



Reflections ...

from the Revive National Gathering Weekend

15 – 17 NOVEMBER

Awestruck: The Bible's Big Picture

THEMES AND THREADS

On Saturday 16 November, myself and three fellow members of Christchurch in Hitchin journeyed to Northampton. We were to join those who had already begun the Revive Gathering weekend the previous evening. As day visitors we received a wonderful welcome and, with judicious summaries of the previous evening's session woven into session 2, Dr David Hull drew us into the Bible's Big Picture through themes from Handel's 'Messiah'.

What a revelation it was to focus on the scriptures that the librettist Charles Jennens had selected! As one who has sung 'Messiah' many times, having the invitation to come away from those familiar tunes and focus in on the word of God was a deeply spiritual experience. Threaded through with some moving stories of those involved with writing and performing this work, David led us through the journey of Christ's submission to the cross through 'Heartbreak' & 'Healing' to the 'Hallelujah' of now being seated in heavenly places. We experienced that journey from despair to joy once again through the scriptures so carefully chosen and ordered by Jennens nearly 300 years ago ... and now offered with passion and clarity by David.

Then more interweaving as Jacqui Parkinson shared her story in the next two sessions. Literal interweaving ... as she spoke about her development as a textile artist and displayed some of her incredible creations that communicate the gospel through the visual arts. Stunning!!!

Jacqui also shared the personal threads of her life growing up, then as the wife of Rev. Dr Rob Frost, and vulnerably enabling us to glimpse the devastating impact of being widowed. Then picking up and offering the broken threads of her life to the Lord, we could see how God had woven them into something more magnificent and impactful than anyone could imagine. Remarried, and through partnering with others, ten years' work of creating huge silk panels communicating God's Big Story is being displayed in cathedrals around the country ... a message that goes beyond words. Like the music that carries the Word of God in 'Messiah' ... Jacqui's glorious creations carry the Word of God directly into the hearts, minds and spirits of those who see and experience them.

And with God ... there is always more!! Jacqui made a comment that the most important things in this life are 'relationships and prayer'. During the day there was space for both of these. For me personally there were intriguing conversations with those I had never met before but were definitely a 'God set up' for making connections in ministry going forward. Then the gift of time and space for the four of us to wait on God, share and intercede for our home church.

All interwoven with heartfelt worship and plentiful food! A day away that will remain with me for a long time. Thank you MET.

Alison Bryan

Coordinator of Healing Ministry, Methodist Central Hall Westminster

'THE GREATEST STORY EVER SUNG' AND 'THE GREATEST STORY EVER SEWN'

Having been a member of MET, previously Headway, for a number of years, I felt drawn to attend, for the first time, the National Gathering at Northampton. The title 'Awestruck – the Bible's Big Picture' was more than lived up to over the weekend and I feel privileged to have been there.

Rev. Dr David Hull helped us to see the Bible's Big Picture as portrayed through the words of Handel's Messiah, compiled by Charles Jennings. For me, the words have, in the past, been overshadowed by the magnificent music, but with David's guidance the Bible texts were illuminated to reveal the story of our Lord's 'Glorious Revelation, Glorious Reign and Glorious Resurrection' – 'The Greatest Story Ever Sung'.

Then came 'the greatest story ever sewn' as we gazed in awe at Jacqui Parkinson's creative work of 'Threads Through the Bible' – biblical scenes portrayed in huge silk panels combining years of work and millions of stitches which tell the story from Creation to Revelation. Brief relevant Bible texts accompany the panels, but the pictures tell the story just like stained glass windows accessible to all. The exhibition tours cathedrals from January 2025; see it and be blessed!

Jacqui's testimony, particularly of bereavement following the death of her husband Rev. Dr Rob Frost, was a story in itself, inspiring us to trust in God when the future is uncertain, to take a step of faith only to find he has gone ahead of us and prepared the way.

David stepped down as Chair of MET and on Sunday morning we welcomed Chair-elect Rev. Chris Briggs, who led a session entitled 'The Almost Gospel and the Almost Christian' and led us in prayers for Revival. There is no space to elaborate but I was struck by his humility and humour: we are in good hands.

Communion on Sunday morning was most moving as we gathered together, the body of Christ. Sharing in the bread and the wine in remembrance of him who died for our salvation was truly a little taste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all mankind. The experience was enriched by the late autumn sun shining through the window and, as it were, bathing us in God's Wondrous Glory. A final blessing was the opportunity to be anointed with oil. The Holy Spirit was present throughout.

Morning prayers were led by Roz Addington, well known to readers of MET's magazine, and for me a chance to

meet in person someone called by God to share in words and pictures what is on his heart; a present day prophet in the form of a gentle unassuming woman!

Last, but not least, the choice of worship songs/hymns by Hilary Balsdon was perfect and enabled us to praise the Lord Jesus with every part of our being.

Margaret Newrick

MET: Revive member from Cumbria

PRAYER AT REVIVE

Prayer was very much an integral part of the Revive Gathering with the emphasis, not surprisingly, on revival. As well as early morning prayers, each of the sessions throughout the weekend included specific times of prayer, in which everyone enthusiastically took part. Some pictures and words of knowledge were received by a few people. One of these pictures was of a large white shining church emanating the glory of God, to which were coming a multitude of people. It was a very encouraging picture of revival which we can hold on to through the difficult times which God has made clear lie ahead.

There was also a dedicated prayer room with seven prayer stations where people could participate in prayer in a more creative way. These included praise and adoration, confession, reflection on Psalm 46, praying for the church and all in leadership, prayer for our country, cities, towns and local communities and prayers for friends and family who don't yet know the love of Christ in their lives. There was also the opportunity to make a nativity card to send to someone to serve as a reminder of the true reason for Christmas. People interacted well with all the aspects of prayer and were appreciative of the whole weekend.

Roz Addington

MET: Revive Prayer Coordinator.

THE REVIVE GATHERING 2025

This year will be taking place on the weekend of Friday 14th – Sunday 16th November 2025 at: The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Further details and a booking form will be available in the spring mailing.