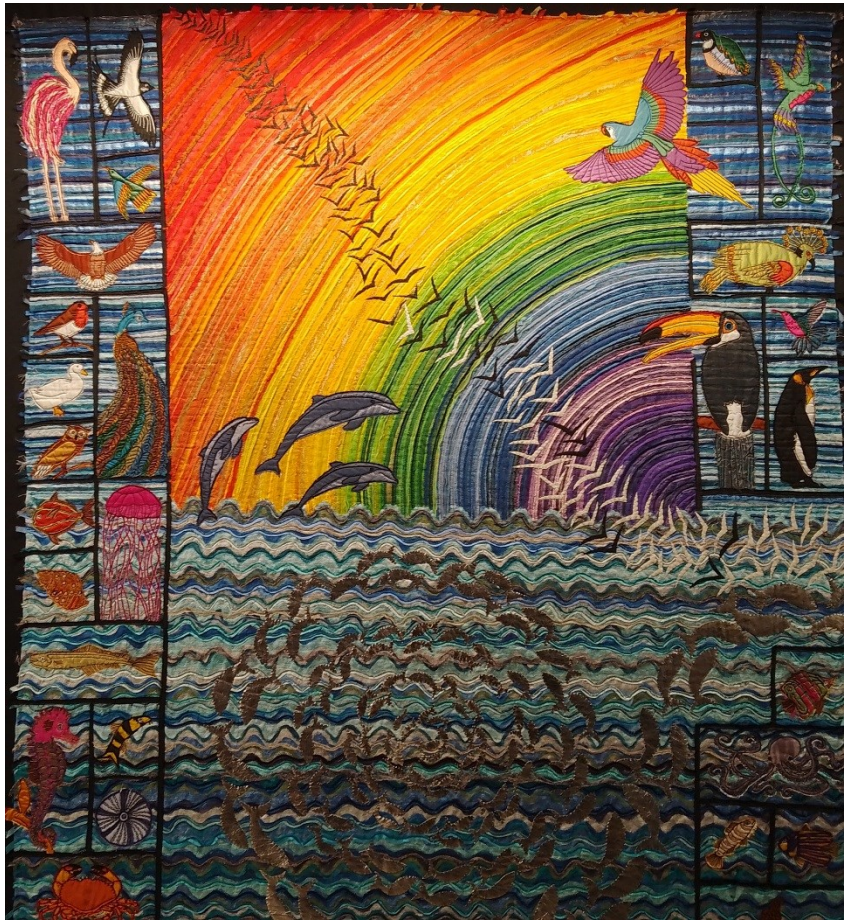
*the*LINK

The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

MAY—JULY 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



Threads Through the Bible—see page 6.

One of the panels from Revelation. Photo taken by Ann E.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I hope you all enjoyed the Easter season with a variety of services and the open air event in Victoria Square. We didn't get wet!

Welcome to a very full magazine which I hope you will find enjoyable. Thank you everyone who wrote articles and sent photos. Don't forget to look at the church's website where the magazine will appear in full colour.

Padgate MC is celebrating 150 years of its church building, and had a weekend of events from 4-6 April, although there are other events throughout the year. Some of us attended the Anniversary Celebration Service on the Sunday when the speaker was Dr James Tebbutt, the North-West England District Chair. There is a photo of him chatting to Janet and Roger on page 6. The photo above is of an old banner still in Padgate's care.



The Church at Creamfields is now recruiting for this year's event so, if you are interested, see Karen or David M for information (or search on-line).

Some people from church travelled to Liverpool to see the amazing embroidery exhibition held at Liverpool cathedral. The photo opposite and the one on the front cover were taken by Ann E. See her article on page 6.

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 July 2025

ACE
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

WAITING IN WONDER AND MOVING ON

In my study I have a pair of stabiliser wheels (the sort attached to the bikes of young children when they are learning to ride). I occasionally use them as a visual aid in services and school visits. They serve as an illustration that there needs to come a point when the stabilisers need to be removed so that the bike can be ridden by balance and pedal power alone. After all, how many older children, teenagers and adults do you see riding bikes with the stabilisers still on?



In order for us to grow and move on, we need to embrace change. At this time of year many of the country's school children will be entering their final term at school and will be preparing to move on, either to secondary school or to higher education. It might be a scary prospect and mean a change of surroundings and a change of the people with whom they share their surroundings but nevertheless they need to move on if they are to grow.

The time leading up to Pentecost (8 June this year) was and still is a time of waiting - a looking back to when Jesus was physically present here on earth and God had been most real. It was and remains also a time of wondering - what will happen next? And this is the significance for us of the story of the Ascension of Jesus as recorded in Acts 1: 6-11.

The period between Ascension and Pentecost reminds us that, just as stabilisers need to be removed from a young child's bike, so we need to move on if we are to develop and grow; we cannot continually cling on to the way things have been. For the disciples gathered on a mountain top near Jerusalem, they needed to realise that Jesus' earthly ministry had now come to an end; he would no longer be physically present alongside

them. Instead, the Divine presence would come in the form of the Holy Spirit; God's gift to the Church, the power given to them (and us!) to be witnesses to Christ, 'to the ends of the earth'.

At Pentecost we look to the moving of God's Spirit within the church, equipping us to share God's love with others and encouraging us to pay attention to how God is speaking to us today.

In order for this new phase in God's mission to begin in the world, the previous phase had to come to an end and the Ascension marked its ending. Moving on and letting go of past ways of working is an essential part of our growth and development as Christ's disciples.

In short, is it time for the stabilisers to be removed and for us to embrace change so that we can grow?

May we all move on in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Every Blessing

Jeremy

A POEM BY ANGELA

MYRRH

Mary, did you keep the myrrh?

Did they wrap it in his winding sheet?

Bitter perfume mingling with bitter tears.

Did an old man watching in some fastness far away,

Stir and sigh, uneasy as he read the stars?

Could you ever bear the scent of it again?

Mary, did you keep the myrrh?



(*Image: Bing Creative Commons)*

THREADS THROUGH THE BIBLE – LIVERPOOL ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL

I visited this busy exhibition in March with a sewing friend and we were both amazed at the dexterity, artistry and craftwork involved in this huge undertaking.

'Threads through the Bible' is a culmination of 10 years' work by the textile artist Jacqui Parkinson, combining 3 exhibitions: 'Threads through Creation', 'Threads through the Cross' and 'Threads through Revelation'. In total there are 44 silk panels, stretching 80 metres in length with more than 25 million stitches! I was astounded at the imagination and intricacy of her work (I'm still at the cross-stitch level!). The exhibition took up most of the available floor space in the cathedral and is now touring into 2026 to another 8 Cathedrals.

Born in Manchester but now living in Devon Jacqui, a former drama teacher, says that the 'aim of the exhibition is to share the message of Jesus and make the Bible more accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds'.

If you'd like to see the exhibition you can see the dates and venues by typing 'Threads through the Bible' into your search engine.

Ann

The front cover picture is part of the Creation embroidery, photographed by Ann.

Threads through Revelation' toured the country's cathedrals from 2016-2018 as did 'Threads through Creation' from 2021-2024. The exhibition in Liverpool Cathedral was the first time all 3 sections had been shown together.

It will be at Ely Cathedral from 9 May to 30 June.

Ed



STOCKTON HEATH METHODIST CHURCH LENT STUDY COURSE 2025

Good News: The Musical! (With help from Les Misérables)

For our Lent study course this year, we have been looking at Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 12, with a little bit of help from the story behind the stage musical and film, *Les Misérables.*



In the story, we follow the fortunes of Jean Valjean, who rises from an unjust conviction for stealing a loaf of bread to help feed a starving family and 19 years' forced labour, to a new life as a town's mayor, a respected businessman, a legal guardian to a young girl called Cossette, and supporter of the poor and dispossessed.

All this is made possible by the generous (some might say reckless) gift of 2 solid silver candlesticks by the kindly Bishop of Digne. Jean Valjean is allowed to go free by the Bishop to start this new life. All that is asked of him by the Bishop is that he uses his new-found riches to live a life of compassion and mercy to improve the welfare of those around him. Valjean is saved from the clutches of the law for a purpose. A new life is begun!

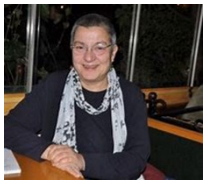
Les Misérables contains a strong Christian message, which runs throughout it. It explores the themes of love, justice, the possibility of redemption and the power of compassion and underwriting all this is the grace that God shows each of us.

As Paul writes in his letter to the church in Rome*, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God…For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Romans 12:2-3).*

UPDATE ON AMNESTY'S WRITE FOR RIGHTS CAMPAIGN 2024

Thank you to everyone who supported Warrington Amnesty's event in the church hall, and signed cards to send to individuals suffering human rights abuse across the world. It was a very blustery day last December when weather warnings told us all to stay at home; however, we sent off cards with multiple signatures to our 3 selected cases. Thank you to those who signed after the event and also sent off cards.

The cases are selected by Amnesty UK in contact with local Amnesty and other human rights groups, in relevant countries, plus the individuals' families to ensure that the publicity will have a positive effect. So, it is pleasing to report 2 successes so far.



Professor Şebnem Korur Fincanci, Head of the Turkish Medical Association, is a human rights defender, anti-torture advocate and forensic medicine expert. She was arrested in October 2022 after calling for an independent investigation, during a live TV interview, into allegations that Turkish armed forces may have used chemical weapons in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Professor Fincanci was convicted of 'making propaganda for a terrorist organisation', widely recognized as a trumped-up charge. At the start of the 2024 Write for Rights campaign she was awaiting the result of an appeal but also faced other charges relating to her human rights work.

Following cards and messages of support sent to Professor Fincanci, from

Stockton Heath and across the world, and letters sent to the Ministry of Justice, Turkey, by Amnesty supporters during the 2024 Write for Rights campaign, Professor Fincanci was acquitted of charges with the prosecutor stating that no criminal offence had taken place. Representatives from Amnesty were present as observers in the court building.



The second case was featured at our event at Padgate church. Ana da Silva Miguel, also known as Neth Nahara, was arrested at her home in Luanda, Angola, on 13 August 2023 after broadcasting a live video on Tik Tok criticising President João Lourenço. The next day Angola's first-stage court convicted her of 'outrage against the state, its symbols and bodies'. On 27 September Angola's second-stage court extended her sentence to 2 years, following an appeal by the public prosecutor. The court did not allow her lawyers to counter appeal as is legally prescribed. Further she was denied her daily HIV medication for 8 months and her health deteriorated, requiring hospitalisation.

However, in January this year, Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, reported:

At last Neth, (and 4 other Angolan activists), are free. We are overjoyed that they are at home with their loved ones.

She went on to say that it was thanks to the Write for Rights campaign 2024, and the thousands of people who supported it globally, that human rights wins like this are possible.

Again, thank you to everyone who supported our events at Stockton Heath and Padgate Methodist churches. We will keep you updated on future wins.

Gill Hardy, Warrington Amnesty.

ACTIVE HOPE AND STOCKTON HEATH METHODIST CHURCH

As you know, we at Stockton Heath Methodist Church aim to live our faith as best we can in practical ways as well as in providing financial support. We have around 20 different charities that groups and individuals support on a regular basis. We aim to have a mix of international and local charities that we contribute to, through one-off activities, retiring collections, regular giving, the Christmas fayre, generous donations from some of our groups, eg. knitting and drama, concerts and other means. One of the local charities that we have been supporting in a financial and practical way for well over 10 years is Active Hope.

Active Hope is a Christian charity based at "The Smile Centre, Sandy Lane, Orford, Warrington". It is committed to providing quality outdoor and adventurous activities from well-qualified and enthusiastic instructors to children and young people from across the area.

Active Hope is a non-profit making organisation; all the money received goes straight back into the work of the charity. It is supported by individuals; some are our church members, and some larger charitable trusts.

It works with children and young people from all backgrounds offering them new and exciting opportunities and experiences. Its tag line (Life - Faith - Adventure) suggests giving children new experiences in life, encouraging them to look at faith whilst embracing adventure. In experiencing new challenges, the children develop valuable life skills and gain a fantastic sense of achievement.

As part of the instructors' work in schools, they start by leading the Class, Key Stage or School in a daily act of collective worship. This is central to who they are as an organisation. Using a range of stories, role-play and quizzes they aim to make the experience relevant and interesting to the children. This is tailored to link with individual school themes.

Stockton Heath Methodist Church Involvement in 2025

As a Church we collectively supported the February Half Term Adventure Academy. 17 members of the Church helped over a 3-day period with various activities ranging from driving minibuses, helping the children with games and outdoor pursuits, preparing and serving breakfasts and lunches, making sandwiches at home and tidying round/cleaning the Smile Centre. We also provided a full English breakfast, cooked and eaten in our Church Hall on the Wednesday, for 25 hungry children and about 10 staff and volunteers. During the 3 days, the children had a go at archery, mountain-biking, getting to grips with a climbing wall, playing

games in the Dingle and walking in the Lumb Brook stream.

From being a very apprehensive set of children at the outset, they grew in confidence and were a credit to the 5 schools they came from. Each headteacher of the schools has the difficult choice of which of their many children are the most needy, have difficult family backgrounds and would be unlikely to have any structure to their half term holidays. This is where Active Hope step in to provide a completely free experience for the underprivileged children.

The second stage of the Adventure Academy is where the children are taken away to an outward-bound activity centre in Wales at Easter. This time they enjoy an activity based mini-holiday where they will go with the other children they met at half term. Activities include walks, games, and a camp fire on the beach. 4 members of SHMC are going to support this Adventure Academy in mid-April.

For many children the opportunity offered by Active Hope can be life-changing. Several headteachers have reported that they can see a marked difference in the behaviour and attitude of children after they have been on an Adventure Academy.

Dan Curtis, a former teacher, Founder and Director of Active Hope, came with his family to SHMC on Sunday 23 February, to tell us more about the charity as part of our morning worship. He gave us an illustrated presentation on the work of Active Hope and how it positively affects children and, indeed, leaders. It is only a small charity with a very small number of paid staff and so are reliant on donations and volunteers to help.

Chris Ardern and Alan Rogers work regularly with Active Hope on their Food Team which is a regular activity during school terms supporting school activities, for example days out at Delamere Forest. They would be pleased to hear from you if you think you can volunteer to help on a food team in the future, or indeed, support another Adventure Academy.

It was the first time that David Maki had volunteered to help Adventure Academy and he was part of the Food Team. He proved an instant hit bringing round the food for the children. They realised that with his accent, he was a tall, distinguished, real American! For many it was the first time they had come across someone from the USA! It prompted several of the girls to ask him for his autograph which they kept along with the Active Hope reward stickers! I think it made David's day and shows the value of volunteering!

Another example was, one of the children at the end of the 3-day session asked if the volunteers were coming to Wales at Easter. Dan Curtis said it depends on whether the volunteers are available. It certainly prompted me to make myself available for the 3 days in April. Some children understand that the volunteers are not being paid and are there to help them. For some this is a new and useful concept.

Thanks go to all Church Members and friends who have helped Active Hope in any way, either this year or in the past. We are all very grateful.

Note by Geoff Clarke, Steward, Stockton Heath Methodist Church, April 2025.

HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY TO CHRISTIAN AID!

80 YEARS OF FAITH IN ACTION



Not only does this year mark a remarkable 80 years of Christian Aid, but it's also the 68th Christian Aid Week (I think there will be some in this church who have taken part in nearly 50 of them!), a week that has seen millions of pounds raised to fund life-changing work in the most vulnerable communities around the world. From the first Christian Aid Week in 1957 to today, it has grown from a small local event to a national movement that continues to have a lasting impact.

I'm grateful that many members of the congregation have been so supportive in 'volunteering' (at least, not hiding!) when I approached them to ask if they would be willing to collect door to door.

This year is special because of the 80th Anniversary but also because the need is so great. I would like to invite you to join me –

Collecting door to door - a street or half a street? **OR** giving out **'delivery only'** envelopes. Please let me know.

Fundraising by asking friends and family to sponsor you while you are walking or cycling before and during CAW. The aim will be to reach 80 km together on foot or on wheels. You can do your cycling/walking alone, with a dog or with others. The idea would be that you email or text your kms to me and I'll keep a running total. Could I suggest we aim to fundraise from 1 May – 18th May which is the end of CAW. Who knows – we may turn our kms into miles!

Sharing - Look out for dates to share a 'BIG BREKKIE' at 32 Victoria Avenue, Grappenhall, during CAW – all welcome.

Over the decades, Christian Aid Week has adapted to changing times, but its core purpose remains the same: **to encourage the Christian community to take action in the fight against poverty and injustice. Please join me.**

Ann

TIME

At last there are signs of better weather and with that promise we will all soon be planning how to spend the long hours of daylight, the warmth of summer and that very special luxury called time – something we all have but constantly abuse. Look around you and see how people live today using the very common phrase *"Well I'd love to but just don't have the time".* Apparently there is no time to keep in touch, no time to play with children, no time to visit someone lonely, no time to listen to someone with a problem, no time to stop and see God's beautiful world. How sad! So what is the true value of time?

1 YEAR:
Ask anyone who just failed a grade at college
1 MONTH:
Ask a new mum who gave birth to a premature baby
1 DAY:
Ask a daily wage person with a family to feed
1 HOUR:
Ask 2 lovers waiting to meet
1 MINUTE:
Ask the man on the station who just missed the train
1 SECOND:
Ask someone who just missed a terrible accident
1 MILLI-SECOND
Ask an Olympic athlete who won a silver medal

Treasure every minute you have, use it wisely and remember - time waits for noone; if you miss it, you won't get it back.

Barbara



HAZEL'S HYMN CHOICE

Low in the grave He lay
Jesus my Saviour
Waiting the coming day
Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a Victor from the dark domain
And He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose, He arose
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed
Jesus, my Saviour
Vainly they seal the dead
Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep his prey
Jesus, my Saviour
He tore the bars away
Jesus my Lord!

It surely must have been considered 'posh' to have a pump organ in your parlour!
Lesser mortals might have had to make do with a piano in the back room, but then the great Dr Lowry was no ordinary mortal. He seemed to have been showered with gifts, especially in the music department. Born in Philadelphia, he became a Christian when he was 17 and studying at university. Graduating with flying colours he was soon back there, this time lecturing the students as Professor of Literature.

He had joined the Baptist Church nearby and after a while felt a call to the ministry, becoming the pastor of the West Chester Church. His congregation lapped up his Bible Studies in the week and his sermons on Sunday. He had a real way with words and the church members would sit for hours listening to his imaginative teaching and fascinating illustrations. It's said that even his business meetings were a joy to attend. There was nothing dull about Robert Lowry!

He also loved to sing, making a study of the old hymns and introducing new ones that he'd written himself, with many songs aimed at young people and children. His hymn book, 'Pure Gold' sold over a million copies.

So, what was the secret of his success? He said he had no set method, but described his brain as 'a spinning machine with music running through it all the time'.

In Holy Week 1874, he was sitting in his parlour studying the Resurrection passage in Luke 24 for his Sermon on Easter Sunday. The words seemed to sing out as read verses 6 to 8 and transferring the open Bible to his grand organ, he sat down and wrote the hymn.

The mood of the verses, where the words concentrate on the grave, is subdued and the pace even, but the chorus, that concentrates on Jesus' rising, has many dotted notes and an unexpected rhythm. With a good organist (which we most certainly have!) it can feel very exciting, even exhilarating, just the kind of mood any leader of worship would want to create on Easter Day.

Robert Lowry believed that a good hymn must come from 'the experience of the writer, be clothed in strong and inspiring words, and easily understood by the congregation'.

I think these words and tune fit that description perfectly and I look forward to singing it at least once in the Easter season!

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2025 THE COOK ISLANDS

We joined with Christians around the world in our participation of The World Day of Prayer, which was held this year on 7 March and included worship material prepared by the women of the Cook Islands.

The Cook Islands are a tiny island nation in the Pacific Ocean, two-thirds the size of The Isle of Wight, and nearest to Tonga and Samoa.

The theme this year was "I Made You Wonderful" from Psalm 139, v 14 (*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*) The service reflected the natural beauty of The Cook Islands with its wonderfully sandy beaches, clear blue lagoons and its colourful flora and fauna.

Christianity was taken to the islands 250 years ago, and the women of the islands play a central role in the keeping of their Christian heritage and in passing it on to the next generation. Worship is lively with fantastic singing and we aimed to reflect this in our service. There are plenty of fresh fruits to choose from on the islands and so we served a selection of non-alcoholic cocktails from our makeshift beach-side bar before worship!

Thanks to all who took part in the service and to those who made donations to WDP. We raised £92 which goes to support women's charities across the world.

Next year we go to Nigeria . . .

Lis

THE BALLAD OF MARIA MARTEN

by Beth Flintoff

Dramatic Society's summer production is a thrilling and moving retelling of a real-life murder mystery.

Performances take place at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 1, Thursday 3 and Friday 4 July, and at 3.30 pm on Saturday 5 July.

Tickets can be booked online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/shmds, or by telephoning the TicketSource box office on 03336 663366. Tickets are £9 if booked in advance, and £10 on the door.

Congratulations to Albie Jones, Julie's son, who has been selected to join Team GB Olympic development squad for cycling. We wish him well.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER: WORSHIP TABLE AND THE BEACH-SIDE BAR (See page 15)





ACTIVE HOPE—CHILDREN AND VOLUNTEERS (See pages 10-12)





