

LINK PLUS++++

July / August 2021

Dear Friends

My Mum always said to me 'God loves a tryer', and perhaps those words are never more applicable to us than it is today.

As we reach the end of another rather strange Methodist year, we will start 2021/22 with new hope for the future. What the shape that future will be will depend on our prayerful response to the circumstances of our life, our society, and our world. We will not always get things right, but the important thing is to try – to try to be better disciples, to try to hear God's word, to try to live as loved and forgiven people who love and forgive others; to shine with the light of Jesus, Light of the World.

As I write this message, Methodist Conference is in session. The delay in lifting all restrictions means that this year's Conference circumstances are not ideal. There are a few people present, and many are joining online. They are all trying their best to recognise where God is directing the future of the Church, and there is a packed agenda this year, full of difficult issues. I am writing this before many of the debates have taken place, so there is no agenda in what I will say next. But the decisions to be made this year could have significant impacts on 'the way things are'. Some will be welcomed; some will be received with concern and sadness; some may even raise questions for people about their future within this Church. Just as we pray for all those who confer, so may we pray for all those who will think that the decisions made this year are not right, and for whom the Methodist Church will be a difficult place in which to remain. We will not always get things right, but the important thing is to try!

Some of our churches are looking closely at where they are and how they relate to their communities. Some of these conversations may bring change; and as with all changes some will be well received, others will be less welcomed. Please pray for all those in conversation and the initiatives, new

and old, which will be started or restarted in this next year. We will not always get things right, but the important thing is to try.

*Weak is the effort of my heart, and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see thee as thou art, I'll praise thee as I ought.*

(John Newton)

Steve

Brean

We are now settled back into some sort of routine. We are getting between 15 and 20 people in worship and sometimes more, and then if the weather is satisfactory we adjourn to our back garden for coffee which seems to take as long as our worship period. It is all very good as we catch up with our friends and their needs and look to our future plans. In the coming months we hope to be able to be free of the restrictions in the church and which will allow us to fill the place if we get enough people. We shall also be able to have a coffee in the school room though I must say, it is quite nice to be sat in the garden.

In common with many other churches in the circuit we have been reading and contemplating the Gospel of Mark in our worship. It has been a worthwhile exercise and, in her own reading, Judy has found a poem by DH Lawrence on the subject of Saint Mark. It is an amusing yet meaningful poem and I have included extracts at the end of this report. Joyce was also hoping to contribute an article in her series about women in Methodism. *(Ed. For these see Plus+++).*

At the end of August we shall be having our annual outdoor service, that will be on the the Sunday of August Bank Holiday, 29th of August, at 4 pm. We hope as many of you as possible will feel able to come and share with us.

Those of us who have taken part in the study groups on Wednesday mornings have now completed the book of Acts. It has taken us over six months to get through, having a chapter a week but we have all been blessed by the insights and the fellowship that we have shared. Next week we start on the book of Hebrews; when I confessed that I had forgotten much I previously knew about Acts, I had to admit that my knowledge of Hebrews was even more limited; others too I guess so we look forward to finding out more about what, for me anyway, is a lost book of the Bible.

Judy and one or two others have been busy creating scenery and figures for West Huntspill's anniversary montage which WH expect to display in the coming weeks. Well done, we hope it goes well. And it is good to know that Huntspill as well as Brent Knoll and Burnham are now fully open again.

Our best wishes for travelling mercies and an enjoyable holiday for all of you who plan to venture away from our neighbourhood in the coming weeks. Return nice and refreshed to face the autumn. Conversely, we hope that those who come on holiday into our district also find the opportunity for relaxation and renewal. Many have come already as we have seen by the numbers on our beach recently.

Enjoy the summer.

Harvey Allen

Burnham

It seems ages since the last time I did the Burnham report for the Link magazine. Lots of things have happened and much of it GOOD!! We have started worshipping in church again as well as on zoom and although our Sunday worshippers were few at the beginning there has been a steady increase and almost all of our available seats were taken last Sunday morning. All our chairs are back in their pre-covid positions (although only certain marked seats can be used), but it does make us feel that 'normality' may be just around the corner.

We are now in the process of developing groups within the congregation of the church to discuss the future of the church under the umbrella of a METHODIST WAY OF LIFE. Obviously it is the right time (after the massive upheaval that the coronavirus has brought to everyone), to develop the way, and how, we worship and the presence we have in our community. It is time to be very positive and say goodbye to trundling on as we are. Good times ahead!!

The stewarding group has changed. Ann Smith has stepped down and we thank her for all the work she has put into the stewarding team – she will be missed. David Patient has been appointed by Church Council onto the stewarding team and we give him a big welcome. Geoff will be happy to have another man on the team after having to deal with five (loud and chatty) women for quite a long time. (Am I allowed to refer to "men" and "women" now?) In addition Joan has stepped down as Senior Steward and the responsibility of S.S is being replaced by two defined roles. Marian Kingsbury

takes over as the contact steward for ministers and local preachers and Marian Foster will be the contact with Nicola Christie and others, and will distribute necessary information and directives as required.

The stewards were involved with an own arrangement last Sunday evening (20th June)- our 1st evening service actually in church since the first lockdown. As it was World Refugee Day we took that as the theme of our service. Those of us who took part in the service were glad to be able to do it – we made it very informal and inclusive – even though it did go on for a bit too long (probably a lot too long if I'm honest) but we hope that those who came to the service took some thoughts home with them.

So now it is summer and we approach the end of all covid restrictions. Hopefully we pick up the pieces of our lives and go on confidently (maybe a little cautiously) in future. We send our good wishes from all here at Burnham.

Stay safe and well.

Ann Hall on behalf of the Burnham Stewards

East Brent

We have had some very thought provoking talks from our preachers of late, whilst studying St. Marks gospel this month at Sunday services. It's surprising how each preacher gives a different perspective on well known passages of the Bible.

We are pleased that all of our members are back worshipping together each week with the occasional visitor. When we can sing and have coffee afterwards our Sunday mornings will feel more normal.

We send our love to Margaret Green who has fallen down and bruised herself quite badly, we've missed her and her walking stick!!

Milton Methodist has borrowed two of our chairs to show to their congregation as they are going to replace their pews with chairs and have decided that our chairs would be the most suitable – we must have done something right!!!

Jill Legg

PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

Message from India

Much before India's health infrastructure and economy could even begin to recover, the second wave of Covid-19 came like a tsunami, exposing a callous, unprepared government that put the lives of millions of citizens at risk. It was only in January this year that the Prime Minister had claimed that India was one of the world's first nations to be victorious against Covid. The nation was showcased as the pharmacy of the world with its indigenous vaccine as well as having the world's largest capacity for producing them. Within three quick months, India's fragile health care system has now been fully stretched with an alarming shortage in beds, medical equipment, oxygen, medications, vaccines and even space for cremating the dead. In a surreal run of events, when all this was happening, the Prime Minister devoted his energy in addressing over-crowded election rallies in which Covid protocols were completely ignored. After the elections, he moved his attention to building a new Parliament complex with a project cost of Rs.200 billion, which was declared as an essential service at a time when the stench of death was reeking across New Delhi.

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit India hard. It is once again the poor and the destitute who are suffering the most. Hospitals have run out of beds, oxygen and medicines. Some unscrupulous people have taken advantage of this crisis and have started black-marketing oxygen and medicines at exorbitant rates. In the light of these situations, the Anglican Church of India has decided to reach out to its poorer brethren and their neighbours with precautionary measures like sanitisers, masks, soaps, oxy-meters and vitamins in order to ensure they don't succumb to the disease.

The Anglican Church of North India operates in the northern districts of the state of West Bengal. It specially operates in the South Dinajpur district. The Anglican Church of North India initially decided to cater to 500 families by distributing hand sanitizers, surgical mask, soap, oxy-meters and vitamins.

On 15th of May, 300 families received hand sanitizers, surgical mask, soap, oxy-meters and vitamins at Mokrapur & Mostapur villages. On 16th of May 200 families received hand sanitizers, surgical mask, soap, oxy-meters and vitamins at Kalikapur village.

The Anglican Church of North India in collaboration with the Calcutta Young Men's Christian Association organized a Covid 19 relief camp on 11 June 2021. The relief was given to grounds men of different clubs in Calcutta. All the grounds men of different clubs live in club tents and are very much prone to be effect with Covid 19 virus. As a precautionary measure these grounds men were given sanitizers, soap, and clinical masks. As there was a complete lockdown in Calcutta, and these clubs have no work to be given to these grounds men, food items like rice, flour, sugar, oil pulses, potatoes and onions were given to one hundred grounds men.

In the book of Judges Chapter 6:12 where we see that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, mighty man of valour". Gideon raises the question that if the Lord is with us then where are all the miracles that their forefathers told them about. Gideon feel that the Lord has forsaken the Israelites. For many of us who believe in the divine faith may have the similar questions like Gideon during this Covid 19 pandemic situation, if the Lord who is a living Lord is taking care of us. The answer is yes as we see so many friends around the world are praying for us and extending their support by sharing in their resources. The Lord works through people who have shown compassion. My special thanks goes to all the people who have come forward and stood by our side.

- Holy Cross, Sullivan Island, SC, USA
- St. Michael's Church, SC, USA
- Anglican Relief and Development Fund, USA
- Seacoast Church, SC USA
- The Methodist Church, Weston-Super-Mare and Burnham-On-Sea Circuit U.K
- Helping India Mission, USA
- New Wineskin USA

With God's blessing,

The Right Revd. Dr Probal Kanto Dutta

A LITTLE EXTRA FROM THE TEA TOWEL HOMILY DEPT
(especially for dog people)

God gave us dogs to help us understand
the meaning of unconditional love.
Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole.
Dogs laugh, but they laugh with their tails.
A dog has lots of friends because he wags his tail but not his tongue.
Whoever said “diamonds are a girl’s best friend”
has never owned a dog.
Aim to be the special person your dog thinks you are.
The most affectionate creature in the world is a wet dog.
A dog teaches a child fidelity, perseverance
and to turn round three times before lying down.
To err is human, to forgive, canine.
Every once in a while a dog enters your world
and changes everything for the better.

Submitted by Ann Hall (from a tea towel made in the UK (!!)) especially for
the Leprosy Mission)

Mothers in Israel (Part 3)

With John Wesley’s death in 1791, many changes that he had resisted occurred. The Methodist Church broke its connections with the Church of England and began to consolidate the framework of organisation and of doctrine that had been evolving during Wesley’s lifetime.

Initially women’s preaching seemed to have flourished. In a book “Prophetic Sons and Daughters” Deborah Valenze found that women often initiated and promoted meetings, and that their concerns for their families easily translated into a wider pastoral concern. What she termed “cottage religion” gave women an opportunity to develop a different domestic and social order, and for a short while their involvement could be seen as taking a central role in the movement. Reaction to this was to set in. While Methodism developed its independence from the Church of England, it also began to grow away from the direct influence of Joh Wesley.

In the Minutes of Conference for 1803 there is the following response recorded to the question about women preaching:-

“We are of the opinion that they should not.

1. Because the vast majority of people are opposed to it.

2. Because their preaching does not at all seem necessary.... But if any woman among us think she has an extraordinary call.... We are of the opinion that she should address her own sex, and those only. Upon this condition alone... should any woman be permitted to preach.... It should be under the following regulations!"

There followed the criteria that must be met.

These included having the approval of the Circuit meeting, and the Superintendent minister; and they were not to preach in another circuit without a written invitation from the Superintendent of that circuit, and a recommendation from her own superintendent. (I was unable to ascertain if this applied to male preachers as well!)

In 1804 the Wesleyan Conference was short of preachers to fulfil the commitments, this ruling was not revoked.

In the research I did for my dissertation (some 25 years ago) I could find no evidence to support the first point that the "majority of people" were opposed to women preaching, but there was considerable evidence to support the opposing view. This was impressive as the sources were written at a time before it was considered politically correct to value the contribution of women. There was also evidence that some contemporary records of women's service to the church were not made public as had been the original intent. These included written accounts of the roles women had taken in leadership in the church that were suppressed, and evidence that obituaries were censored to removed any account of a woman's preaching ministry so that it did not give ideas to other women!

In spite of the official rulings, women found the courage to respond to their sense of God's calling, and, as well as preaching, developed a broader based pastoral concern within society, including work among the inmates of the workhouses.

There is evidence of the ongoing work in print. Reverend Zachariah Taft was a keen supporter of the ministry of women, and wrote two works supporting women's ministry. He was married to Mary Barritt who continued as a preacher after her marriage. And we must not forget George Eliot's "Adam Bede" (published in 1859, real name Mary Ann Evans!) where one of the central characters is a Methodist woman Itinerant preacher. It would be possible to dismiss this as pure fiction, except George Eliot's aunt, Mrs.

Elizabeth Evans (nee Tomlinson) was a preacher both before and after her marriage.

So, within Wesleyan Methodism, there was a definite discouragement for the role of women, prime among whom was Jabez Bunting; and by the 1830's their ministry had been entirely eclipsed. In 1836 recognition of male itinerant preachers had become more formalised with the receiving the right hand of fellowship, the laying on of hands and the designation of the title Reverend.

Only a few years later in 1842, the first college for ministerial training was opened at Richmond College in London.

However, this tells the story only as far as Wesleyan Methodism went at this time.

In the next instalment I shall look at what other options were open to women as other Connexions were born from discontent with the way Wesleyan Methodism was heading. From this grew the Primitive Methodist Connection, and the Bible Christians and I shall go into their history in the next two episodes.

Joyce Pipet

Gerald Brown

Gerald Brown, who some will remember from Burnham, asked for everyone to know how much better he is. He can even manage a little shopping. He would like to thank our church for their prayers. He says he and Sandra miss us but are both doing well.

Marian Foster

St Mark (excerpts)

D H Lawrence

There was a lion in Judah
which whelped, and was Mark.

But winged.

A lion with wings.

At least in Venice.

Why should he have wings?

Is he to be a bird also?

Or a spirit?
Or a winged thought?
Or a soaring consciousness?
Evidently he is all that,
the lion of the spirit.
Ah, lamb of God.
Would a wingless lion lie down before thee as this wingless lion lies?
The lion of the spirit.
Once he lay in the mouth of a cave
and sunned his whiskers,
and lashed his tail slowly, slowly
thinking of voluptuousness
even of blood.
But later, in the sun of the afternoon
having tasted all there was to taste, and having slept his fill
he fell to frowning, as he lay with his head on his paws
and the sun coming in through the narrowest fibril of a slit in his eyes.
So, nine tenths asleep, motionless, bored, and statically angry,
he saw in a shaft of light a lamb on a pinnacle, balancing a flag on its paw.
'Guard my sheep' came the silvery voice from the pinnacle,
'and I will give thee the wings of the morning'.
So the lion of the senses thought it was worth it.

Submitted by Judy Allen

SCAM WARNING

A church member (*Ed.in another Circuit!*) received an email which showed up as being 'from' the Minister. He had no reason to suspect that it was not from the Minister, as they have email contact about all sorts of church matters. He opened the email. It asked him if he was available, because the sender needed a favour, and was signed from the minister. Still unsuspecting he replied and then received a response asking him to go to a shop and purchase a Google Play card, claiming that the sender had forgotten their niece's birthday and it was urgent.

He became suspicious, then noticed that the grammar and punctuation were poor. He therefore did not respond, but alerted the Minister. The email address the messages had been sent from, and it was not the Ministers. Instead it was from the email address: office23127@gmail.com

A few days later the Minister was contacted by another Member, to ask if she had just texted her. The sender signed as the Minister. claimed to be in a meeting, but to need a favour. She replied to the first message and was then asked to go to a shop and buy a Google Play card. But was given a different reason. She was told that the card was needed for a woman who was in hospital battling cancer.

The phone number from which the texts were sent was 07451 200598.

Take care!!!!

Methodist Church Safeguarding Office

Finally, please note....
the deadline for the
September Link Plus
is 28th August.



Have a great summer

LINK DIARY

| Date & Time | Location | Event |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| August | | |
| 7 th 10.30am | Brent Knoll | Charity Coffee Morning |
| 14 th 10.30am | Brent Knoll | Charity Coffee Morning |
| 21 st 10.30am | Brent Knoll | Charity Coffee Morning |
| 28 th 10.30am | Brent Knoll | Charity Coffee Morning |
| 29 th 4.00pm | Brean | Open Air Service |
| September | | |
| 8 th 7.30pm | Uphill | Local Preacher & Worship Leaders |
| 11 th 10am | Kingswood School | District Synod |
| 12 th 10.30am | Brent Knoll | Harvest Festival |
| 15 th 7.30pm | St Andrew's | Circuit Meeting |
| 19 th 10.30am | East Brent | Harvest Festival |
| October | | |
| 10 th 10.30am | Brean | Harvest Festival |
| 21 st 7.00pm | Zoom | Circuit Safeguarding Officers |
| November | | |
| 20 th 10.30 | East Brent | Christmas Fair |
| December | | |
| 2 nd 7.30 | | Circuit Meeting |
| 17 th 7.00pm | East Brent | Carol Service |