson, John the Baptist, Moses and probably Jesus all had long hair". His father replied, "And did you also notice they all walked everywhere they went?"

A minister went to preach at a church for the first time and he was pleased to hear that a group called "The Prison People" would be singing. When they were announced, the group came forward and sang in a rather pained fashion. After the service, the minister asked why they used such a name. The reply was, "they are usually behind a few bars and always looking for the key".

A mother asked her 9-year-old what he had learned in Sunday School. He said "Our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. At the Red Sea he got the army to build a pontoon bridge and everyone got across safely. Reinforcements then arrived to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

"Is that really what you were taught?" asked the mother. "Not really," said the boy, "but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe me".

What's the best way to study the Bible? You Luke into it!

When is medicine first mentioned in the Bible? When God gave Moses two tablets!

Did Eve have a date with Adam? No, just an apple!

What did Adam say to Eve when handing her something to wear? Take it or leaf it!

Who was the fastest runner in the race? Adam, because he was first in the human race!

What's a miracle that can be done by a complainer? Turning anything into whine!

How do you know that atoms are Catholic? They have Mass!

And one from social media, source unknown:

Pontius Pilate: "Joseph, I really don't understand. You're one of the richest men in the region and you've spent a small fortune on a new tomb for you and your family and you want to give it to this man, Jesus."

Joseph: It's just for the weekend."





Are you ready to make a difference in your community?
We're seeking volunteers for our Homes Team, a vital part of CARE UK Charity dedicated to supporting, with practical items, those in the community facing hardship. The need can often be urgent.

Roles Include:

- Sorting and categorising practical items such as bedlinen/towels, kitchen ware, cleaning products
- Liaising with the team and other departments
- Qualifying referrals from professionals

Volunteer hours can accommodate your current schedule. Whether you can spare just a few hours or a few days each month, in a charity like ours every minute counts! Due to the nature of the Homes Team's work, swift action is often required. Training for the roles will be given, and will be ongoing.

How to Get Involved:
For details about the Homes Team opportunities, reach out to the team at info@careukcharity.org.uk. Visit us today to get a taste of the volunteer experience. The kettle's always on, and a warm welcome (plus biscuits!) awaits you.

Location:
Unit 9 Riverside Retail Park, Wharf Street, Warrington.WA1 2GZ Join us in making a positive impact on the lives of those in our community. Follow us on Facebook to find out more about what we do.

DRAMA SOCIETY'S NEXT PRODUCTION

Our Drama Society's spring production is *Poppy + George,* a romantic drama with music inspired by the days of music hall and beyond, from the author of the modern classic, *Kindertransport*.

It is 1919. The Great War is over and Poppy Wright arrives in London from the north of England to make her mark in the world. Deep in the heart of the East End she finds work in Smith's tailor and costumier's workshop.

This is a time of change and opportunity, emerging from the losses of war, when all are questioning who they are and what roles they can play in forging a new, modern era.

Poppy + George will be performed on Tuesday 12, Thursday 14 and Friday 15 March at 7.30pm, and at 3.30pm on Saturday 16 March.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/shmds**, or by phoning the TicketSource box office (0333 666 33 66).**



Welcome Maeve Alys, daughter of Martin and Sarah Knight, and sister for Aiden.

Maeve Alys was born on 14 December.

We wish her and her family every blessing in her life to come.

Thanks to Judith for passing on this photo and information.

Congratulations to Richard and Evie Clarke who were married on 25 November in Warwick.

We wish them a long and happy life together.

Thanks to Geoff and Lesley for passing on the photograph and information.





Another scenic view from Costa Rica. I am sure the trek was very hot and tiring but the scenery must have made up for it!

At a recent All Age Worship service led by Hazel, the passage of scripture referring to wings like eagles (Isaiah 40, 31) was used. After the service we enjoyed cake provided by Hazel's team of 'liturgical bakers'! Can you spot the eagles?



Thanks to all of you, and to Richard C for the photo.