

LINK PLUS +++

February 2025

News and Views from Steve Bennett our Minister

One of the practices I was encouraged to undertake at a retreat last year was to pause.

If you are like me you might already pause during the day, to take a break from their duties, to recharge the batteries, to make a cuppa, even perhaps for some to have a short nap. The pause suggested by the retreat leader was none of these. What she advocated was the practice of pausing intentionally. Deliberately taking a break for time to just be in the presence of God. We were encouraged to inhale deeply, breathe out fully and repeat the practice, perhaps reciting in our heads a verse of the bible or a line from a hymn. Whilst initially I thought this idea was not my kind of thing, I have found great benefit since in intentionally engaging in this spiritual practice, as a response to unexpected items in my work schedule or in anticipation of what lies ahead.

As human beings who rely on the air we breathe, it is the source of life. We know that breathing is never pointless; likewise, intentional connecting with God for our own self-care is never in vain. We may lead busy lives or have high expectations of ourselves or carry the burdens of others, and to ignore our Creator and Sustainer, is to ignore our own wellbeing. Jesus spoke about being connected to the vine, and receiving from the goodness of the vine, in order to bear much fruit. This is what intentionally pausing can help us do.

When we are fearful, when we are rushed off our feet, when we feel alone and that no-one cares, when our aches and pains get us down; try to pause, inhale, and breathe. With every breath, remember that the Spirit of God is always near. In church life, with every committee meeting and church event, our praying, listening and singing, caring and laughing; pause, inhale, and breathe. With every breath, remember the Spirit of God is near. When things are going well and all seems rosy; pause inhale and breathe. With every breath, remember the Spirit of God is near.

In this new year, we will continue to do the work of God, and we will be challenged to do this work in new, maybe even unfamiliar ways. We may be asked to try new things or look at things in a new way. We might be uncomfortable, and we might fear what this will mean for us. Then we should pause, know the presence of God and the transformative power of Jesus; inhale, and breathe deeply.

Steve

BREAN

(www.breanmethodistchurch.org.uk)

I had a bit of a shock the other day when I looked out and saw scaffolding surrounding part of our church. Remedial action necessary to the roof of the church tower after some of the autumn gales. I guess that some of you have had to deal with this problem too, but it seems an awful lot of trouble just to sort out a few tiles. All is well again now, so let us hope we can all get through the rest of the winter without further ado.

Quite a change from the joy of celebrating the Christmas season together. So many people contributed.

Our thanks first of all for all your support, particularly that which resulted in us being able to send monies to various charities. We sent £309 to Action for Children after collections from Christmas lunch (£124) and the Christmas Eve Carol Service (£185) and enough to provide three domestic toilet units for households in Zimbabwe from our Christmas cards campaign (see later).

December gave us elements of fun – and was meaningful. Members from St Bridgets joined us for the joint Communion service in December and the lunch afterwards. We were pleased that Steve was able to be with us to conduct the service (and therefore did not have to race back from wherever else he was preaching, to be with us for the meal).

The Saturday morning coffee and carols event that Anne and Rose led was also a success (except that I had mistaken start time and was half an hour late, though I guess that those used to my singing, were happy with that).

And then of course the Carol service on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. John took over the co-ordination this year and, as usual we held a couple of meetings where half a dozen of us met together to pool our ideas, ready for John to bring it all together. New ideas, old favorites, and on the day more than forty had fun and absorbed the meaning of the Christmas story. Refreshments followed. It is now more than thirty years since we began this informal way of announcing Christmas.

It was good to see people there who were not churchgoers. One couple I spoke to come out from the Stoddens Road area of Burnham every year. I first met them before Covid, and here they were again as soon as restrictions were lifted. They now also bring a box of mince pies with them to add to the selection available..

Lovely atmosphere. And thanks to all those who contributed to making all this so good, furniture arrangers, caterers, Rose and Anne for coffee and carols, John for all his work in setting up the Carol Service, the Baker family for planting and decorating the Christmas tree, and everyone for coming and making such great occasions through the month.

The new year has started with two 'away fixtures'. We started the year, very appropriately with Steve taking a combined Covenant Service at East Brent for East Brent, Brent Knoll and us, and which was very appropriate. And on the following week we had our monthly service with St Bridgets and which, because



January is an 'odd' month was held at St B's. They are still in a quandary as they are still having difficulty finding a vicar. Our prayers and good wishes to them in their search.

So Happy New Year everyone. From us all, may February go well with you.

Harvey Allen

BRENT KNOLL

(www.brentknollmethodistchurch.com)

We don't have a lot of news this month, as January has been a quieter time here at Brent Knoll after the joy and excitement of Christmas.

We will be holding Brent Methodist Church's Council on 2nd February. This was originally scheduled for March when we were going to East Brent, not only for joint worship and the meeting, but also to enjoy their kind hospitality over lunch. But this needed to be rescheduled due it clashing with the visit of our Chair of District, Marcus Torchon.

Looking ahead, we are planning to hold a Spring coffee morning, but dates and details have yet to be decided. We will, of course, keep you posted when they are confirmed.

From all of us here at Brent Knoll, we continue to hold our Circuit, our Ministers and our congregations firmly in our prayers.

God bless, Rosemary Krull

EAST BRENT

(www.eastbrentmethodistchurch.org.uk)

Our Candlelight Service and Christmas Morning Services were well attended with some visitors from the village. The Christmas tree had been decorated by the East Brent School children, with decorations that they had made themselves.

Our Christmas collections from the two services will this year be split between Luhimba and All We Can.

We welcomed our Link friends from Brean and Brent Knoll to the Covenant Service on the first Sunday in January. It's such a joy to meet together and chat over a cup of coffee after the service.

We look forward to welcoming Margaret back after her month in Australia visiting her children.

We have just received an e-mail from Margaret to say that her husband Roy has not been well and has been in hospital so have had to delay their flight home until sometime in February.

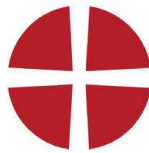
Please remember them in your prayers.

Jill Legg,

BURNHAM

<http://www.methodistchurchburnhamonsea.org.uk/>

STEWARDS COLUMN



**Burnham, Highbridge, and Huntspills Methodist Church
Burnham**

Christmas was celebrated in style and with deep meaning in Burnham and West Huntspill. In Burnham we enjoyed a very large Christmas tree and large nativity scene – both donated, for which we are very grateful. A major addition, for all to see at worship, at Waffle Hub and at other gatherings, was a display of the Twelve Days of Christmas with biblical references. Each of the twelve scenes was made with great attention to detail over many months by Christine Thomas with assistance from family and friends. All the services over the Christmas period were well attended and were wonderful times of worship.

The Alpha course which ran during 2024 was said, by all who participated, to have been a powerful experience. Plans are being made to run the course again this year – starting quite soon.

We are also re-launching the congregational discussions on the Methodist Way of Life and specifically how we may put it into action in our church and community. From many discussions, begun in mid-2021 and continuing to 2024, we developed and revised over time a form of roadmap to guide our decision making. In 2025, we will be considering new initiatives and goals as we seek to pursue our declared mission to “proclaim God’s love and live it”.

David Patient [on behalf of the Burnham Stewards.]

WEST HUNTSPILL

(www.wsmbos.org./westhuntspill.htm)

Hello to all our Link Friends, we would love to see you at our Coffee Morning on Friday the 28th February from 10.30am till 12 noon. We will have the usual Sales table of Puzzles, Books, various items of Bric a Brac plus some home-produced items. As you know we do not charge for coffee, tea, cakes or biscuits, but we welcome any Donations, which for five months at least will be for the R.N.L.I. in memory of Maureen Cavill, who was a supporter.

The following is a poem that I was taught at a Youth Hostel in Scotland in 1965. It can actually be sung to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne” Janet J.

A smile it is a funny thing,
it wrinkles up your face.
But when its gone you’ll never
find its secret hiding place;

But far more wonderful to see,
is what a smile can do,
you smile at one they smile at you
and then one smile makes two.

Janet J. & Kay

THOUGHT PROVOKERS

Julian of Norwich was a 14th Century English mystic, an anchoress, who received visions whilst walled up in her cell:

And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding, and thought: what can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has been, through the love of God.

THE LINK FELLOWSHIP

Since the last edition of the Link Magazine, the Fellowship have had two meetings.

The first was in December when we met for a lunchtime buffet lunch arranged by Christine Thomas. Fifteen of us sat down to a meal of various salads and cold meats with jacket potatoes, followed by a variety of deserts. After the meal we enjoyed a time of singing favourite carols and listening to Christmas themed readings that people had brought with them. I was deeply touched when at the end I was presented with some flowers and a card to thank me for what I do in organising the Fellowship. I would not find that role possible without so much support from all who attend.

Fewer of us were able to meet in January due to illness or holidays. The theme for the afternoon was quizzes and puzzles. We had a good time as a whole group working out the visual “Say what you see” cards and decided that all too often we were trying to overthink the answers!

Our next meeting is on Tuesday February 11th - 2.30pm at East Brent Methodist Church hall when our theme will be “Signs of Spring”. You are invited to share what you’ve seen of springtime, or bring poems on the theme of Spring.

All are most welcome to join us.

Joyce Pipet

SUPERNUMERIES COMMUNION

Each month for about the last 35 years on the first Wednesday of the month, the supernumeraries have met for communion. I was interested to discover fairly recently how the Supernumeraries communion had come into being.

This began when an American intern was placed to serve for a year in the circuit, and the supernumeraries who were there at that time felt that a good way in which to give support was to have a monthly meeting with her, including communion, at which they took turns to officiate. However, once this period was over, the monthly communions were continued as there was much to be gained from the fellowship and shared service this offered to the supernumeraries and their spouses.

Revd. Beth Bridges was very active for many years in organising the rota of who was to officiate , greatly aided by Revd. Margaret Trapp who took on the practical side of preparing the room and the communion at Brent Knoll. When Beth felt she could no longer continue to do the rota, Margaret took that on as well. She has recently felt that it was a role she would need to relinquish, so I have offered to undertake this, with a move to Brea.

At our January communion Margaret was thanked for all she had done over so many years, and presented with a card of thanks, flowers, and the promise of a meal together on her next birthday that falls on our April communion Wednesday.

It is such a tribute to the original vision that this gathering which is much appreciated has continued for so many years.

Joyce Pipet

FROM THE CONNEXION

WHOLEHEARTED MONTHLY

The Methodist Church is thrilled to announce the launch of Wholehearted Monthly, a free, online mission series starting in March on the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm - 9:00pm .

Wholehearted monthly is for anyone committed to a vibrant friendship between "Church" and "World" — and a desire for both to flourish. Each month it will include, testimony from local innovators, input from a renowned guest speaker, and wisdom-sharing in networks around Gospel justice, inclusion, evangelism, and growth.

Speakers for the first three gatherings are now public!

Tuesday 11th March: Nadia Bolz-Weber is a best-selling author, public theologian and pastor, and is the founder and church planter of House for All Sinners and Saints.

Tuesday April 8th: Rowan Williams is a theologian, poet and former Archbishop of Canterbury, and is author of fifty books on literature, politics, and being Christian.

Tuesday 13th May: Chine McDonald is a writer, broadcaster and author, and is Director of Theos, the religion and society think tank.

Each event is hosted by The Methodist Church in Britain and open to all.

Book in online here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wholehearted-monthly-tickets-1082365166349?aff=evangelismgrowth>

THOUGHT PROVOKERS

As the Danish Philosopher and Theologian, Soren Kirkegaard once said: "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards".

Any faith that does not manifest itself in works is not faith; it is complacency and self-satisfaction.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...

...They shall soar up with wings as of eagles...

...they shall run and not be weary...

...they shall walk and not faint

(Isaiah 40.31)

LINK ITEMS

As from this month I have taken over the compilation of items the have been submitted for inclusion in the Link. Now that I am not preaching regularly, I have more time to give to the task. The preparation of those items is up to each one of us and I hope that you will do your best to contribute. Most articles have reported on activities within our Link area but that doesn't need to follow every time. Light hearted submissions are every bit as welcome as is news from your church or group.

The next meeting of the Link Committee will be on March 4th and if you have ideas for what we can include please have a word with your Committee member before then.

All submissions for the March edition should be with me by 26th February please. My email address is:

harveyjallen@hotmail.com

Thankyou, Harvey Allen

POETRY CORNER

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate

When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh

Had sought their household fires.
The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,

The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

It once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

ZS

SO WHAT CARDS DID YOU GET THIS YEAR?

Back in the day, I remember an uncle only bought and sent his Christmas cards on Christmas Eve. There was a delivery on Christmas morning, and he reasoned that everyone else had bought and posted their cards long ago. No sweat then!

So did all yours get posted and delivered? No big hold ups this year? So, how many. There used to be people who carefully counted up theirs and made a declaration. Somehow they felt blest; their friends loved then after all.

Nowadays, for one reason or another, the number of cards sent and received has halved, or getting on that way. A number of reasons but central is the cost. Including the cost of the card it is now over £1 to send a card. Do you remember the cost all those years ago when you had to start buying your own?. And yes I do remember the time of decimalisation in 1971 when the cost of a second class stamp was 2½p (it is 85p now)

The increasing cost of postage is a major reason why people send fewer cards at Christmas. At Brean Methodist Church we have partly overcome that; by not sending them to each other. For several years now Celia has provided us with a single card to sign and we make a donation in lieu of cost of card and postage. Elsewhere people make phone calls and more recently emails. The website Jacquie Lawson must be making millions with their electronic card business. And to be fair, we make a healthy saving too having paid a single subscription for using their services. The money we saved went into the All We Can funds, and together we raised enough to provide three toilet units for families in Zimbabwe. It gives us satisfaction for doing something constructive, it relieves us of making choices of to whom we should send our greeting, and I don't hear so many people telling us how many cards they received this year.

But why do we send cards anyway? It is difficult to find cards that reflect the birth of Jesus, though Jacquie Lawson does have a reasonable selection and provided we are content to send the same design to a number of people, then problem solved. We have made our point. But that means no cards to put on our shelves. No Christmassy feeling to our room hanging down off the picture rail, no reminder through Advent and as long as 12th night of friends and family who cannot be with us.. Will we ever see dearly beloved again? No cards this year to use our scissors and sticky tape on, in order to make next year's selection (and don't look down on that procedure for it illustrates our willingness to spend time and trouble on maintaining our relationships). Just think, this year's cards received might well be refashioned and used again next year such that great aunt A might receive a card that was posted to you from Aunt Z even though they each dislike the other and would never exchange cards voluntarily.

But what about those cards without Nativity scenes on them, those with robins and stage coaches and other paraphernalia, have they any value that relates to the Christian season. Well I guess you could see them all in relation to God's creation. After all Jesus does make reference to the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields. And the stage coach does remind us that God is lord of history after all, and times past do have relevance to the present and future.

Clearly, the use of Christmas cards is decreasing. A shame perhaps. It is good to walk into a room with cards, their memories and all that they represent, shining forth in front of us. Where would we be without them?

H.A.

DIARY DATES

Regular days	Time	Location	Event
Monday (except Bank Holidays)	10.30am	Brean	Coffee morning
Wednesday	10.00am	Zoom	Link Bible study (details from Steve)
Thursday	11.00am	Zoom	Coffee chat (details from Steve)
Monday - Friday	9.00am - 5.00pm	Burnham	Waffle Hub Community Cafe and Associated Activities
Other dates			
February 4th	7.00pm	Zoom	Circuit Safeguarding Meeting
February 6th	10.00am-12noon	Uphill	Quite morning – see below **
February 11th	2.30pm	East Brent	Link Fellowship
February 28th	10.30am– 12noon	West Huntspill	Coffee morning. Donations for RNLI
March 8th	7pm - 9pm	Brean	Sausage, Mash and Beetles
March 2nd	10.30am	Burnham	Service taken by our new District Chair, Dr Marcus Torchon
March 4th	2.00pm	Brean	Link Committee
March 6th	7.30pm	Milton	Circuit Meeting
March 11th	7.00pm-9.00pm	Online - see item above	Wholehearted monthly
March 12th			Presbyteral Synod

** Just a reminder that the first Thursday of the month is next Thursday 6th February and as usual we shall be holding a Quiet Morning at 10.00 - 12.00. Following a short introduction - with suggestions for reflection - you are invited to use time and space for your own spiritual renewal. At the close of the morning there will be space to share and also ministry for anyone needing prayer support. You don't need to book

It is a blessing to take time to be quiet in midst of our busy lives and just reflect on God's love and grace.
NOTE - there are major road works and closures along Uphill Road South outside the church which may create parking problems