

LINK PLUS++++

September 2021

Dear Friends

As we start the new Methodist year, we are aware that there are a number of things that will challenge us. Whether these are how we can remain a relevant, living church in a world that still suffers the shock of COVID, perhaps needing us to look at everything we do and ask the searching questions about our church, its people, buildings and mission. Or whether our biggest challenges will result from the decisions of Conference, ranging from the new Standing Orders on Governance and Trusteeship, to the financial problems of the Church, to the aftermath of the 'God in love unites us' debate, or the other decisions of Conference 2021 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8q-Pf51cgM details the highlights).

As always, we will try to work through these thoughtfully and prayerfully, and, as far as it is possible, in consultation with those concerned. I would ask you to keep your Circuit Staff and Leadership Team in your prayers as we seek to find solutions that will enable us all to move forward as the church of Christ. Inevitably, there will be issues where we will not find agreement and will need to work through painful decisions together. I know too that when change occurs some may feel left out of the loop. So if you feel your voice is not being heard in these processes, please speak to me or one of your church stewards.

In this year of change, we really need more people in a Circuit Leadership role. If you feel this could be you, please have a chat with me.

May God continue to bless you.
Steve

Brean

September? September? Where did August go? Or the rest of the summer come to that.

We seem to be well into our stride following the lifting of Covid restrictions, though. Our first act was to rearrange our seating by adding three chairs per row in the centre of the church to the two seats only at each side.

It worked a treat. We can still seat 35 comfortably and we have more space, including two aisles. We all agree it is better, the church no longer feels half empty and perhaps more importantly, it is less noticeable if people sit at the back!! (Not that we ever did of course!) We have been fortunate in that we have had a congregation of 15-20 most weeks. All of our regular members are back, and it has been good to see many of our holiday regulars amongst us again; as well as a few casual visitors. Coffee after service has returned to its happy hour after service in the schoolroom too, and we shall resurrect our weekday coffee mornings as from the beginning of September. So we look forward to welcoming anyone to join us from 10.30 on Monday mornings.

By the time you see this [Link](#) we shall have held our open air service at the entrance to the church with tea and cake to follow. Were you there?

The summer season has gone fairly well in Brean. Most sites have been very full, and holidaymakers seem happy enough. Now of course we shall see a dropping off, but September can still seem quite busy even so. We hope in turn, that those of you who have been able to get away for a holiday break have found a time of rest and enjoyment.

Life is not all pleasure though and, as I write this, the tragedy of Afghanistan is unfolding before our very eyes. And we are being reminded about the sheer force of Nature as tornadoes threaten the southern states of USA. Plenty of material for our prayers. Which is a

reminder that our Methodist Prayer Book for the coming Methodist Year is now published and available.

Our friend Marjorie Godwin died earlier this month. She had been in Tudor Lodge for a few years now and quite poorly recently. Her funeral is at Sedgemoor crematorium on September 7th at 1pm. Marjorie and her husband, Walter (who died some years ago) had been active members of our church and staunch supporters of our ecumenical partnership. Walter was our treasurer for several years and Marjorie was always present to help out when things needed doing. They came to Brean (in the 70s I think, though it could have been earlier) from a life in business in Birmingham where Wal was in the jewellery trade). Now owning a caravan site, they later also bought the site next door called Skoorbland (strange name? - well take the first six letters and reverse them to reveal the surname of the first owner), before passing on the site to son Brian and retiring to Berrow.

September is the start of the new Methodist Year. We welcome a newly retired supernumerary minister to our section of the Circuit, and we think of all those ministers and deacons taking up new posts throughout the Connexion. And our thoughts are with newly appointed officers to church, Circuit and District committees. May it all go well with you, with vision and pastoral concern for all your charges.
Happy New Year
Harvey Allen

Brent Knoll

Our summer didn't quite go as planned as we had to cancel our August coffee mornings due to the ceiling between the kitchen and the toilet collapsing in late July. At the time of writing, we have this in well in hand and we're looking forward to the repairs being carried out soon. Although this was obviously very disappointing, we were all grateful that the Church hasn't been affected and remains completely undamaged.

All of us at the Methodist Church were so very sad to hear of the death of Jack Coles, husband of Mary Coles. Jack and Mary had been married

for 75 years (a wonderful achievement in any day and age) and our love and prayers during this time go out especially to Mary and the family.

As we look forward to September, we are going to be holding our Harvest Festival on Sunday 12th September. But not in the church - Claraine Clarke and her family have kindly offered us the use of their barn for this special service and we are grateful to both them and to our own minister, Rev Steve Bennett, who will be leading it.

September also marks the beginning of the Methodist Church New Year - so from all of us here at Brent Knoll Methodist Church, we wish you a happy and healthy one. As our children go back to school and holiday makers return home after the summer, we wish you every best hope for the months ahead and we will, of course, continue to hold you all and our Circuit in our prayers. Every blessing
Rosemary Krull

Burnham

As I write September's Link, I realise my last column was a year ago (although, I did forget to write the May column and got mixed up with the dates!).

I started last year's column with 'Welcome Back', Burnham is open for Sunday Morning Worship, not realising we would be open and then closed, open Christmas morning and then closed.

Ann wrote last month that we are now again open (look out for the new posters on the noticeboards outside the Church), and we were, until Sunday 15th August when we were part open? This was due to my (Marian K) testing positive for Covid, and as I had been in Church the previous Sunday, all the people who attended that Service were contacted by NHS Track & Trace and told to self-isolate.

Testing positive for Covid came as a bit of a shock. The previous week 6 family members had been away for a week to Devon. We had all

been very careful (or so we thought), to wear masks, follow all the safety rules and avoid crowds.

When we returned home, one person was poorly and took a lateral flow test, which was negative. Still feeling unwell, the next day, they booked a PCR test which came back positive. We then all took tests and 5 out of the 6 people tested positive for Covid.

Having updated my NHS App with the result, I was told to self-isolate for 10 days (until Thursday 19th August at 23:59 to be exact), and this was followed with NHS Track and Trace phoning every other day, completing questionnaires and confirming who I had been in contact with since 2nd August.

The next few days I spent looking at the rules, regulations, and guidance, to ensure we did everything we could to keep others safe. This experience has definitely made me 'stop and think'. I know sometimes I take life for granted and don't appreciate what I have. I am in the position to have received both vaccinations, whereby others haven't. Let us continue to pray for the World, for those who are poorly, and for vaccinations to be made available for everyone.

Returning to the start of my column, 'Welcome Back', Burnham is open. Saturday coffee mornings have re-started and other activities are being booked. We have set up our Prayer Area for anyone who would like to pray, alone or with others. Our Methodist Way of Life groups are continuing, building on the development work we have already started. A new Methodist Year is upon us, a time to reflect on our faith and commitment as we continue to ask God to guide us in our daily lives.

From all of us here in Burnham, look after yourselves and others

Marian Kingsbury on behalf of the Burnham Stewards

East Brent

Well another Methodist year is about to begin!!

What does it mean for the remaining Churches in this circuit, we at East Brent are fewer in numbers at present and send our love and sincere wishes to Joan Hicks, Margaret Green (who is back in hospital) and Jill recovering from a hip operation (look out Andrew Murray).

But we are singing again and are a happy group. The new year will see us resume vestry duties and coffee after the service.

Financially we still have to find the increase in the assessment (little as it is) it becomes larger with fewer members, yet The Methodist Church holds billions that they hold on to, pay very large salaries to their top dogs, and have a pension fund deficit.

Anyway we will continue to keep going and support whatever is required for this. We send our best wishes to all link Churches and hope and pray this year will be much improved and meaningful to the last one.

Gordon Legg

PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

A New Hymn

This hymn was written by Rev Dr Andrew Pratt in response to an article in the Methodist Recorder on July 30th about the new "inhumane borders bill" written by Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal

- (1) When strangers are unwelcome
the church's heart beats slow
the lost who run from danger
have nowhere left to go.
No words of grace are spoken
while, looking on the world,
the heart of God is broken:
love's banner tightly furled.
- (2) The people at our borders
who need compassion now,
reach out for care and shelter,
but rules will not allow
these ones to seek asylum:
we've put up legal walls,
before we've even met them
we disregard their calls.
- (3) Then images from scripture speak
judgment on the Church,
and call for clearer thinking
as values seize or lurch.
The Christ that we would worship
would turn the world around,
and shake us from our comfort,
our certain, solid ground.

(4) Then shatter walls and windows
and let the Church reach out,
and not with Psalms and anthems,
but anger, let us shout
condemning every outrage
that demonises life
and break the laws that damage,
evoking human strife.

Andrew Pratt 30/7/2021

Tune: Aurelia; Kings Lynn Meter 7.6.7.6D

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Submitted by Maureen Cavill

Mothers in Israel (part 4 – The Primitive Methodist Connexion

As I indicated at the end of my previous article, there were those who were unhappy with the way Methodism was developing after the death of John Wesley and so breakaway connexions arose.

In passing, I shall mention the Methodist New Connexion that was the first of these, but as I have found no evidence of the use of women in their preaching work, I shall not follow them further. It is a very different story when the histories of the Primitive Methodist Connexion and that of the Bible Christians are examined.

Primitive Methodism was inspired by Lorenzo Dow from a camp meeting held at Mow Cop on the borders of Cheshire and Staffordshire in 1807. From this Hugh Bourne and William Clowes formed two groups that seceded from Wesleyan Methodism, but these united in 1811 to form the Primitive Methodist Connexion. The name arose because the followers believed that they were reverting to a more “primitive” style of evangelism, such as they perceived John Wesley had developed in his ministry after his conversion experience.

Almost from the start there is evidence of their use of women in the evangelistic ministry, for names of at least three women itinerant

preachers are recorded who joined because they felt that Wesleyan Methodism had denied them a place to exercise the ministry to which they felt they were called. It is believed that in the early days of the Connexion as many as 20% of the itinerant preachers were women, many under 20 years old and from poorer backgrounds.

While some outreach undertaken by women was in towns, much was in rural settings, and valuable work must have been done within the home settings. Women were used mainly in evangelical outreach situations where because of their novelty value, they made quite an impact, and were cheaper. Some records suggest that at times they had to raise their own salary where there was a lack of circuit finance, or that money might be deducted from payment for “neglecting opportunities”.

Most accounts suggest that men and women itinerants worked together, and alike were persecuted and imprisoned. The Connexion was concerned with propriety, so no male preacher was to travel alone with a woman unless they were married, and visa versa. It was inevitable that the work of the Connexion in ministry should move from outreach to consolidation and growth in the societies that had been established, and a further move from worship in the informal home settings into purpose- built chapels. It was at this time, during the 1840's that the number of women itinerant preachers declined.

The Connexion was moving from being a breakaway fringe movement to a accepted mainstream denomination and thus a move to greater respectability and conformity with current social values which in turn led to women being marginalised as itinerant preachers.

One of the problems in tracing these women has been to discover who they were and where they served in ministry. Records were not always accurately kept and preserved. Names on a plan did not always indicate if the person in question was a woman meaning that some have been blotted from memory.

Dr Dorothy Graham through the Wesley Historical Society Publishing published a book "Chosen by God" that covered the research she had done using the Primitive Methodist Minutes of Conference, and Primitive Methodist magazines through which she had identified over ninety women itinerant preachers, and a further thirty who did not receive official recognition by Conference. These thirty were perceived and recorded by circuits as authentic preachers. However, this was by no means complete as while I was working on the dissertation I was doing on the subject of early women ministers, I received a copy of a local church history produced for the centenary of Chittoe Heath Methodist Church. (Now closed but it was in the Calne section of the Wilts United Area.) In 1837 their minister was Sarah Gale, and then Elizabeth Randell in 1839. That leads me to suspect that a perusal of other church histories could well add to the list of those already traced. I shall conclude this article with a quote from the proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society from an article submitted by Wesley Swift in December 1953 on "The Women Itinerant Preachers of Early Methodism."

"Itinerant Females" were a phase, though an interesting one, in the development of two branches of the Methodist Family. They had their day and ceased to be."

No comment! – But next time I shall trace something of the history of the women within the Bible Christian Connexion.

If you want further reading on all of this I can recommend;

- "Mothers in Israel" by Donna Fowler Marchant, which deals with women's place in the early development of Methodism And
- "Women, Preachers, Methodists" ed. By John Lenton, Clive Murray Norris, & Linda A Ryan which covers the subject to the present day.

Joyce Pipet

LINK TO HOPE CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL.

Every year my friends, family and church members try to support this appeal. The charity sends filled shoeboxes to the elderly as well as some families in Moldova, The Ukraine, Romania, and Bulgaria. They ask for basic items such as socks, hat and scarves, a mug, cutlery, a

small hot water bottle, reading glasses, candles etc. If you or you and your friends can fill a shoebox, they would be very grateful. This year I can deliver them to a collection point near Bridgwater. The shoeboxes need to be there by Nov 5th. If you can help, I have some leaflets or you can find out more at their website www.linktohope.co.uk or you can contact me on 01278 785360.

Marian Foster

Autumn Nature Notes

Judy Allen's poetry offering this month is from Ted Hughes, one of Harvey's favourite poets and is appropriate to the season:

The laburnam top is silent, quite still
In the afternoon yellow September sunlight,
A few leaves yellowing, all its seeds fallen.

Till the goldfinch comes, with a twitching chirrup,
The suddenness, a startlement, at a branch end.
Then sleek as a lizard, and alert, and abrupt
She enters the thickness, and a machine starts up
Of chitterings, and a tremor of wings, and trillings -
The whole tree trembles and thrills.
It is the engine of her family.
She stokes it full, then flirts out to the branch end
Showing her barred face identity mask.

Then with eerie delicate whistle – chirrup whisperings
She launches away, towards the infinite

And the laburnam subsides to empty.

Finally, please note the deadline for
the October Link Plus is 26th
September.

LINK DIARY

Date & Time	Location	Event
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
26 th 10.30am	Burnham	Harvest Festival
October		
10 th 10.30am	Brean	Harvest Festival
21 st 7.00pm	Zoom	Circuit Safeguarding Officers
November		
20 th 10.30am	East Brent	Christmas Fair
21 st 6.00pm	Burnham	Circuit Service (with Rev Dr J Pye)
December		
2 nd 7.30	tba	Circuit Meeting
17 th 7.00pm	East Brent	Carol Service
19 th 6.00pm	Burnham	Carol Service