*the*LINK

The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

FEBRUARY—APRIL 2025



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





Some wintry scenes, taken on 10 January after a really frosty night.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings everyone and welcome to a magazine with a slightly altered layout. Well, I fancied a change and had stayed with the last layout for a long time. Also, I received some helpful guidelines from ACE. I hope you like it.

Thank you to those of you who sent me articles, despite it being the Christmas and New Year period when you might otherwise have been distracted!

As I write this, it has probably been the coldest day of the week and also a very beautiful day as the sun has been shining and the trees have been coated in thick frost. Absolutely beautiful. As I had an empty page (opposite) I took several photographs. I love the winter clematis. It looks too delicate to be out in such cold weather.

On the first Sunday of the New Year it snowed and made driving very difficult. Fiona was operating Zoom and, rather than get stuck on the roads, she walked nearly 5 miles to get to Stockton Heath. She (and all the others who made it so we could have service) deserves a halo!!!

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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The **deadline** for the next magazine (May to July) is Sunday, 6 April. My contact details are at the fool of this page.

Member Editor 2024
Association for Church Editors

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

"RATS, I WAS HOPING FOR A HUG!"



One particular cartoon in the Peanuts cartoon strip is called, "Rats, I was hoping for a hug!" Snoopy has fallen out of a tree and landed on his head with a loud "klunk." Lucy declares this to be Snoopy's own fault and tells him so in no uncertain terms. All the while, Snoopy's head is still spinning. "Rats…" Snoopy thinks, "I was hoping for a hug!" Instead all he received was a lecture on how foolish he had been.

Do similar scenes happen to us? We hurt ourselves – maybe not by falling out of trees but emotionally we are hurt and a family member, or well-meaning friend gives us a lecture about how stupid we were, when actually, what we were really hoping for, was a hug. Or how often do we act like Lucy? Too quick to open our mouths and give lectures to others.

Don't misunderstand me, sometimes people need good teaching, but many times, especially after making a stupid mistake, people feel more like Snoopy in the cartoon, in need of a hug.

In Luke's gospel Jesus longs to give the city of Jerusalem a hug. He is looking down upon a city, which on many occasions in the past, has rejected the word of God (often killing the prophets, sent by God) and which is about to reject even God's own Son. It is a city which has had a long history of turning its back on God and refusing the way of peace, but instead of the stern lecture or the angry words, Jesus longs to offer them a loving embrace. *(Luke 13:34).* One could say that here he exhibits a more motherly response to what will befall him in Jerusalem. Jesus likens himself to the mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

In the case of danger, a mother hen will protect its young from danger by shielding them under

her wing. Indeed, there are recorded instances of those farmers who, on cleaning up after a farmyard fire, have found the blackened and scorched remains of the dead hen with live chicks still sheltering underneath its wings. She has quite literally given up her life to save them.

It is a vivid and indeed violent image of what Jesus declares that he longs to do for Jerusalem. It is the strongest possible statement of what Jesus thinks his death will be all about: the one who will give of himself on behalf of the many.

But instead of seeing a people alert to the dangers, aware of their past misdeeds and preparing to turn *back towards* God, he sees a people who have turned their backs *on* God, preferring to go their own sweet way: oblivious to the danger that surrounds them. And in a world that has played with fire and where now that fire rages out of control, Jesus still stands with arms open wide, as a mother hen, longing to gather the chicks under his wings, and take the full force of that fire on himself.

Jesus' lament over Jerusalem tells us that God's love is undiminished. But always God gives us the freedom to choose between following him or not, but with that freedom comes accountability.

Jesus stands before us now, arms wide open waiting and wanting to show us how much he loves us, wanting to win us back, but you can't force someone to love you, you can't make them jump into your arms.

During the period of Lent, as we share in that journey to Jerusalem, we see just how much God loves us, just how much he longs to protect us with this: the most vulnerable posture in the world -- wings spread and breast exposed -- but if you love someone and you mean what you say, then this is how you stand.

Jeremy

DATES

Ash Wednesday/start of Lent:
5 March

Good Friday
18 April

Easter Sunday
20 April



THE SEASON OF LENT

During Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, 5 March, we are called to take ourselves out of the comfortable zones we live in and experience discomfort to enable us to grow closer to God. A good Biblical example of this is the Book of Job, written 500-600 years before Christ. Job enjoyed a very comfortable life for his time. He lived according to the ways of God and was subsequently blessed because of his righteousness. He enjoyed good health, had a large happy family, and was one of the wealthiest men on earth with lots of land, huge herds of different animals, plentiful crops, and many willing servants. However, suddenly, all this is taken away from him, and he experiences the most uncomfortable life imaginable.

Job, however, gets advice from his close friends who, like him, were God-fearing people. It's not a comfortable story to read, which makes it ideal for Lent because it can take you out your comfort zone. His agony and lack of comforting words from his, at times, non-sympathetic friends, leads Job to seek help from God.

Today, we are more fortunate than Job because we have an arbitrator to seek help from, to comfort us and guide us through life. In fact, we don't have one, but 2, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who are one with God. But, even so, as followers of Jesus, we need to understand that our lives are not necessarily going to be comfortable all the time. Like Job we have to learn to take the rough with the smooth because it is through the bad times that we can recognise the joy of the good times.

In his second letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul tells us that we have to expect, as he did, to face hardships so that we can appreciate the joyful times – '*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, having nothing and yet possessing everything.'*

The possessions that Paul refers to are not the worldly possessions we associate with Job, but the heavenly possessions that we can read about in Matthew's gospel: *'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'.*

This Lent, try not to do only those things designed to comfort you personally, such as changing your diet or taking more exercise, but seek to store up treasure in heaven by doing some of those things that make you feel uncomfortable but that will bring joy to others. And if you need help in choosing what your Lenten task might be, try reading those parts of the Bible, such as Job, that you avoid because you think they will make you feel uncomfortable, you might be surprised how comforting that can be in the long run.

Bob Peters, ACE

THE HOLY LAND

EVERYTHING CHANGES: NOTHING CHANGES

Looking back: In October 2024 we met again for a Vigil for Peace – to think of and show solidarity with people suffering in Palestine and Israel. After a year of conflict, a ceasefire and lasting peace seems as far off as ever. In fact the movement of Israeli troops into both Lebanon and Syria is extremely disturbing.

This quote from Dr Rowan Williams is as appropriate today as it was 12 years ago. In 2013 the former Archbishop of Canterbury was Christian Aid's new chair.

'We are in Christian Aid presumably because we're not prepared to sit down quietly under a system that seems unjust and pushes people out of the way for the sake of profit. It's of the first importance that as Christians we say we live from a set of values, the Kingdom of God, that will challenge the way the world runs. We have to go on saying that change is possible.'

(Christian Aid Week 2013)

Looking forward: As an attempt to bring about change, every Thursday at midday people meet on Zoom to pray for those affected by the violence in Palestine and Israel. The prayers are sent from Jerusalem by Sabeel, an ecumenical movement among Palestinian Christians, to supporters all over the world.

If anyone would like to know more about *The Wave of Prayer* (see below) it will be displayed every week in church and in the hall for everyone to read. If you would like to join the weekly Zoom prayers – for half an hour – please let me know.

To learn more about Sabeel, type – sabeel.org – into your browser. *(cont)*

PRAYER:

Emmanuel, you who were born in a stable and made your home among the oppressed. May your light pierce the darkness of violence and despair. Strengthen us to be bearers of that light, standing in solidarity with all who yearn for liberation and hope. Grant us the courage to proclaim, as Mary did, your promise to lift up the humble, to fill the hungry with good things, and to bring down rulers from their thrones.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Taken from the Wave of Prayer 26 December 2014

Ann

(See back page for photos from vigil.)

ALL WE CAN NEWS

Very often I have to omit updates from All We Can as there is too much material to go into the magazine. This time I shall make up for that! Ed) Used with permission.

A NEW CEO FOR ALL WE CAN



Joining in September 2024, David brings with him a wealth of leadership experience, skills, knowledge and experience from within the charity sector. Having spent the past 30 years in a variety of senior roles in the humanitarian and social justice sector, David is known for inspiring change and helping organisations become fit for purpose and fit for the future. He is deeply passionate about seeing change happen and driving the change needed to make the world better – a world where people live equal and free.

David has brought about change through a variety of senior roles, such as leading and expanding World Vision's operations in Armenia, building and leading World Vision's Global Office of Strategy Management to support transformation, as Director of Policy and Programmes at World Vision UK, focussing on programme impact, fundraising and influence, and most recently, as Plan International's Global Executive Director of Strategy and Collaboration.

Chris Sutton, Chair of the Board says: ‘I am very pleased to welcome David as our new Chief Executive after a very competitive selection process, with a selection of trustees, managers, staff and stakeholders all interviewing our shortlisted candidates. David brings great knowledge of, and passion for, doing things better in the international development sector and shares our values and commitment to locally-led partnership. I and my fellow trustees very much look forward to working with David as he leads us on the next stage of our journey.

I am also very grateful to Angela Zamaere Smith for her 10 years at All We Can, including taking on the role of interim Chief Executive. Angela has been a key driver of our locally led partnership model, and while she now takes a career break, I very much hope we can work with Angela again in some capacity in the future.

The last 10 years at All We Can have been immensely rewarding for me. Through our unique partnership approach, I have endeavoured to make right some of the aid sector wrongs that I experienced early in my career as part of a local NGO back home in Malawi nearly 30 years ago. I have had the opportunity to chart a different path in the development sector and demonstrated that it is possible to put communities and local actors in the driving seat of their own transformation. I have come full circle. All We Can’s vision is every person’s potential fulfilled, and I believe that my own potential has been fulfilled in several ways.

This is an exciting time for All We Can as it enters the final year of its 2020-2025 strategy, and I look forward to new heights and opportunities in the sector under new leadership. David comes at the right time to consolidate and build on our successes.

ALL WE CAN Methodist relief and development

All We Can works alongside 28 local partner organisations in 11 different low-income countries. When we support All We Can as a church, we are contributing to positive change in all of these contexts, but it is always encouraging to hear about particular instances of how All We Can’s partners are enabling sustainable change.

This is the story of **Fatema Begum**, a 24-year-old woman living at Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh, the world’s largest refugee

camp. Following an increase in violence in Myanmar 7 years ago, the Rohingya refugee crisis remains one of the world’s most urgent humanitarian emergencies requiring longer-term solutions.

All We Can have been supporting BNKS (Bolipara Nari Kalyan Somity), a local humanitarian partner working with displaced families. Their mission is to create opportunities for participation in socio-economic development activities, improve access to education for children and adolescents, and to raise awareness with community members on issues such as health, nutrition, child protection and livelihoods.

BANGLADESH My name is Fatema. I fled to Bangladesh in 2017. Upon settling in (Cox’s



Bazar), I entered into an arranged marriage with a man who already had 4 children, becoming his second wife. Despite having 2 children of my own, I harboured a childhood dream of attending school and finding employment, aspirations that my family had never supported. In Myanmar, I briefly attended a Madrasah (a place of study).

My journey took a positive turn when I crossed paths with staff collecting names for potential learners for education sessions through the Self Learning Kit (SLK). Excited about the prospect of studying from home, I eagerly enrolled as I had been waiting for this opportunity since my childhood. Now I can finally learn English and Burmese. Commencing my SLK studies in 2020 during the pandemic, I diligently balanced my household responsibilities, dedicating time to SLK practice with regular support from volunteers and facilitators. During sessions, when facilitators inquired about the motivation behind my studies, I consistently responded that ‘I want to be a teacher like you. I want to earn money for my family and support them.’ Progressing through SLK Phases 1 & 2, I was able to successfully complete my studies. Presently, I work as a day guard, responsible for listing the names of community volunteers. I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to fulfil my childhood dream, and I am excited at the prospect of being an inspiration to other women in my own community. I want to encourage them to pursue education and take pride in their accomplishments.

ACTIVE HOPE
17-19 FEBRUARY
HALF TERM ADVENTURE ACADEMY

Active Hope is a small, locally based, Christian charity, aimed at helping very disadvantaged children in our area. It is one of the local charities that our Church and indeed the Circuit has supported over many years.

During the February half term, SHMC is planning to support Active Hope with another Adventure Academy. This will be at the Smile Centre on Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 and based in our Church Hall on Wednesday 19 February. We are hoping that several of you will be willing to get involved. There is an opportunity for new people that have not previously helped to find out more about the charity and the ways you can help.

We are looking for volunteers to be on a food team, either preparing sandwiches or helping make breakfasts and lunches. There is a chance to be with the children either as greeters, playing games and helping with activities or perhaps setting up the hall on the Wednesday. We also need one or two minibus drivers.

We would also like prayer partners so even if you feel you are unable to be with the children, you can pray for a safe and successful few days.

If you want more information, please contact Geoff Clarke on 01925 486364, 07957 214436 or clarkegeoff82@gmail.com.

Dan Curtis, Active Hope's leader, is taking part in our Church service on Sunday, 23 February which is immediately after the academy so we can brief you on all the activities.

You may remember the article on letter-writing submitted by Chris in the last magazine. Here is the main part of that article.

Dear All

Letters have been an integral part of communication for centuries, being delivered by hand and even by pigeons, a practice referred to as 'pigeon post'! In May 1840 Britain produced the Penny Black, the world's first postage stamp and, for a long time since, the world has continued to depend on letters for communication alongside the later invention of the telephone.

But, with the advent of technology in the form of e-mails and text messages, letter writing has been reduced to just an art form that few with a fancy indulge in, which I think is a great shame.

Did you know that 1 September is "World Letter Writing Day", when people from all around the world are invited to pick up a pen and write a letter to someone. It's that simple! You could send a letter to a friend or family member, or someone who is ill or in hospital, or to say thanks to someone who has been supportive when you needed it. There are plenty of other options. An unexpected letter could make someone's day, so never underestimate its power when it drops through a person's door.

There is something very personal and intimate about a handwritten letter. The writer will have chosen the paper to write on and their hand will have glided across the sheet as they wrote. Letters from the past were usually written in ink and often in beautiful script which was how it was taught in schools back then. Fountain pens, though still available, aren't much used for writing these days because the ball point pen is so much easier. However, this takes nothing away from the important point, that it takes time and effort to write a letter, and thus conveys the feeling that it has been carried out with much thoughtfulness and love for the person it is being written to.

Handwritten letters, if kept, can make for great memories. I have a collection of letters that my father wrote to my mother when he was in the Royal Navy stationed at HMS Woollomooloo in Sydney Harbour, Australia, from 1943-45. He was a very good letter writer, making them very interesting and often sprinkled with amusing stories about his time 'downunder' which made me think that he had rather a good war! I also have 2 letters dated December 1942 and January 1943, written by a great aunt who had emigrated to the USA in 1906. At the time of WW2 she was living in Brooklyn, New York. The letters were sent to my grandfather and family in St Helens, asking how things were in England, and did they have enough food to eat? She was also delighted that her son and nephew, who were in the USAF, were in England at the time and had visited the family, so I am presuming they were stationed at Burtonwood air base.

When I was at school, I studied French and German, and penfriends were arranged so that we could communicate with each other and improve our linguistic

skills. It was so exciting when a letter came through the door, especially bearing a foreign stamp. I also had a penfriend nearer to home, on the Wirral. We met and made friends whilst camping with the Girl Guides on Anglesey and during that week many of us received letters from our parents, which were excitedly ripped open, particularly by those feeling rather home sick. I know of people who have also acquired penfriends when young and have continued corresponding all through their lives and even met up whenever they could. Unlike daily and disposable digital communications, letters, if kept, can provide a history of relationships we have had with people that we can go back to, reminisce over and treasure.

Happy letter-writing
Chris Park

THE ENGLISH LESSON

We'll begin with box, and the plural is boxes;
But the plural of ox should be oxen, not oxes.

Then one fowl is goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always called men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

The cow in the plural may be cows or kine,
But the plural of vow is vows, not vine.

I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
If I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?

If one is a tooth, and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

If the singular is this and the plural is these,
Why shouldn't the plural of kiss be named kese?

Then one may be that, and three may be those,
Yet the plural of hat would never be hose;

We speak of a brother, and also of brethren,
But though we say mother, we never say methren.

The masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
But imagine the feminine she,

shis, and shim!

So our English, I think, you all will agree,
Is the craziest language you ever did see.

I take it you already know
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?

Others may stumble, but not you,
On hiccough, thorough, slough, and through?

Well done! And now you wish, perhaps
To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of heard, a dreadful word,
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.

And dead; it's said like bed, not bead;
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!

Watch out for meat and great and threat;
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.

A moth is not a moth in mother,
Nor both in bother, broth in brother.

And here is not a match for there,
Or dear and fear for bear and pear.

And then there's dose and rose and lose,
Just look them up, and goose and choose.

And cork and work and card and ward,
And font and front and word and sword.

And do and go, then thwart and cart.
Come, come, I've hardly made a start.

A dreadful language? Why, man alive,
I'd learned to talk it when I was five,

And yet to write it, the more I tried,
I hadn't learned it at fifty-five!

Anon
(Submitted by Bert)

Stockton Heath Methodist Church (building) celebrates its 120th birthday later in the year (2 November).

Watch out for more details nearer the time.



CHRISTMAS AT SHMC—UPDATE



Little Spencer's face says it all as we celebrated Christmas with a very successful party at Tots Time. (*Parents' permission given to use)*



A very modern Santa all dressed up and waiting to deliver his presents for the party. (Note jeans and mobile!)

SCHOOLS WORK - THE CHRISTMAS STORY

In planning to engage more with the community and local schools, Jeremy was welcomed into Stockton Heath Junior School. Following discussions, he invited 2 classes of children to come to our Church on 2 consecutive Thursdays in December to hear the Nativity story told by a selection of actors from the drama group and church members. Four separate groups of around 8 children went into 4 breakout rooms in the Church building where they interacted with characters from Nativity scenes, meeting the shepherds, hearing about the wise men's journey, saying hello to Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus or doing a craft activity. The children asked some interesting questions and there was a complete range of knowledge about the Christmas Story from those who knew almost nothing to those with a good understanding. Apart from the children, Teachers, Assistants and parents also listened in. Everyone agreed that it had been a worthwhile exercise and hopefully will be repeated.

THE CHRISTMAS FAIR raised over £1,700 for church charities. Thank you to everyone who helped or supported this annual event and to Barbara for organising it.

CHRISTMAS CARD for All We Can. Lesley's card raised £126. Thank you Lesley and everyone who donated.

VIGIL FOR PALESTINE

(See pages 7-8)





