*the*LINK



The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

AUTUMN 2024

NORTH WEST ENGLAND
METHODIST DISTRICT

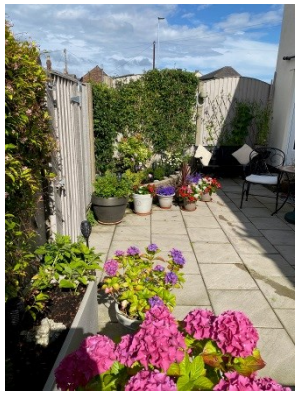


Stockton Heath Methodist Church
Charity Commission Number 1134148
Minister: the Rev Jeremy Tresise
Keep in touch on: www.shmc.org.uk;
www.facebook.com/stocktonheathmethodistchurch



Angela's garden





Front cover: Anne N's garden
Above: Barbara M's garden
Below: Denise and Richard's garden



Top: Hazel's garden
Middle: Hazel's tomatoes
Below: Karen P's tomatoes





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the summer magazine which I have at last managed to complete. For a while I did not think there would be an edition this time as it was proving difficult to find someone to print it following the retirement of Emma from the Circuit Resource Centre. Thankfully someone agreed to have a go so I hope you are now reading this as it will mean he was successful at operating a highly technical machine. Rather him than me!!

Thank you for the photos of your gardens, a sample of which appears opposite and inside back cover, and all of them will be passed to Jeremy so you may well see yours on the screen at harvest time. My apologies to Chris A. I tried everything to convert Apple photos into bog-standard Jpegs but it just did not happen except for one which appears on page 5. How I managed that I have no idea. Hopefully Jeremy will know more about this than I do.

Apart from photographs, I had no articles from church members. Someone did query whether we should continue with a magazine if no-one submitted items but I don't think that is necessary just yet. However, I may think about reducing the number of pages.

I shall finish by wishing you all a happy Methodist new year.

All for now.

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, 6 October 2024.

The Editor's contact details are below.



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

As I write this letter, the country's attention is turning to Paris and the Olympic Games. A 4-yearly excuse to follow sports on the TV that you had never really given much thought to previously or never even knew existed (I have just been watching the Kayak cross final, an obstacle race in a canoe, basically!).

It has also given us reason to support athletes/cyclists/swimmers/gymnasts who we scarcely know (and who largely keep out of the public eye between competitions) as they seek to win a medal in their event, followed by the inevitable lap of honour, wrapped in the national flag.

As well as the feats of endurance, agility, strength and speed, I also find the spirit in which the competition is played, particularly impressive. Despite the years of training that has gone into these Games and the sheer will to win, it is humbling to see the congratulations that are soon offered by fellow competitors and the crowds and the shared delight in witnessing true sporting greatness.

Sadly these have not been the only events that have captured our attention over the summer. We have seen and read about the traumatic events in Southport, where 3 little girls were killed and a dozen others were badly injured at a dance-themed holiday club. As we offer our prayers for those who are grieving, injured and for those who witnessed such awful events, we can scarcely comprehend the horror that befell such a joyful and innocent event.

The events that have occurred in our towns and cities in the following days and weeks are no less shocking. Righteous anger at the violent loss of 3 young lives has given way to further acts of violence and intimidation aimed at those who are already among the most vulnerable in our society and in no way responsible for the tragic events in Southport. They too parade in national flags and emblems (and in so doing, defile them).

As the police struggle to maintain order on our streets, and community leaders call for calm, the response by the majority in our communities has also been humbling. The clearing and cleaning up of streets, people coming together to fix the damage caused to shop fronts, Mosques and community buildings and a determination that a shared community life from which we all prosper will be preserved.

The Olympic Games shows the world how it is possible to be both proudly competitive and yet also remain respectful, peaceable and joyous; true celebration of how people from differing countries, cultures and creeds can work side by side. The response

of communities up and down the land to the violence on their streets can also offer us a glimpse of how a communal life is intended to be.

The book of Genesis reminds us that God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them *(Genesis 1:27).* When Jesus is asked which is the greatest of all commandments, he responds by quoting Deuteronomy, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind”. The second, he reminds them, is to “love your neighbour as yourself.” *(Matthew 22:37-39).*

Our calling is quite clear: to love God and to love one another. Our response therefore in the face of hatred and division is to go and do likewise. Our example is in the one whom God has sent. Our reminder is on the flag on the back of the athlete, the one with the cross on it.

Peace

BIBLE MONTH – GENESIS

During the month of June, we were blessed to follow Bible Monthly’s study of the book of Genesis. As part of our Sunday morning services we were led through the book in a variety of ways. Our thanks to all those who led or who took part in any of these services.

In case you missed any of the services, here is a quick resume of the book. It introduces us to God, to God’s purposes and to God’s relationship with us. The references allow you to read this for yourself.

1.God is creator of all. *(Genesis 1:1)*

2. God gives us room to respond. *(Genesis 1:5)*

3. God resides within us. *(Genesis 1:27)*

4. God is good. *(Genesis 1: 31)*

5. God seeks to partners with us. *(Genesis 2:19)*

6. God is merciful. *(Genesis 4:15)*

7. God calls us. *(Genesis 12:1)*

8. God is faithful. *(Genesis 15:5-6)*

9. God desires to reveal his purposes. *(Genesis 18:17-18)*

10. God hears the cries of the outcast. *(Genesis 21:17-19)*

11. God makes his mark upon those who seek him. *(Genesis 32:24-25, 30-31)*

12. God remains with us, no matter what. *(Genesis 39:21)*

13. God saves us for a purpose. *(Genesis 50:19-20)*

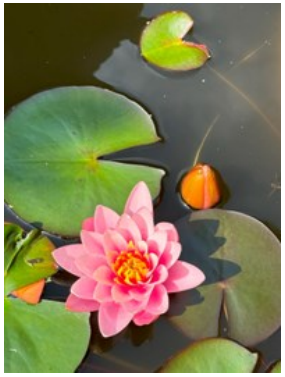


Photo: Chris A

ALL CHANGE!

In September we face some changes. First of all we have a new President and Vice-President of Conference, who actually took up office in June.

Next, from 1 September, we will no longer be in the Liverpool District but in the new, enlarged District—North West England Methodist District (District number 1). As I reported in the last magazine, this District will include the old Districts of Liverpool, Lancashire, Cumbria, Bolton & Rochdale and Manchester & Stockport.

This new District has a Facebook page if you would like to see what is going on—https://www.facebook.com/nwedmethodists.

The Sankey Valley Circuit continues reviewing the new strategy, and I am sure we will hear more about it in due course.

Lastly, our church is undergoing internal upgrades—see page 13.

NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF CONFERENCE



The Revd Helen Cameron is currently the Chair of the Northampton District and the Nottingham and Derby District, Moderator of the Free Churches Group and President of Churches Together in England. Helen represented the FCG at the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen, reading prayers during the service and was also present at the Coronation of King Charles.

She has served as Assistant Secretary of the Conference and was the Director of Methodist Formation at the Queens Foundation. Helen enjoyed circuit appointments in the Birmingham South-West and the Elmdon circuits and is committed to the enabling, resourcing and flourishing of lay and ordained ministry. She has served in an Anglican/Methodist LEP, in industrial and rural mission, in areas of significant deprivation and in the joy of growing churches

Helen has worked extensively with survivors of sexual abuse and co-wrote the study guide ‘Reflect and Respond’ with members of the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group.

Originally from Yorkshire, Helen is Chair of one of the largest Methodist Districts in the British Connexion which includes 260 churches and covers a geographical area from the Cotswolds to the Fens and from East Midlands Airport nearly as far south as Heathrow. Helen is an honorary Ecumenical Canon of Peterborough Cathedral.

Helen is married to Iain, a retired GP, and has 3 adult children. She enjoys novels, poetry, gardening and theatre.



Mrs Carolyn Godfrey is the District Safeguarding Officer covering both the Darlington and Newcastle Districts, and a local preacher. She has a background in pastoral care and child protection within the education system helping to support children with additional needs and families facing complex issues. Carolyn has a Master of Education degree which focused on social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Carolyn knows some of the challenges and benefits of neurodiversity because of her own dyslexia. She is particularly interested in how other neurodiverse people can be included within worship and all aspects of church life. Her experience in her safeguarding role, education and lifelong engagement with the Methodist church have given her a drive to understand and challenge the use and misuse of power.

Carolyn grew up in rural South Lincolnshire, is married to a Methodist presbyter and has lived in several circuits and districts around the Connexion. To unwind she likes to be creative, especially with crochet. She loves to spend time with her husband, her 2 grown-up daughters and her grandson.

(Information from Methodist website and used with permission)

Rather than include articles on overseas countries this time, I am using 2 prayers. The first is provided by Embrace the Middle East, and the second is from the Methodist Church website. Both are used with permission.)

God of peace and justice,
Our hearts break as we acknowledge the reality of violence, oppression and uncertainty for the people of Gaza, the West Bank and those who have been forced to flee. O Lord, we cry out to you; do not turn your face away.

We lift before you our Palestinian sisters and brothers, remembering that we are all part of the one household of God. May you surround them with your loving kindness and may they know your ever-present help.

We especially plead for the Christian community in Gaza – for those who remain and for those who have fled. Give peace and protection to those sheltering in the churches, and comfort and guide those who have become refugees in foreign lands.

We commit Embrace's Christian partners to you as they continue to bring hope and healing to their communities. Grant them the strength they need to continue serving, and protect them as they give sacrificially to others.

In a world full of violence, hate and injustice, may you keep our hearts pure and fill us with imagination for the ways of peace. Help us to hold all those who call Palestine and Israel home in our hearts and give us courage and opportunities to speak up for justice and a future in which all peoples can thrive.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

The following prayer has been written by a Ukrainian family who are being hosted by the Black Country Methodist Circuit.

Lord God of power,
You alone work miracles, so be kind to all and hear us.
Help us God, our Saviour, and deliver the people of Ukraine from persecution.
Come to our aid and destroy the intentions and unrighteous boldness of those who go to war against our people.
Calm those who oppose your commandments.
Grant us all peace, salvation and joy in our hearts.
For you are protection and salvation for those who trust in you.
We give you glory, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever.

Amen

ITEMS FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR CHURCH EDITORS

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

A casual church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. He wrote "I've gone for 30 years now, and in that time I've heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, and the preachers and priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all".

This started a real controversy in the 'Letters to the Editor' column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I have been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked 32,000 meals… but for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals! However, I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!".

MONASTIC TYPO

A new monk arrives at the monastery. He is assigned to help the other monks in copying the old texts by hand. He notices, however, that they are copying from copies, and not from the original books. So, the new monk goes to the head monk to ask him about this. He points out that if there was an error in the first copy, that error would be continued in all the other copies. The head monk says, "We have been copying from the copies for centuries, but you make a good point, my

son." So, he goes down into the cellar with one of the copies to check it against the original.

Hours later, nobody has seen him so one of the monks goes downstairs to look for him. He hears sobbing coming from the back of the cellar and finds the old monk leaning over one of the original books, crying. He asks what's wrong.

"The word is 'celebrate'," says the old monk.

TURN, TURN, TURN

Back in the 1960's, my Saturday afternoons were often spent with a couple of school friends, listening to the current hit records of the day. We played the latest songs by the Searchers, Hollies, Beach Boys and Roy Orbison (amongst others), while enacting our own version of 'Juke Box Jury'!

One record that we seemed to play quite a lot was by an American group, The Byrds, and it eventually reached the dizzy heights of number 26 in the UK charts of October 1965. "So, what has this to do with the Bible?", I hear you ask.

Back then, single records were made of vinyl and spun on a turn-



table at 45 revolutions per minute. Labels were stuck in the centre, showing the name of the song and the record company, as well as details of the composers and performers. What struck me about this particular label was that, just below the name of the song, was printed, 'Words from the Book of Ecclesiastes'. When I returned home, I checked the passage in my King James' Bible and sure enough, apart from a couple of lines and a few slight changes to fit the metre of the tune, the lyrics were virtually identical to the passage in my Bible.

The song was '*Turn! Turn! Turn'* and the writer who adapted the Bible passage was the American folk-singer and songwriter, Pete Seeger. Since the Byrds took it into the charts, the song has been recorded by many other artists over the years, but for me the definitive version will always be the recording by the Byrds, with Roger McGuinn's jangly guitar sound, that resonated around my friend's front room all those years ago.

Reading the Bible passage many times over has made me realise that God does have a plan for our lives and that '*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven'.*

Alan Rickards

GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND IT WAS VERY GOOD
Genesis 1:31

The sunrise is so consistent that we take it for granted, but few things are as miraculous as the celestial dance that takes place on a daily basis.

The earth spins on its axis at 1,000 mph at the equator and, while

it is rotating through 360 degrees every 24 hours, it is also hurtling through space at an unimaginable speed of 67,000 mph. You might not have any big plans for today as you're reading this, but you will travel 1,600,000 miles in your annual lap around the sun. Quite an accomplishment. So, take time to wonder and to thank God.

This reflection was taken from the quarterly booklet 'UCB Word for Today' which has a thought for every day. You can get free issues from the publishers:

United Christian Broadcasters,
ucb@ucb.co.uk
01782 911000.

DISREPAIR OR MAINTENANCE

I have just returned from a reunion with my 3 old school friends in the area where I lived during my teens. Growing up I was always aware of a burned-out stately home nearby but thought little about it. My friends, who have remained in the area, used to take their children there for picnics in the wilderness that the estate had become, and we were not prepared for the surprise in store for us.

English Heritage has acquired Witley Court in Worcestershire and had secured the remains of the (original) Jacobean Manor House which had been turned into a vast mansion, first by John Nash and later into the Italianate style by Samuel Daukes. The gardens were laid out by William Nesfield and contain a vast and magnificent water fountain representing Perseus and Andromeda. We waited to see one of the 3 daily firings of the fountain – absolutely amazing!



Attached to Witley Court is Great Witley Church, built on the site of a 13th century church and thought to have been designed by James Gibbs. It is, I understand, unique in the UK being late Baroque in style and indeed, built largely by Italian craftsmen. Whilst always a parish church, it relied heavily on the generosity of the landed gentry – the Foley and Dudley families – but after the fire that destroyed Witley Court, causing it to be abandoned, the financial support failed, and the church fell into serious disrepair. Since 1965 the local community has raised enough money to embark on a major restoration project and the church is once again at the centre of a living community of Christians.

As we approached, we were struck by the size of the door – it is vast, and this has the effect of making you feel very insignificant as you reach up for the huge handle. Once inside the senses are assaulted by the sight of treasures which include ceilings painted by Antonio Belluci, the organ on which Handel composed the Chandos Anthems and a set of

10 magnificent stained glass and enamel windows designed by Joshua Price and depicting the life of Christ. There is wonderful wood carving and gilded stucco moulding completing an astonishing church which, from the outside, reveals nothing of the splendour within.

My reason for telling you about this small country church is that, although we were all aware of its presence, we had never got close enough to appreciate its full splendour. It was just always there, tucked away up a bumpy country lane, off the main drag, hidden by trees, and as far as we were concerned pretty irrelevant to us. Aren't we guilty of treating God a bit like this? We leave Him in the background – we allow Him to 'fall into disrepair' in our lives because we rather take Him for granted instead of carrying out 'continuous maintenance'. He becomes relevant when we are 'up against it'. We can fail to meditate on His full splendour and become spiritually bankrupt, while all He longs for is for us to develop a living relationship with Him, to appreciate His awesomeness.

Reverend Biddy (Assistant Curate in Mumbles Ministry Area, Swansea)

(Image of church from webpage: www.greatwitleychurch.org.uk

Have a look at the webpage for more photographs, particularly of the ornate interior.)

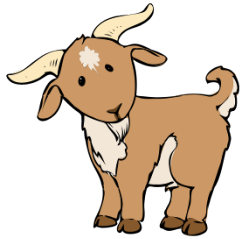
TIME FOR A SMILE



A SHEEPISH RECOVERY

A devout old shepherd lost his favourite Bible while he was out looking for a wayward lamb. Three weeks later, a sheep walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth. The shepherd couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the sheep's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "It's a miracle!".

"Not really," said the sheep. "Your name is written inside the cover."



THE FRUGAL LUTHERAN

The frugal Lutheran walked into the house panting and almost completely exhausted. "What happened, dear?" inquired his wife.

"It's a great new idea. I have to be a better steward of our resources" he gasped. "I ran all the way home from the stewardship committee meeting behind the bus and saved £2.

"That wasn't very bright," replied his flustered wife. "Why didn't you run behind a taxi and save £15?"

(Images: Bing, Creative Commons)

JAMES TIMPSON, MINISTER OF STATE

I recently read an article in the Radio Times relating to a programme led by Rob Rinder. He mentioned the new Minister of State responsible for prisons, James Timpson (Lord Timpson OBE).

James is the son of Sir John Timpson who lives in Cheshire. John and his late wife, Alex, created a garden at their home (Sandymere) which now opens to the public in June under the National Garden Scheme. As a member of the Cheshire Gardens Trust, I have visited the garden twice, hence my interest in the article about Sir James.

Sir John and his wife fostered many children—90 children over 31 years, as well as having 3 children of their own and adopting 2 sons. He was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in April 2017 for services to business and fostering.

The Timpson family is well known for their shops which repair shoes and cut keys amongst many other things. The business originally was in shoe retail but they sold off this section. Sir John handed over the CEO role to James but is now standing in for him while James works as Minister of State under the Labour government. He himself is not an MP.

He was appointed by the PM because of his keen interest in the prison service. Sir James was Chair of the Prison Reform Trust as well as CEO of Timpson's. The staff of Timpson's includes over 10% of former prisoners over the age of 25.

Rob Rinder is excited about Sir James' appointment and hopes our politicians now understand it is time to break the cycle of offending and reoffending.

The Timpsons have a website about the history of the company which is interesting. Find it at:

Meet the Timpsons - Timpson Group (www.timpson-group.co.uk/our-story).

Rob Rinder's series has now ended but can probably be found on Channel 4's website. It is called 'Britain behind Bars: a Secret History'.









Photos by Julia from a 2016 visit to Sandymere

CHURCH NEWS, AND BITS AND PIECES

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT this year is from 9 to 22 September and will celebrate 30 years of the fair trade mark. Look out for activities connected with this at the Fair4All stall in the market, and maybe at our church.

6 OCTOBER—HARVEST FESTIVAL

Look out for information on Harvest weekend events in the weekly notices.



TIM BAKER will be visiting us again on 20 October. Sadly this will be his last visit as he has now left All We Can but is honouring his commitments.

UPDATE ON WORK IN CHURCH

We'll be getting round to the painting as soon as we have finished all the remedial work in preparation. No date yet as we want to ensure all the messy jobs are complete before we decorate for obvious reasons. Work is progressing well and in the last few weeks the following work has been done or is being completed:

Insulating and plastering external walls in corridor behind organ and in Stewards' Vestry

Replacing radiator in Stewards' Vestry

New and safer access to loft from rear corridor

Fitting damp proofing membrane, insulating and replastering walls in Wesley Room

Installing suspended ceilings in Stewards' Vestry and Wesley Room with improved LED lighting

Repointing external walls on Heath Street side of Church where required.

Thanks to John S for this update which he forwarded to me on 7 August so much of this work has now been finished.

CHANGE TO DATE OF CHURCH MAGAZINE

It has been decided to bring forward the date of the next magazine by one month to November rather than December. This means that the following production dates will be February, May and August. This will make it easier to fit in the main Christian festivals throughout the year.

So, please start thinking about what you would like to submit in October which will cover the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany dates.

The next deadline is **6 October.**





WALKING DAY IN THE 1950s

This photo, c1952.

c1955





1959

Do you recognise anyone in these photos? Why were these young women dressed the same?

Thanks to Anne N for letting me copy the photos.



Ruth, from St Thomas', was ordained in Chester Cathedral on 15 June. She is here with Michael Ridley.

Thanks Janet for the photo.



This is the Methodist garden created for the RHS Flower Show, Tatton, this summer. Some of you may have seen it.

Photo from Facebook page of North West England Methodist District.







The final selection of garden photos comes from Sue and Mike and features wildlife in the garden.

I love the one with the robin and parakeet.



On Sunday, 21 July, a celebration of the life of hymnwriter Isaac Watts took place in our church. 'Joy to the World' was put together by Hazel who also assembled a large singing group. The church itself was full for the evening's performance.

The story of Isaac Watts was fascinating and the singing was brilliant. Thank you Hazel and everyone else involved for all your hard work.

This photo was taken from the sound desk at the back of the church.



WALKING DAY

Stockton Heath walking day took place on 13 July. It was our church's turn to lead the walk, and Michael Ridley led the service.

Despite the threat of rain, the afternoon remained dry on the whole.

Many thanks to Denise for this photograph.

See page 14 for walking days from the past.