

# LINK PLUS++++

## November 2021

### **Dear Friends**

With government leaders from across the world meeting for COP26 in Glasgow, we pray for the discussions and for the future of this planet which we will pass on to the next generations. We acknowledge that the decisions made this month will have a major impact on the life of those who are to come.

We see similar problems in our churches where the way things have been for the last 50 years or so may need to change in order for there to be a church for future generations. We certainly need to acknowledge that the church does not resonate with people as it once did, and we as God's people do not reach out to others with God's love and grace as often as we ought. Should we also acknowledge that the decisions made in this post-COVID era will have a major impact on the life of the church in the years to come.

Both these issues may mean that we must make sacrifices. For the sake of the planet we might have to change the way we live, the things we expect from it, and the way we offset what we consume. This might be costly for us, as it will be costly for countries and governments. And in our churches, what sacrifices might we have to make to sustain the church for the future?

As we approach Advent, we remember what God sacrificed for our future, and realise the price he asks us to pay now is so small in comparison!

Steve

## Brean

I don't like Halloween. It was never really part of my childhood. It was a day of mystery that could be ignored. No longer. What was a day with vague religious connections has now been taken over by what seems to be a whole season of ghosts and ghoulies; and the innocent American tradition of Trick or Treat has come over here and been turned into a habit of potential vindictiveness. As its name implies (the eve before a hallowed time) it is followed by All Souls Day; revered by many as the day to remember departed friends and family. Even now, after all these years I am glad when Halloween is past and over. What an old spoilsport I am.

Well, our church's summer visitors have nearly all gone from us now. It has been a delight to see them, they have added so much to our church life. At coffee after service on 24<sup>th</sup> and at our coffee morning on 25<sup>th</sup>, they all departed saying that they look forward to returning next year.

To mark the occasion, electricity power decided it had had enough too and cut out half way through Sunday service. We were left to continue without light and power. That didn't give us a problem until the last hymn. No electric for the organ you see. Never mind, prompted by our singers we gave a decent rendition of Lord, you call us to your service, each in our own way.

And even better, Judy, as she does always, had boiled up the water for coffee, beforehand and it was still more than hot enough to use. The downside was a feeling for the swan that had crashed into the power cables to cause its own distress as well as ours.

Early in October, we celebrated Harvest Festival. A happy occasion, a nicely decorated church and attended by a number from St Bridget's also. Thanks to all who made contribution to the day. No lunch this year because of Covid precautions but cake to compensate. Any excess tins and packets of food were taken to the food bank in Burnham; and enough of the flowers lasted for another couple of weeks to make very adequate displays.

Also in October a concrete plinth appeared in our carpark to accommodate a new oil tank. The previous one had sprouted a small leak so has had to be replaced; because of current Connexional stipulations it has to be placed a regulation distance from our boundary edge. Slightly less car parking space but perhaps, if we ever save up enough in current conditions, we can resurface the driveway to allow another couple of vehicles alongside the church.

Becky's video of our church and us is now about complete and we have seen a trial run of it. Most exciting, and hopefully it will appear both in our Facebook page and on our website. Great fun to see ourselves there saying why we come to Brean Methodist Church.

November brings us Remembrance Day (service at St Bridget's Church at 10.50am); and our Church Council, more next month.

And this month we follow Joyce in our thoughts as she travels to Guernsey to pay her respects for her brother who died at the end of October.

November also means colder days and we hope that some modification to our ventilation advice takes place quickly. Many of us have now had our Covid booster jabs which, so they say, gives us near full protection, so perhaps, with our large space compared with our size of congregation, it will allow us to return to a pre-Covid situation without all our doors and windows open. Fingers crossed and all that. And maybe, that will allow us to hold a beetle drive with sausage and mash, like we did in the Good Old Days.

And fireworks on or about the 5th. Now I do quite like that, though preferably in public displays and away from frightening our pets.

And then it will be getting on for Christmas so don't forget Stir up Sunday this month.

Best wishes from us all

Harvey Allen

## **Burnham**

It has been lovely to see more people joining our Sunday services, some are regular worshippers, some are returning after the lockdown, some have been visitors from other churches and some holiday makers. A couple of weeks ago two holiday makers came into church with their masks on. The lady asked if we were allowed to sing with our masks on, I replied "Yes". Then she asked "We are not allowed to stand up and sing in our church. Are we allowed to stand up and sing here?" "Yes" I replied. The lady smiled then said "You have made my day, we are not allowed to stand in our church, now I can sing out loud!!" At the end of the service she thanked us for a lovely service and for making her day. We are now still wearing masks as we walk around the church and the other rooms but have started to take them off for the service and the refreshments afterwards. Another careful step forwards.

We have had some inspiring services in the last few months, they have really lifted our spirits and given us a lot to think about. We had a Christening that had been postponed for several months. It was lovely to welcome Nancy and her family back to our church. We have another Christening booked for later in the year. It does feel as if we are starting to get back to some sort of normality.

The Stewards Team in Burnham has had some changes this month. Joan Wilkins & Anne Hall have retired as stewards. Joan was the Senior Steward for many years and Anne has been part of the Stewards Team for many years, also holding the role of Senior Steward during her time. They will both be sadly missed. We would like to say a big "Thank You" to them both for all they have done. Joan has very kindly agreed to join the list of Church Greeters, so we will still see her smiling face in church, and Anne remains committed to the life of the church, not least as a Worship Leader.

We have gained two new stewards. Linda Patient joins her husband David as a steward and we also warmly welcome Jackie Clark to the Team. They both have so much to offer the team and the church, we are very lucky to have them. If anyone else would like to join the

Greeters Team, the Coffee Rotas or would be prepared to do the Sunday Bible Readings, we are always looking for people to help. Just ask one of the stewards and you will be welcomed with open arms.

Marian Foster

for the Burnham Stewards

## PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

### An excerpt from John Clare. Shepherd's Calendar for November:

The landscape sleeps in mist from morn till noon;  
And, if the sun looks through, 'tis with a face  
Beamless and pale and round, as if the moon,  
When done the journey of her nightly race,  
Had found him sleeping, and supplied his place.  
For days the shepherds in the fields may be,  
Nor mark a patch of sky – blindfold they trace,  
The plains, that seem without a bush or tree,  
Whistling aloud by guess, to flocks they cannot see ...

Submitted by Judy Allen

### Mothers in Israel – Part 6

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with Lillie Edwards from the Bible Christian Connexion being “pensioned off”, the door to ordained presbyteral ministry had closed for women. But there was another avenue that was opening up in several of the Methodist connexions.

To quote from “Women in leadership in Methodism: a historical approach”, when referring to the work opening up in city missions:

“The most notable women-only organisations were of course the Deaconesses orders. These impacted on Methodism first through the Mildmay Deaconess Institution, founded in 1860, which attracted evangelicals from all denominations including Methodists.”

The Primitive Methodist Connexion had had deaconesses for some time, that from one account were trained on the job, but from another, from 1900 received training at their Institution in Southwark. The United Methodist Free Church opened a Deaconess Institution in Pimlico in 1892. This became part of the United Methodist Connexion in the 1907 Union with the Bible Christians and the Methodist New Connexion. All continues to have deaconesses up until the early 1930’s when the 1932 Methodist Union was formed.

However the foundation of the Deaconess order in the Wesleyan Connexion is well documented.

It had come about initially through the vision of one man, Revd. Thomas Bowman Stephenson, who had seen and responded to the need for care of destitute children. He set up homes where these children could be cared for and taught skills for employment at a later stage. The first of these homes opened in 1869, and as the work expanded, so did the need for training of staff. This began in 1873 and formed the foundation of the National Children’s Home – now Action for Children.

While “Sisters of Children” were trained to provide the care of children in the homes, Stephenson realised that there were other needs within the community, so his vision of “Sister of the People” or Deaconesses was outlined within the Wesleyan Church in 1890. This work developed quickly, and in 1894 the first sister was sent to South Africa. This led to a long tradition of overseas service and the founding of deaconess orders in other countries.

The Order in Britain gradually took on a more formal structure. When in 1900 Stephenson became superintendent of the Ilkley circuit, Conference agreed that what had become known as the Wesley

Deaconess Order should be fully recognised, and that Stephenson should be appointed as its warden. In 1902 a house was purchased in Ilkley that opened later that year as the Deaconess Institute College with its first 17 students.

There is a record dating back to 1905 that gives a picture of what a typical 70 hour week might involve for one deaconess.

7.30 daily – breakfast for 100 children. Weekly – lead 3 prayer meetings; play the organ on Sunday: lead choir practice; Do extensive young people's work; drill class; Benevolent Society committee; Women's Own Club; Babies Hour; a few hours in the office; Cutting out garments for a sewing class; visiting in homes and hospital, -not to mention giving practical help in the home for those who needed it! As I mentioned earlier, 1932 saw the Union of the main Methodist Connexions. At that time the Wesleyan Deaconess Order with 304 deaconesses, was joined by the 45 from the United Methodist Church. A year later 24 Primitive Methodist sisters joined as well, And four years later when a new Book of Offices was produced, there was a service of ordination for deaconesses who up until then had been consecrated to the work.

The years following the Methodist Union were difficult ones for the Order, as there were circuit changes leading to a strain on circuit finances, and of course it was a time of industrial depression. The situation was to change with the outbreak of the Second World War when many avenues of service opened up, like assisting with evacuees, visiting, and holding services in hospitals.

The 1950's brought new challenges as society changed in the post war years. The training of deaconesses continued at Ilkley, and at this point I contacted Revd. Joyce Plumb, and Deacon Lois Tait who reside in our circuit, as it was during this time that they were in that work. Many of you will remember Revd. Beth Bridges who was also initially a deaconess.

The pattern of training they received was a two year course at Ilkley, followed by a three year spell as a probationer before becoming ordained.

Beth had begun her training two years before Joyce and unusually spent a period of ten years working in the Tiger Bay area of Cardiff where she made such an impact on a notorious area of the city. She and Joyce also had time together on caravan missions. Such missions were sometimes based in urban areas, but more often in villages. Stationing to begin with was one year, then the norm got extended to three.

Joyce's background had been one where the work of deaconesses was very visible, and she felt called to that work. However, she undertook that calling, because at that time the presbyteral ministry was not open to women. When that changed, both she and Beth offered and were accepted into the presbyteral ministry, a development I shall explore further in the next episode.

When I spoke to Lois, she made it clear that the parameters of the Deaconess Order fulfilled her own calling, and that she had had no desire to candidate for the presbyteral ministry. In her words "I was a born Deacon". Her journey took her to her training at Ilkley, followed by three years' probation at Sheffield. Her next appointment was with the Methodist Missionary Society when she was sent to Kenya where she lived for 8 years. Her work there was among women who had come to the towns, providing, among other things, literacy classes, and teaching sewing.

It was during that time that she got married.

I have omitted to say up to this point that all deaconesses were single women, and for many years, if they married, they lost their designation as a deaconess. It was in the 1960's that it was agreed that ordination as a Deaconess was for life.

As Joyce told me, Beth was one of the main leaders who campaigned to have married women retained in the Order. Lois referred it to being in the "waiting box" and was one of the first to retain her position after the change. She remained for about four more years in Kenya where her husband was head of a school, and where their child was born.



In 1968 the training of deaconesses moved from Ilkley to Handsworth College in Birmingham where it was united with presbyteral training – moving on when that closed to Queens College also in Birmingham. As I indicated earlier, both Beth and Joyce subsequently became presbyters. As in 1973, this was a path that was now open to women, it made an impact on the Diaconate Order, and recruitment ceased from 1978.

However, the possibility of renewing and redefining the role that deaconesses had played in church life led to re-opening the Order to both women and men in 1986. In 1987, 12 candidates were accepted for training for what was still known as the Wesley Deaconess Order. Two years later the name was changed to the Methodist Diaconal Order, and the title of deacon agreed for all its members. In 1990 there was the first ordination of the deacons at the Methodist Conference. Previous ordinations had occurred as part of the annual Convocations. In this circuit we have had the ministry of Deacon Harriet Bacon who was instrumental in the 1990's of initiating the ecumenical church at Locking Castle, from meetings in her home to a portacabin; and of course, currently we have the ministry of Deacon Gary Hoare who is active in the similar venture at Mead Fields.

Next time I shall trace the journey, of which there were hints in this account, that the Methodist Church took to the ordination of women presbyters.

I appreciate the conversations I had with Joyce, and with Lois, in preparing this. Much appreciated, even if I could include only a fraction of our talks.

Joyce Pipet

**Finally, please note the deadline for  
the December/January Link Plus is  
28<sup>th</sup> November.**

# LINK DIARY

Date & Time	Location	Event
<b>Weekly</b>		
Wednesday 10.00am	Zoom	<u>Link Bible Study – Hebrews</u> Meeting ID: 842 8627 4955 Passcode: 358753
Thursday 11.00am	Zoom	<u>Link Coffee Morning</u> Meeting ID: 854 3680 5731 Passcode: 419002
<b>November</b>		
4 <sup>th</sup> 2.00pm	Brean	Link Churches Meeting
14 <sup>th</sup> 6.00pm	Burnham	Memorial Service for those who have died during Lockdown and in 2021
17 <sup>th</sup> All day	Tesco Burnham	Foodbank Christmas Collection
20 <sup>th</sup> 10.30am	East Brent	Christmas Fair
20 <sup>th</sup> 2.30pm	Burnham	Local Preacher Accreditation Service for Rosemary Krull
21 <sup>st</sup> 6.00pm	Burnham	Circuit Service (Rev Dr Jonathan Pye)
25 <sup>th</sup> 7.30pm	Zoom	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders
<b>December</b>		
2 <sup>nd</sup> 7.30	Zoom	Circuit Meeting
8 <sup>th</sup> 7.00pm	Burnham	Weston Hospice Memorial Service
16 <sup>th</sup> 7.30	Burnham Catholic	Burnham & Highbridge Choral Society Christmas Concert
17 <sup>th</sup> 7.00pm	East Brent	Carol Service

19 <sup>th</sup> 6.00pm	Burnham	Carol Service
20 <sup>th</sup> 7.00pm	West Huntspill	Carols
22 <sup>nd</sup> 6.00pm	Mead Fields	Carols – contact G Hoare for details
24 <sup>th</sup> 4.00pm	Brean	Carols
24 <sup>th</sup> 11.15pm	Burnham	Midnight Communion
25 <sup>th</sup> 9.30am	West Huntspill	Christmas Service (breakfast at 8.45am)
25 <sup>th</sup> 10.00am	East Brent	Christmas Service
25 <sup>th</sup> 11.00am	Burnham	Christmas Service
26 <sup>th</sup>	Please note there are no in person services on this day. Deacon Gary Hoare will be offering a Zoom service for those who would like to participate	
<b>January 2022</b>		
8 <sup>th</sup> 10am onwards	Burnham	Epiphany Fair
22 <sup>nd</sup>	All Day	District Candidate's Committee (please pray for Ildi Haraszti as she explores her call to be a Methodist Minister).

Loving God, may we feel your comforting arms enfolding us on our journey with you. Keep us safe and protect us. You are our comforter and friend, and you are with us even in our darkest moments. Thank you that you never leave us alone; your love surrounds us, always and in all places; no one is beyond your reach including those who feel they are unlovable; help us to show your love to all. You reach out in times of depression, stress, or anxiety and place your healing hand on us. We claim your promise never to leave or forsake us. Comforting, loving, and redeeming God, through you, may we see the rainbow after the clouds.

**Coffee Shop Sunday, Coventry & Nuneaton Circuit  
Methodist Prayer Handbook 2021/2022 p4**