

THE NEW MAGAZINE OF METHODIST EVANGELICALS TOGETHER

RE•VIVE

Partners in the Gospel

SPRING 2025

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EDITORIAL

The theme for this spring edition is 'Partners in the Gospel'. We have invited our partner organizations to share their reflections on the theme of partnership – so we have contributions from All We Can, SJI, Cliff College, Evangelical Alliance, LWPT and The Methodist Church. We also have a feature of partnerships on the Isle of Wight – which I have been involved with over the last 10 years.

The Bible Study has been compiled by Ian Buchanan, CEO of LWPT which explores our partnership

in the gospel as Paul writes about in Philippians 1:1-6.

Our Chair Chris Briggs shares about the 'Christianity Month' initiative for May and our Ambassador, David Hull gives an update on his new role.

On a personal note, I shall be moving from the Isle of Wight in the summer as my husband John is 'sitting down' (retiring) and we shall be moving back to the mainland. In view of this, the autumn edition of Re:vive will be later than usual (late October). The mailing address and phone number will remain the same, with forwarding in place, until we are in a position to make new arrangements.

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HOWDY PARTNERS!

CHRIS BRIGGS

The Chair writes...

That may not be the way most of us greet people nowadays, but it popped into my head. Of course, the phrase finds its origin in a greeting exchanged by cowboys in the Wild West. Or does it? Some argue that it was invented by Hollywood and became a staple greeting in Cowboy films. Either way, partners and partnership are important concepts for us as Christians and I hope and pray this edition of RE:VIVE will reinforce that.

There is much that binds us together within Christ. We are 'All one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). At the same time denominations, worship styles, theological and doctrinal differences, different visions, charities, and organisations, all fighting for exposure, can sometimes encourage solo mentalities and an air of competition which does not always sit well with the gospel. It can undermine our witness to the God who brings us into unity.

In Philippians 1:5, Paul refers to the importance of 'partnership in the gospel' in his writing. I am also

struck by 1 Corinthians 3:1-14 where Paul speaks about being 'co-workers in God's service' (v. 9). Different ministries can lead to friction between groups and individuals within Christ's Church, but what we are aiming for is for us all being open to the Holy Spirit in such a way that we can be caught up into God's purposes. God knows what he is about, and he can bring a complementarity to the different individuals, organisations, ministries and sense of direction. A General in the Army would not tell his or her Battalions and Companies to do their own thing. The Battalions and Companies may have individual identities and emphases, but this is drawn into the one overall identity of the Army with a defined strategy.

Partners, or partnering, implies some sort of relationship. This takes us to the heart of so much of the Christian gospel. It is about relationship. We are drawn back into relationship with God through Jesus and we are drawn into relationship with one another. Within the body of Christ, we are all connected. 'We are family' as the American vocal group Sister Sledge sang when it was released in April 1979.

I hope this edition of our magazine will remind us that ultimately God has a strategy, and we partner with God and each other in that strategy. The individuals and organisations represented in RE:VIVE on this occasion are partners with one another and with MET:Revive, even if that is not always at the forefront of our mind. This edition is not simply an advertising opportunity for groups to sell their wares, but rather an acknowledgement of how God might give particular calls and ministries to people but we all share in partnership of the Gospel.

'Howdy Partner', which I began with, is also a saying of Woody in the Toy Story films. 'You've got a friend in me' by Randy Newman was the main theme song for the first film of the franchise when it was released. It featured in the sequels too. When Jesus spoke to his disciples in John 15:15 he said he no longer called them servants and went on to say, 'Instead, I have called you friends'. Jesus himself draws his followers into friendship with him and in that sense, he calls us into friendship, partnership, relationship with one another. We are indeed 'Partners in the Gospel'. Hallelujah! Praise God! Thank you, Wonderful God for one another as we reach out with good news of the Kingdom seen in Jesus.

Chris Briggs



The Power of Partnership

PHIL KNOX

Phil Knox from the Evangelical Alliance shares why partnership needs to be at the heart of the church

There's a video clip that went viral a few years ago featuring the band Coldplay whilst performing a stadium gig in Munich. Chris Martin, Coldplay's band leader, sits at his piano about to launch into another number of his vast repertoire when he spots a handwritten banner in the crowd, held aloft by an eager fan. Inscribed in black ink on a white piece of A2 card is an offer to play the song 'Everglow'. Astonishingly, the artist addresses the wannabe and clarifies the proposal,

'Are you for real? Do you really want to come on stage and play with me? People have paid a lot of money.'

At his beckoning, a young man begins to make his way through the crowd, is lifted over the barriers and takes off his hoodie and coat. The crowd are lapping it up, a sea of smartphones capturing the moment. Chris asks again, 'Are you sure you want to do this young man?'

Introduced as Ferdinand, the young German takes his seat at the stage piano as thousands hold their breath and wonder whether he can actually play or whether he is a musically illiterate fraud. As he opens with a pitch perfect chord they wonder no more, and he is so good that Chris threatens to leave the stage and leave the guy to perform on his own. Returning he says, 'OK, let's try it man ... this is a German, British union ... let's go.'

When I first saw the clip, I was blown away by the moment, but also profoundly reminded of the power of partnership.

Partnership needs to be at the heart of the church because it is at the heart of mission.

Partnership needs to be at the heart of the church because it is at the heart of mission. Just as Coldplay could perform perfectly well without Ferdinand, so God could act in the world without us. But in his generosity

and grace, for our benefit and his glory, he invites us and involves us in being good news people in a bad news world, drawing people to himself, feeding the hungry, befriending the lonely, restoring the broken and bringing hope to a world so desperately in need.

One of the great joys as disciples of Jesus is partnering with God in his divine activity in the world. But we also get to partner together. The task of reaching the UK is too great to be accomplished alone. But together, with God and with each other, we can make a significant impact.

We, as the Evangelical Alliance, have existed since 1846 to unite the estimated 2 million evangelicals in the UK to reach the lost and give the church a clear, effective and united voice into the corridors of power.

Unity matters to us because it helps us all together make Jesus known. Jesus' prayer for his church in John 17 is that we would be one 'so that the world might know.' This is not for our own sakes, but to point people to Jesus. This unity should be so noticeable, observable and tangible that those outside of the Church would notice it and be drawn towards it.

What does this look like in practice? First, we facilitate relationship between evangelicals locally, gathering, introducing, championing and blessing local unity. Second, we conduct research into how people are coming to faith, listening to where God is at work, reporting findings and telling stories to inspire and shape fruitful mission. Third, we create resources to help faithful gospel proclamation and effective cultural engagement.

But unity also matters as it means we can speak loudly with a collective voice. In uncertain times, much of the public square is a contended space, but by uniting we are stronger and clearer on issues that matter. Our advocacy teams speak up on behalf of all of us, telling the story of the impact of the church in communities to the highest levels of government and speaking out on contentious issues, especially around our gospel freedoms.

The Evangelical Alliance is a membership organisation made up of hundreds of organisations, thousands of churches and tens of thousands of individuals. The strength of our voice depends on the size of our membership and we are regularly asked how many members we have. If you are not yet a personal member, would you consider joining today to help us speak more loudly with greater representation?

Our world is reeling from painful fractures. Over half of people in the UK say that we are the most divided we have ever been as a nation. What an opportunity we

have as the church to tell a different story! In Luke 5, as tired and discouraged disciples let their nets down into deep waters at Jesus' command, the nets begin to break with the size of the catch. Simon Peter signals to their partners to come and help. What a beautiful prophetic picture of the church uniting to reach the lost. The task of mission and evangelism in the UK today is too big and the stakes too high for us to go it alone. Our encouragement is to love your postcode deeply but be more widely connected locally and nationally.

Back at the Munich concert, in an amusing interlude Coldplay's temporary band member takes his phone out to presumably record the moment or take a selfie. Chris laughs and tells him he doesn't need to film it, 'Everybody's filming you!' Herein is the profound truth of partnership: when we unite, people notice. May we be the answer to the John 17 prayer of our Saviour. May a watching world notice and be drawn to Jesus. May we

rally around the gospel and build Kingdom friendships in a lonely world. And may we each hold up our own banner in the crowd to stand up and play our part as we seek together to make Jesus known.



PHIL KNOX

Phil Knox is an evangelist and missiologist at the Evangelical Alliance. He is passionate about making Jesus known and the power of friendship. His work in the UK is studying how people come to faith in Jesus and helping the church maximise those pathways.



PRAYER FOCUS

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE: A greater response and uptake of churches within local areas to partner with EA in reaching out with the love of Christ to more people; unity amongst evangelical churches in local areas; working and praying in partnership together and seeking God for his agenda in churches and communities across the country. (1Corinthians 3:8-9; John 15:4-5).

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH

Local Churches: For every member and attendee of the church to have a desire to read and study the Bible and to understand the importance of prayer; to seek the power of the Holy Spirit; to seek God's agenda for each individual church in how to engage in mission and outreach. (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Hope: For people across the Connexion to keep their hope fixed on Jesus in these dark and difficult days; to reach out and grasp his assurance and keep hold of the promises in Scripture and let his light guide us in the darkness of all that is happening in our nation and the world. (Romans 15:13; Hebrews 10:23).

Prayer Focus is compiled by Roz Addington. If you would like to contact Roz feel free to email: prayer@metrevive.uk

FOCUS ON NATIONAL ISSUES

Revival: A recognition across the country of the need for God, and an awareness only he holds answers to our needs; for the Holy Spirit to convict people of corporate selfishness, pride, greed, arrogance, self-righteousness, and egotism. (1 John 1:5-10; Psalm 86:4-7).

Government: The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, and all Members of Parliament; a return of integrity and trust amongst all politicians; for openness and honesty in all dealings and decisions; Christian MP's – courage to stand firm on Christian principles and for their integrity to shine out; a return to the Christian roots on which our land was built. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2; Philippians 2:1-5).

FOCUS ON WORLD ISSUES

America: Pray for the Christians within President Trump's Administration to have a large influence on his policies, both within America and across the world; for President Trump to move from head knowledge to having a 'heart' encounter with God and the Holy Spirit, transforming his whole outlook on the situations he faces. (James 3:17; Isaiah 55:6-8).

Europe: Response to America's withdrawal of military aid to Ukraine; wisdom for future security; unity across the continent; God's solution to the situation. (Psalm 22:28; 1 Chronicles 16:11).



MAY IS 'CHRISTIANITY MONTH'

CHRIS BRIGGS



MET:Revive is pleased to support and publicise Christianity Month. This relatively new vision is gradually gaining momentum as churches realise this is a reasonably easy way to celebrate the many changes that have happened in the world and in lives because of the Christian faith. We can use May as a month for intentional Christian outreach and witness as we celebrate the effect Christianity has had for good around the world. I always want to say at that point that of course we should witness all year round, but having a month when we gather resources and encourage one another to share in the same message has the potential for far greater impact. We have special prayer days when we should pray all year round, we have particular weeks where Christian charities raise funds and profile, we have special campaigns. None of these preclude us from carrying our work and ministry in these areas all year round.

I want to invite you then to pray for Christianity Month. This edition of the magazine will likely coincide with Christianity Month so it may be too late to do anything for 2025, but I am perfectly serious when I say it is not too early to start praying and thinking about Christianity Month 2026. You will find the logo on this page. Feel free to use it. It can be downloaded from a number of sites – just search for Christianity Month via your search engine or contact me if you need a digital copy.

In a church I have care of, this year for Christianity Month we have arranged a textile exhibition called 'Good

Grief' over 'Dying Matters' Week in May, a Community Fun Day, a Comedy Night with a Comedian who is a Christian, a craft workshop working with wool (obvious links to the Christian faith), an afternoon tea to link with the commemoration of VE Day, a Holiday Club, visits into schools, and our usual church activities which will have Christian literature freely available. Sunday services will be more seeker friendly and evangelistic. That is quite a heavy programme but the beauty of Christianity Month is that you can give it a go just by putting on one event. Maybe you have a monthly coffee morning and you could advertise this as linked with Christianity Month and arrange to have some free gospels on hand. You could put the Christianity Month logo outside. Perhaps you could invite a local preacher or another speaker to share something about how the Christian faith has changed the landscape of the world!

For Christianity Month there is nothing to sign up to, no training to take part in, no package to buy. You do not need to have great resources to take part. It fits any size church and can be a gentle, light-touch encouragement for people to discover the jewels of the Christian faith, or it can be a marvellous opportunity to go all-out in mission.

Why not start talking about and planning for Christianity Month 2026?

CHRIS BRIGGS | CHAIR OF MET



Why Mission Needs More Than Just a Training Day

ANDY FROST

Andy Frost shares 5 lessons about how mission can truly transform a church

The old way was simple.

As a charity (Share Jesus International), a local church would invite us in for a day of training on mission and evangelism. We'd show up, deliver solid content, receive a thank-you, maybe a gift towards our work, and then move on. Job done.

But something wasn't sticking.

When I returned to those churches months later, I noticed a pattern. The enthusiasm had faded. The ideas we had shared hadn't taken root. Mission and evangelism had remained concepts rather than a lived-out reality.

So in 2022, we changed course. Instead of one-off training days, we committed to journeying alongside churches over two years – helping them not only think missionally but embed it into their culture.

Every church is unique, with different ministries, leadership structures, resources, and community contexts. Yet, two years in, we're witnessing something powerful: lasting impact.

We call this initiative The Emmaus Project, and through it, we've learned five key lessons about how mission can truly transform a church.

1. ASKING 'WHAT'S NEXT?'

Too often, churches haven't mapped out a clear journey for those exploring faith. A Christmas carol service might be inspiring, but what happens next? Without an intentional next step, people rarely continue exploring.

Through Emmaus, we've been embedding this crucial question into church life: What's next for this person? We need pathways, not just events. When churches make these steps explicit, the entire congregation can play a role in welcoming and discipling newcomers.

2. MISSION MUST STAY ON THE AGENDA

Church life is relentless—safeguarding policies, building maintenance, pastoral care, website updates ... the list goes on! In the midst of this, mission can feel important, but not urgent.

By journeying with churches, we help keep mission front and centre. Some churches have created mission teams that speak directly into leadership, ensuring evangelism doesn't get lost in the busyness. The goal? Systems and structures that sustain a long-term culture of sharing Jesus.

3. PEOPLE ARE THE GREATEST RESOURCE

Many churches we've partnered with had done no evangelism training for years – yet, the world is constantly changing. The way we share our faith must evolve too.

We've found that Christians often need help putting their faith into words and looking for everyday opportunities to share the gospel. Without regular encouragement, mission loses momentum.

4. CULTURE CHANGE IS KEY

Quick 'wins' – like a new event or outreach initiative – can be great. But lasting transformation happens when mission becomes part of a church's DNA.

One simple yet profound tool we've introduced is Prompt Cards. Each Sunday, someone picks a card with a mission-focused question like: Who can I bless this week? Who can I share my favourite Bible story with?

The congregation then actively looks for opportunities to live out their faith. The following Sunday, they share their experiences. This small habit has begun to reshape church culture from the inside out.

5. MISSION IS GOD'S WORK – WE JUST JOIN IN

Ultimately, evangelism is not just something we do – it's something God does in us and through us. As we journey with churches, seeing people come to faith, one truth stands out: prayer is central.

Churches are often great at praying for global issues and internal needs (which are important), but we also need to pray for people by name – that they might encounter Jesus. This is essential to fulfilling the Great Commission.

The old way of doing things was easier. A quick visit. A training day. Then moving on.

The new way? It's more complex. It's time-consuming. But as we see churches come alive and people encounter Jesus – every moment of investment is worth it.

Quotes from churches who have engaged with the Emmaus Project

"As a church we have been inspired and encouraged by the Emmaus programme. We are seeing the first fruits of people coming to faith through the Emmaus programme in our church and we know it will serve us well for years to come."

Blackhorse Road Baptist Church

"We have found the new Emmaus initiative highly relevant. Church members recognise the need and are excited about it and it is flexible in the use of its material."

Cheddar Valley Community Church Leadership Team

“Working with Andy and the SJI team on the Emmaus project is having a wonderful impact in our church: We are becoming more confident in sharing Jesus, more naturally and with greater ease. Every week we are hearing stories of how the Holy Spirit has prompted people to share Jesus with others, and the fruit of this is so encouraging. We deeply appreciate how they are encouraging and guiding us in our journey to being more intentional and effective in reaching out to our communities and making disciples.”

Community Church Tadley

ANDY FROST

Andy Frost is Director of Share Jesus International. At the heart of all that he does, he wants to help people follow Jesus. He presently heads up the London Mission Collective; works with Care for the Family on the Kitchen Table Project and Gather on church unity and mission. He is married to Jo and has two daughters.



PRAYER FOCUS

THE SJI EMMAUS PROJECT: The work of SJI, and the vision to help local churches engage in evangelism; continued inspiration, wisdom and discernment going forward; the necessary resources to continue the work; for a recognition across the Connexion of the need for this kind of initiative and hunger to reach out into local communities. (Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 6:18).

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH: Children and young people: For youth and children’s workers across the nation as they seek to teach children of God’s love; for pure Biblical teaching; protection from erroneous ideologies and philosophies; for all who go into schools to bring the Christian message of hope. (Matthew 19:14; Mark 9:42).

Cliff College: For Rev. Ashley Cooper having stepped down as Principal and for Rev. Andrew Stobart as he takes up the role; uptake of students for the new academic year; continuity for both staff and students in a new ‘phase’ of the college; suitable placements for students to reach out to communities. (James 1: 22-25; Mark 16:15-18).

Prayer Focus is compiled by Roz Addington. If you would like to contact Roz feel free to email: prayer@metrevive.uk

FOCUS ON NATIONAL ISSUES: Violence and Knife Crime: For our young people who are involved in gang culture and all it entails; for Christian youth workers to reach out to these lost youngsters with a better pathway; that they will find their hope in Jesus and find purpose in their lives; a realisation of the fruitlessness of violence; breaking up of county lines; the police as they attempt to combat the violence across our land. (Psalm 145:17-20; Psalm 107:13-16).

Economy: The continuing economic crisis; the Budget; councils under pressure to meet the financial demands placed upon them; local authorities to seek the wisdom of God in the financial pressures the country faces. (Luke 12:15; Matthew 6:33).

FOCUS ON WORLD ISSUES: Ukraine/Russia: For President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the volatile situation he faces; for Ukraine to receive the necessary resources they need; for God to intervene in the war, bringing about a fair peace deal acceptable to Ukraine. For Ukrainian Christians in Russian occupied territory who are being persecuted. For President Vladimir Putin to change his heart or be removed from power; for the Russian people to hear the truth about the war rather than lies; for Christians in Russia to have wisdom and discernment on how to act in the repressive Regime under which they live and for protection. (Proverbs 3:7; Psalm 145:18)



EYES WIDE OPEN

Andy Frost, Director of SJI reflects on the EKKLESIA (a two-day conference for church leaders which explores the raw and the real of church life. It’s a space to unpack some of the thinking and the practical ideas that help bring about Kingdom change).

In March we hosted our SJI 2025 Ekklesia conference. And the theme seemed particularly significant.

We can so often have our head down, getting on with our to-do-list and miss the bigger thing that God is doing. The brilliant contributors from a variety of church streams helped us explore how we ...

- Grow with our eyes wide open, aware of both our authority and our vulnerability, allowing God to change some of our mindsets as we learn from the church in the majority world, inviting the emerging generation into a life of generosity.
- Pray with our eyes wide open – a deep challenge to be people of prayer, not hiding our poverty of spirit behind our gifting, but really modelling prayerful lives.
- Dream with our eyes wide open. There is a new openness to God. How are we open to those looking for answers? How do we help people discover the values that we celebrate are actually found in God’s big story? And how do we dream for our communities, exploring business models that bring transformation and building truly intergenerational churches?
- Lead with our eyes wide open. A challenging word from Acts 9 as Paul is blinded so he can see. May we daily look to see the world as God sees it!

It definitely feels like a new season is opening up for the church in this nation.

Keep an eye on SJI’s YouTube channel for videos of this year’s EKKLESIA sessions: www.youtube.com/@SJInews



Doing Development Differently

PETER BLANCHE

Picture left:

‘Seeing the excavator at work was a turning point for us. It wasn’t just about removing the sediments; it was about restoring our hope and confidence. We knew that with the river dredged, we would be better protected from future floods’.

Peter Blanche, All We Can’s Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Risk Reduction and Grants Manager, explains how the work of All We Can responds, with its partners, to the changing and challenging situations in local communities around the world.

Methodism, rooted in social justice with a focus on the local community, is at the heart of the way All We Can works with partners. We’re called to practice faith through love and support for those in need – and helping communities build lasting, impactful change is how we play our part in seeing a more just world.

The development sector has, for a long time, been a mixed blessing for communities in the eyeline of large NGO’s (non-government organisations) looking to see positive changes from thousands of miles away. While the success of some discrete projects may not be in doubt, an insistence on quick fixes and immediate results has helped entrench a colonial dynamic which has stymied innovation and disempowered communities. It’s not enough to keep doing the same thing and hoping for a different result.

This is where the work of All We Can and our country partners becomes increasingly relevant. We know that the problems in need of solutions cannot be understood fully by someone who is not experiencing them. And those challenges, without that fundamental comprehension of context, cannot be overcome with

imported solutions. Our job is to support our partners who do incredible work; we have a focus on helping them establish self-reliance and sustainability, so that the need for external financial assistance is eventually phased out.

Community-led and community-owned transformation has been perhaps best evidenced in our most recent work in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). This is a key aspect of our partnership approach and commitment: to support our long-term development partners and communities to adapt to the shifting environments they face. Climate change disproportionately affects our priority countries, and so planning for disaster management is a crucial part of ensuring that the development gains of our partners is not lost. An example of this is the Malawi DRR programme.

In 2023, tropical cyclone ‘Freddy’ impacted the southern part of Malawi. The Lower Shire Basin was affected by extensive and enduring flooding. The Malawian government, declared a state of disaster in the Southern Region’s 16 local authorities, including where our partners operate.

We initially responded to the impact of tropical cyclone Freddy by raising a public emergency appeal and, where possible, supported partners to repurpose their development grant. Due to the frequency of these hazards and disasters in Malawi, All We Can hosted a ‘participatory vulnerability and capacity’ training workshop with our local partners which familiarised partners with participatory methodologies and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches to development. Our local partners then supported communities to take a leading role in identifying and prioritising appropriate DRR activities to address vulnerabilities to natural hazards. Some examples of community-prioritised DRR activities included bamboo nurseries, procurement of early-maturing varieties of crops for rainfed agriculture, strengthening riverbanks and early warning system materials, establishing community woodlots, river dredging and village-level action plans.

Our duty to tackle injustice does not stop at our work to address the imbalance of power and wealth in the long-term. As well as supporting local partner organisations to achieve sustainable development, we have a mandate too: to meet immediate humanitarian need where it arises.

That is why we launched a Ukraine appeal following the full-on Russian invasion just over three years ago, where donations from our generous donors funded



holistic support for people there. We were able to offer financial support for winterisation kits to cope with the freezing winters of Eastern Europe, through to the provision of 'summer camps' for Ukrainian refugee children. We could fund immediate relief items, as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), child safe spaces (CSS) through to support for the elderly, and supported integration into new countries and communities. We worked with one partner supporting Ukrainian refugees in Poland with access to multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA). MPCA provides a more dignified approach to humanitarian assistance; people can choose how the money is utilised. This was the first time All We Can had supported such a programme, and we continue to support partners' delivery of flexible programmes.

More recently, in November of last year, we launched a joint appeal with the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church to meet the humanitarian need resulting from the crisis in Gaza and Lebanon. We have been raising money for partners working on the front line of this humanitarian disaster. Working with three organisations in the region, activities funded by the appeal include the provision of rehabilitation support for injured children, providing daily hot meals to families in the most severely affected areas, as well as an indoor play space to support the psychological wellbeing of children with disabilities.

As the world keeps changing around us, so must we be adaptable to meet what we've set out to do – that is, doing all the good we can, by any means we can and in all the places we can.

Our organisation has undergone a lot of changes recently including welcoming David Thomson as our new CEO who started in the autumn. And as we move into the next strategy phase as an organisation, we're doing a lot of soul-searching to reaffirm who we are and what mark we want to make on the world.

We need to be flexible while remaining true to the change we want to see in the world. We hope – and strive – to make a difference with the communities where our partners work with impactful, locally-led approaches, and remain true to Wesley's challenge for us.

PETER BLANCHE

Peter Blanche has been working at All We Can as the Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Risk Reduction and Grants Manager since 2018. His role involves supporting community-led transformation using a Disaster Risk Reduction (risk-informed) approach to local development, coordinating All We Can's response to international emergencies, and maintaining oversight of its Grants Portfolio.



All Praise to our Redeeming Lord

CHARLES WESLEY



All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesus's name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet!

Reflections from Utila

CHRIS HAINES

Chris Haines shares reflections of the time that he and his wife Linda spent serving as a Mission Partners in Utila (an island in the bay of Honduras, Central America).



In 2024, the number of Mission Partners serving the British Methodist Church overseas since Methodism began was drastically reduced. Linda and I opted to return from September 2024, after two years serving the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) on Utila, off Honduras in Central America. Our calling to serve as Mission Partners (Ordained MP and Accompanying Volunteer) came through prophecies received during a sabbatical in Brazil and visiting Methodist Churches there. After due process and training at Cliff College, we were stationed to Utila, and left with our luggage (which arrived a week later) and 12 boxes of freight (two months later).

On arrival, while the Mission House was prepared, we stayed in a hotel, acclimatizing to the heat (mostly 30-35 degrees centigrade), local wildlife (house lizards, cockroaches, scorpions, and mosquitoes, with sandflies, beautiful birds and endemic iguanas outside), friendly people and cultural differences. When we moved in, we also experienced life on Main Street, with its busy traffic (Utila is virtually car-free but has many golf carts, motorcycles, jumbos (motorcycles with trailers) and some commercial vehicles) and loud discos (four within 100 metres) - not conducive to sleep or sermon preparation!

We worked alongside a local minister in Utila's largest church: (membership around 100, congregation around 60, afternoon Sunday School with 127 members and 150-200 on special Sundays) and a Methodist school with around 180 students aged 4-17. They held assemblies in church at 7am every Monday, and everyone had one Bible class a week, which I coordinated and church volunteers



(including us) taught, prepared and marked termly exams. Our time was spent bringing the gospel to all church groups of all ages, through preaching and teaching in church and school.

The other circuit churches comprised a small church on the Cays (coastal islets, accessible in most weathers by a beautiful coastal boat trip), and three active ones on the mainland: La Ceiba, the ferry terminus (forty members), El Pino (twelve members, 45 minutes away by taxi), and Puerto Cortes (twenty members, seven-plus hours away). With no minister on the north coast and a non-resident Superintendent, my duties included coordinating the circuit plan, ensuring monthly communions and training local preachers. The latter was hampered by shortages of theological books, electricity - making online ministry challenging (!) and lack of accredited mentors, along with high travel and accommodation costs.

Every church had English services except El Pino, whose were in Spanish. My Spanish was worse than I'd thought initially, but improved with regular use, especially at school. The school was bi-lingual, with half its lessons in English, but the Principal, half the staff and an increasing proportion of students, only spoke Spanish! Linda's Spanish went from almost nil to getting by, and she's still learning.

The people were amazing. One family took us in for special events, (islanders value their British heritage and language) including Christmas and Thanksgiving - and occasional random hospitality with an invitation that might be along the lines of: 'We've got pigtail bando for lunch, come round for 12'. The sassy Women's Fellowship loved Linda, and took her for a farewell mini-break on the mainland. 'Teen Tuesday' had a great bunch of teenagers, who regularly took services



on Utila and the Cays, as did the Men's and Women's Fellowships.

The island is beautiful - we particularly enjoyed swimming and snorkelling in the Caribbean and the wonderful wildlife. Linda became accustomed to regular trips to the small shops after the twice-weekly food boat had arrived, and water arrived twice weekly into storage tanks.

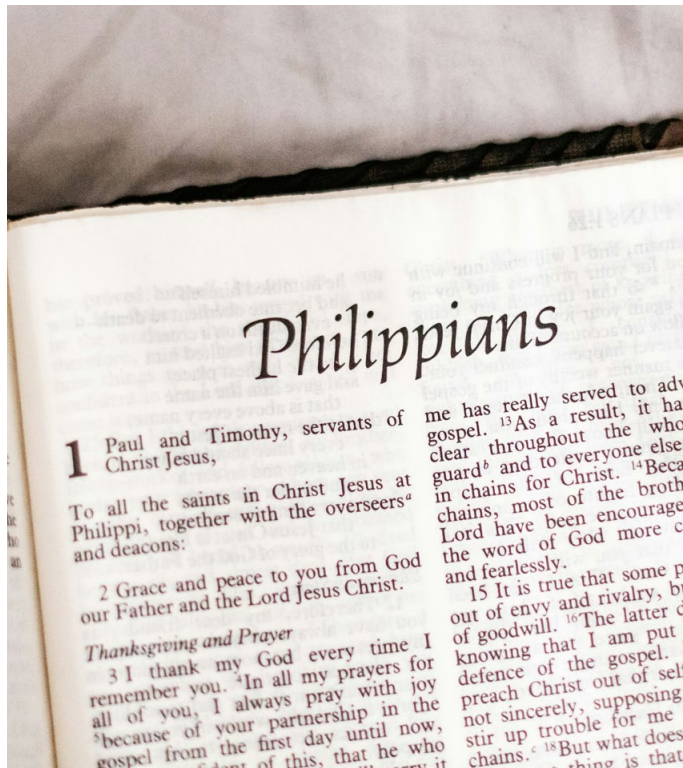
Meetings were challenging. Circuit meetings (usually on the mainland) lasted three days; District meetings in Belize lasted a week! The climate ensured prayer meetings were at 6am on Saturdays (before it got too hot or noisy). When it rained hard, meetings were cancelled and the mission house acquired a temporary moat! Due to the heat, funerals occurred within 24 hours, and the burial occurred during the service while we sang hymns and read scriptures.

Though the heat, noise and power cuts were irritating, it was such a privilege to be able to serve as Mission Partners - partnering in the gospel - alongside such wonderful people in such a remarkable part of the world.

REV CHRIS HAINES

Rev Chris Haines is a Methodist minister and his wife Linda is a Local Preacher. They have served in south Devon, Greater Manchester and Honduras (as Mission Partners), before moving to London last September.





Bible Study

Partnership in the Gospel Philippians 1:1-6

IAN BUCHANAN

INTRODUCTION

Here is an African proverb that might shed some light on what Paul is calling the Philippians to keep pursuing: 'If a cat dreams of becoming a lion it must lose its appetite for rats'.

For us, it means that to become what God is calling us to be – that is, ambassadors for King Jesus on the front line of in his project of reconciliation with a rebellious world – we will have to keep dropping dark habits from our sin-damaged past. Imitating the Lion of Judah is our calling. Let's see how Paul reminds the Philippians of that very point in the powerful opening lines of this little letter.

Paul uses his opening greeting to introduce the reader to three themes that he will play out in the rest of this magnificent epistle. They are: let's model true humility; keep spreading the gospel; and then his

own desire: to see them constantly growing in Christlikeness (maturity and sanctification).

HOW DOES PAUL DO THIS?

1. Greeting: Verses 1-2

Paul is well-known for taking the standard first century introduction to a letter (name of the sender, recipients and a brief greeting or acknowledgement) and adding some beautiful spices to our expectation of a 'simple palate cleansing hors d'oeuvre'.

We may start our emails with the necessary 'Hi Ian' or 'Dear Sally' followed by a very British comment about the weather before getting to the 'what-this-email-is-really-all-about' section. Not Paul. For him the opening lines to his letters must be packed with theologically juicy bits that he wants the readers to experience in their first bite. They are foretastes of what is in the main meal.

Modelling humility: As is typical of Paul, he expands the usual opening lines of his letter by describing himself, and his right hand man (Timothy), as 'servants of Christ Jesus'. The word he uses in the Greek is probably better translated as 'slaves'. That is a word that is linked to humility and submission.

But we must be careful. We must not link that word to that barbaric trans-Atlantic nineteenth century form of slavery. A vile trade that was aggravated by the poison of racial humiliation. The Philippians did not make that connection.

Slaves in Paul's day were not free but they could still rise in the social ranks of the Roman Empire. They had a chance to take on jobs of great importance and of incredible trust from their owners. Paul had that first century picture in mind. Christ treats us with remarkable grace and trains us for valuable ambassadorial

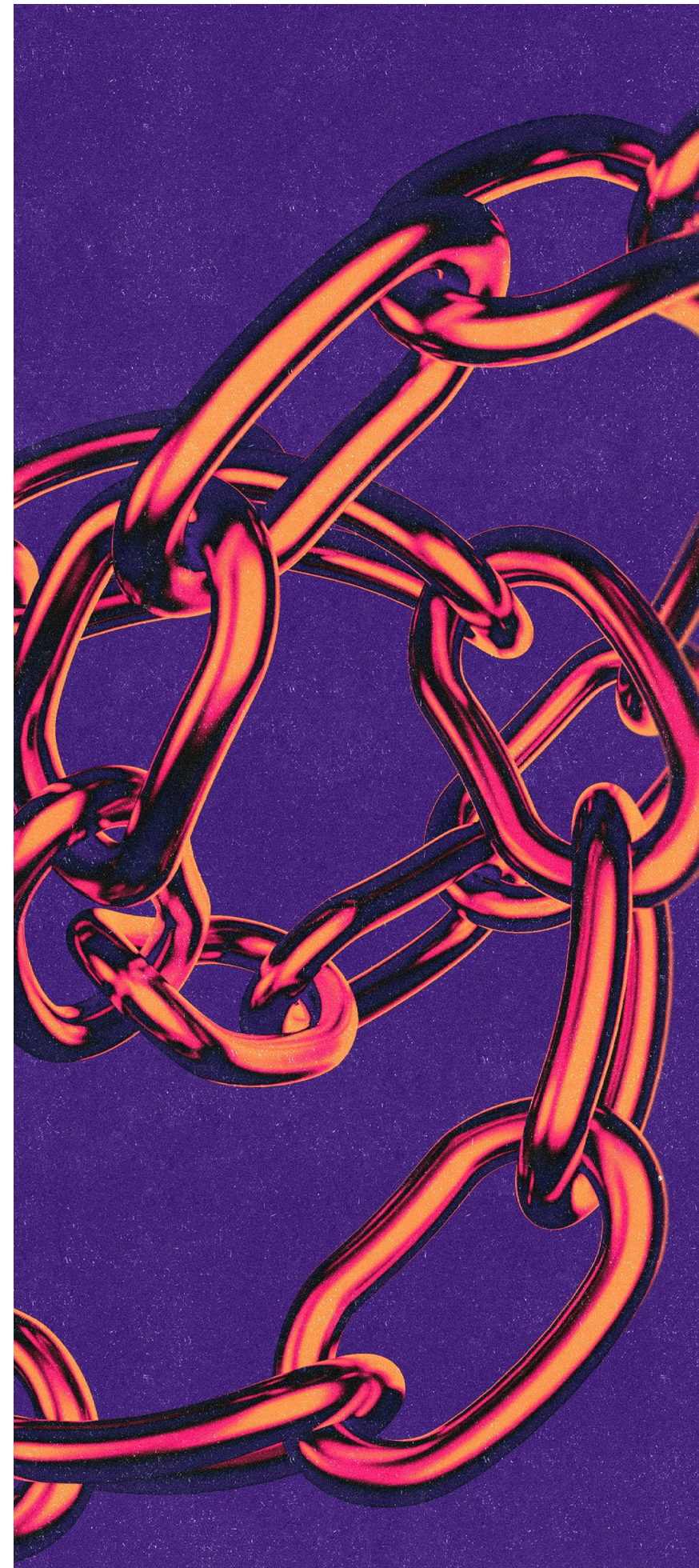
work on the front line of his mission into the UK.

But, like us, they would have understood that slaves always have a master who could define their agenda for daily living. Sin is a vicious slave owner far worse than those who existed in the nineteenth century. Thanks to Paul's letter to the Romans, in chapter 6, we know that it was once our addiction to sin that directed our paths. Thankfully, it is now our Lord's expectation of us, on the front line of his grand project of reconciliation, that directs our daily choices – a position of incredible trust and opportunity.

After reminding them of their lowly place, Paul goes on to surprise us by elevating the congregation in Philippi. He calls them 'all the saints in Christ Jesus'. Paul sees them as a community of servants woven closely together for Royal usage. The Western concept of the lone Christian with their 'churchless faith' (me in Starbucks by myself, reading the Bible on my phone with a gospel song coming through my hidden Bluetooth earbuds) has no place in Paul's vision.

We are a community 'set-aside together' to fulfil God's great passion – his mission into this world. We are his 'chosen for mission people'. And then, to our astonishment, he calls us 'saints'. A holy priesthood set-aside for the fulfilment of the Master's grand plan. Of course, that word has an ethical dimension to it (growing in Christlikeness) but, much like the vessels in the Temple, we are 'set apart' (holy) for an honourable purpose: ambassadors designed to reflect him into this world.

In verse 2 Paul goes on to use two words typical of his Greek and Jewish background – 'grace and peace'. We know from 2 Corinthians



8:9 that Paul defines 'grace' as a way of describing our Lord's incredible choice: '...though he was rich yet for our sake he became poor'. Such humility brought about the end of the hostility that our sin had created between God and his creation. And, of course, that humble act introduced us to the 'peace' that now enters into our relationship with our Lord and Master.

Why has Paul packed so much into such a small opening line? Well, later he'll call them to imitate our Lord's humility in 2:1-11. You'll notice that Paul doesn't do his usual 'an apostle of Christ Jesus' bit when introducing himself. No, he drops titles and gets down with them into the hard and humbling work of service to the King. Service that imitates our humble Lord. Service that furthers his mission of reconciliation with his rebellious creation.

2. A prayer of thanks for their partnership in the Gospel: Verses 3-6

Spread of the Gospel: Once again it was common in ancient times for Christians and pagans to drop a little prayer into their opening lines as a reference to what they had been praying for concerning the recipient. But this time Paul uses the culturally expected prayer and adds so much more to it.

He tells them that he thanks God for them and the reasons why. And, once again, he drops in a foretaste of what he will tell them about later in the letter. He prays for them 'with joy'. He will use that statement as a springboard to numerous others references to joy in this letter, the most famous of which may be, 'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).

Why is he so joyful? His joy is not because of his circumstances but because of two magnificent results

of God's work coming to light in the church in Philippi.

Firstly, Paul can see that the mission of God (the spread of the gospel) is taking hold in the lives of the Philippians. How? Well, not just the obvious 'it is changing you', but they are also becoming a springboard for the gospel into the lives of others.

That is a true 'partnership in the Gospel'. A partnership that is having a multiplying effect because Christlikeness benefits you and those around you.

That partnership was so much more than only praying for Paul, as important as such communication is. It also took the form of tangible support. Again, a foretaste of what is to come in Philippians 4:10-15. When Paul was low and no one supported him, the Philippians stepped in. And they had been with him 'from the first day until now'. That is a truly committed partnership.

Grow in Christlikeness: Secondly, he knows that what God had begun in them will be brought to 'completion at the day of Jesus Christ'. The Lord who started that work in them will also be the One who brings it to completion. To the words of 'joy and thankfulness', I'd probably add 'relief'. What a relief (and joy) to know that salvation is not dependent on the recipient but on the Lord who is at work in us until the 'job is done'.

The progress of the work of transforming us (growing in Christlikeness) will reach its completion when our Lord appears, once again. The work is his, and our work on the frontline of his mission, is simply evidence (to us and to others) of our genuine belief and commitment to his grand project, for which he alone will receive all

the glory. Evidence that we are the 'chosen for mission people'.

Once again Paul is dropping very loud hints of what he will say later in this letter. Whether Paul is pointing to 1:28 and their commitment to 'keep on keeping on' in the face of persecution; or his admonition in Philippians 2:12-13 to keep on 'working out your salvation with fear and trembling'; or Paul's own confession in 3:12 that 'I have not already obtained all this, nor have I already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me', we hear him reminding us of that high call to grow in Christlikeness. As is fitting for an ambassador of Christ Jesus whose life is a 'free sample of Jesus' to all who want to 'taste and see' what our God is like.

Well, this cat is still dreaming of becoming a lion, a lion who reflects the Lion of Judah. So, once again, it's time for me to 'put to death the deeds of the flesh' or, as that African proverb puts it, to keep suppressing that vile appetite for rats.

IAN BUCHANAN

Ian Buchanan, CEO of LWPT (The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust). Ian studied for a BSc in Engineering Metallurgy and then a MTh for church ministry. Ian found his niche in Christian charities who need to combine business acumen with theological insight.



The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust



Ian Buchanan, CEO of LWPT outlines the role of LWPT

LWPT (The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust)

was started by Methodists in order to support those ministering in UK churches for the benefit of God's mission into this world. In the early 21st century we were asked to take our Methodist passion (investing in every-member ministry) and make it a reality through lay and clerical Christians in the UK, but this time to all denominations. In 2005 that dream became a reality.

Why is that Methodist passion so important? At LWPT, we believe that the Methodist commitment to every-member ministry must spread to all denominations in the 21st century. For most denominations and many churches, the luxury of just having a few paid ministers is no longer an option. They need to give their congregations the confidence they need to minister effectively on the front line of ministry. In other words, the 21st century is our Kairos time, the ideal time.

Is there a defining core to the ministry of LWPT that shapes all we do? The incredible value of God's word, intended for all people on the front line of his mission into the UK, drives us. This incredible treasure needs to be communicated well through people who love the Author and understand how well it shapes all of life.

What is the big picture that shapes LWPT? Much like all of God's people, we believe that we exist for the same reason that God's ambassadors and his church exist ... for the furtherance of God's mission into this world.

We want to give the church in the UK the tools and confidence to be able to communicate well, knowing that they are well-resourced and well-trained for all that God calls us to do.

LWPT supports the churches in the UK through three distinct ministries:

Better Bible-based communication training.

Whether your ministry is leading the church in worship, preaching from a pulpit, leading a house group, teaching the Bible or simply using God's word in counselling or evangelism, LWPT wants to help you to communicate well. We offer online webinars and workshops FREE to all. See our YouTube gallery at youtube.com/@PreachMagazine/videos

Better Bible-based resources for individuals and churches.

We produce items that churches will find useful for their daily ministry. If you are interested in being better prepared for your local church-based ministry, LWPT wants to help. Take a look and subscribe or purchase at: lwpt.org.uk

- 1. Better access to tuition grants for further Bible-based studies.** We offer tuition grants (up to £2,000 for tuition and £500 for books/resources) to people who wish to study further. We offer grants to people who are studying certificates, diplomas and undergraduate degrees in UK learning institutions. However, in keeping with our Methodist concern, we also have restricted funds set-aside for Methodist applicants only. If you want to invest more in your church-based ministry through further formal studies, please consider applying at: lwpt.org.uk/vocational-grants

Our Pessimism and His Power: Remember to Forget, but Never Forget to Remember!

DAVID HULL

MET:Revive's new Ambassador, David Hull, updates us on his work and reflects on why it is essential to remember the Lord's mighty acts in our revival heritage whilst forgetting our human weaknesses and failings.

It is a great delight to have begun the new role of MET:Revive Ambassador, with its focus of 'on the ground' ministry around the Connexion. In my travels to Methodist churches across the UK, I've been struck by our deep spiritual thirst. I long for us to 'redig the wells' (Genesis 26:18), rediscovering what the Lord has done in the past as we look to what he might do in our future.

I'm sometimes met with a warning when I speak of looking back to the great revivals of the past. Some point me to Isaiah 43:18-19: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!' It leaves me deeply concerned that we might have misunderstood Isaiah's message and be missing the profound hope he offers to Christians desperately longing for renewal in our own day.

No one is suggesting, of course, that revival will look exactly like John Wesley on horseback preaching to miners in fields! What I do believe, however, is that the pattern of the Lord's saving work remains consistent throughout history. Understanding this pattern is crucial for our churches today.

OLDER THAN TIME ITSELF, YET FOREVER NEW

To understand what Isaiah really meant by 'forgetting the former things,' we need to read these verses in their wider context, including the verses immediately preceding and following:

'This is what the Lord says – he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'

Isaiah 43:16-19

Though many interpret this as a call to forget God's past great acts in order to embrace something new, it seems to me that this misses the true message of the text. Far from calling them to forget his mighty deeds, the Lord begins by reminding his people of what he has done – pointing back to the Exodus (vv. 16-17). THIS God, who did THAT, is now speaking to THEM.

So, what are the 'former things' they are to forget? Having reminded them of the Exodus, would the Lord then contradict himself? Of course not!

The exiles in Babylon were a despondent people. Every drop of hope had been drained through their years as prisoners of war. These former things – idolatrous disobedience, military defeat, forced marches, and years of slave labour far from home – were what haunted them daily. Surely these were 'the former things' the Lord was calling them to forget.

Notice the deliberate parallel: 'he who made a way through the sea' (v. 16) and 'I am making a way in the wilderness' (v. 19). The Lord isn't telling them to forget how he saved them before because he's now going to do something completely different. Rather, he calls them to remember how he saved his people previously because he will save them according to the same pattern again.

This 'new thing' is the Lord's calling card – his way of acting to save his people that is as old as time itself, yet forever new. The same God who made a way through the sea now promises to make a way through the wilderness. His methods carry his unmistakable signature across the ages, for his old ways are forever new. The exiles needed to forget their pessimism and remember his power. We face the same challenge today.

THE OLD, OLD STORY NEW TODAY

In my recent travels across our Connexion, I've noticed three consistent themes in our Methodist churches, into which Isaiah's message speaks powerful hope today:

1. A Spiritual Thirst for Renewal

Throughout many of our churches, there's a great spiritual thirst and openness to the Holy Spirit. Many of us are asking, 'How do we move from maintenance to mission? From surviving to thriving?' I'm convinced that the answer begins with the same pattern Isaiah taught: forgetting our pessimism and remembering the Lord's power.

The same God who poured out his Spirit in the Evangelical Revival 300 years ago remains unchanging in his character and power today. Wesley didn't see the revival of his day as unprecedented, but as a fresh outpouring of the same Spirit who had moved in apostolic times. He studied church history to discern God's patterns of work – remembering in order to recognise the 'new thing'.

2. A Sense of Being Stuck in Mission

Many churches express frustration about evangelism: 'How do we get people to take the next step from regularly attending our coffee morning or toddler group to exploring the Good News of Jesus?'

The Lord's pattern of the 'new thing' reminds us that effective evangelism isn't about novel techniques but about rediscovering timeless truths. Wesley observed in his sermon 'The General Spread of the Gospel' that the gospel typically spreads from heart to heart and home to home – fascinating words to have written in the white-hot days of revival! He reminds us that transformation often happens through growing relationships and deepening conversations.

I've seen this begin to work beautifully in practice. Bathampton Methodist Church – the church in which I grew up – has a thriving Sunday brunch all-age service for young families. Seeking a next step, they started a regular afternoon service a fortnight later. In their large worship area, children and parents explore the same Bible passage separately, with activities for children whilst adults read and discuss Scripture together. Some very new to the Bible are discovering uniquely powerful, life-shaping wisdom they had never encountered before – one step at a time.

People are often more ready to take the next step than we are to invite them. When we combine intentional prayer for those in our community with intentional conversations that offer clear next steps, we're walking the ancient path of God's 'new thing.' Just as the exiles needed to forget their pessimism and remember the Lord's power, we too need to set aside any discouragement about evangelism and remember how the Spirit has always worked through ordinary believers sharing extraordinary truth, as they depend prayerfully on the Lord.

3. Administrative Overwhelm

There's a widespread sense of being overwhelmed by denominational and legal administration. Leaders ask, 'How do we do what needs to be done whilst not taking our eyes off the Great Commission?'

Though the burdens are real and the weight can be heavy indeed, the Lord's command to 'forget the former things' of despair and hopelessness while remembering his mighty acts offers a powerful reorientation. Like the exiles in Babylon, we are called to seek the peace and prosperity of the places in which the Lord has set us (Jeremiah 29:7) whilst singing the Lord's song for all to hear in powerful testimony of our living hope (Psalm 137:4-6).

We need practical solutions alongside spiritual reorientation. This may include advocating for the simplification of what's asked of local churches and their ministers by connexional officers, while also



praying specifically for the Lord to raise up people with administrative gifts in the local context to help carry these burdens. The early apostles recognised this need when they appointed others to administrative tasks so they could devote themselves to 'prayer and the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4).

Just as the exiles needed to forget their pessimism and remember the Lord's power, we must reject the despair that can come when administrative demands threaten to overwhelm our primary calling. We are called to remember that the same Lord who organised a wandering group of former slaves into a nation, who established order in the early church despite the growing pains, is still at work today.

NEW EVERY MORNING

I define revival as the rediscovery of authentic Christianity, accompanied by an extraordinary move of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the accelerated transformation of individuals in holiness, the church in evangelism, and society as lives are changed. The extraordinary moves of the Holy Spirit throughout church history – from Pentecost to the Evangelical Revival, from revivals in Wales & the Hebrides, to East Africa and beyond – all seem to follow this pattern of the 'new thing.'

The same Lord who made a way for them will make a way for us, all to his glory. Whether or not we see widespread revival in our lifetime is in the Lord's hands. The wonder of the gospel is that the Lord's 'new thing' is both dramatic and daily. The same God who moved in sweeping revivals also renews us day by day. In the darkest days of Jerusalem's fall into exile, Jeremiah penned words of profound hope: 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22-23).

As we look ahead to the 300th anniversary of the Evangelical Revival, let this be a call to prioritising prayer and deepening discipleship. Let's look to the Lord to do his 'new thing' again in our day – making a way where there seems to be no way, bringing streams of living water to our spiritual wasteland – forgetting our pessimism and remembering his power.

HELP TO HOST THE 'REMEMBER TO FORGET' AUTUMN TOUR!

I am so looking forward to visiting churches across the Connexion again this Autumn. Can you help to host MET:Revive's Autumn Tour? We are dependent upon a network of local hosts who can help to arrange:

- A local venue
- Worship leaders/musicians
- Invitations and publicity to neighboring churches and circuits to make this a regional gathering
- Help from local churches with travel and accommodation costs where possible

Each mid-week visit includes:

- 'Moving in Mission' Afternoon Leadership Workshop - practical sessions for leaders and available church members
- 'Remember to Forget' Evening Celebration - with worship, preaching, and prayerful response
- Resources - materials for ongoing fellowship and prayer

How to help:

Could you offer to be a local host, helping to coordinate these arrangements? - It is no different from organising any other service or special event in your church or circuit! Alternatively, could you speak with your minister about hosting us and put us in touch?

To explore hosting a visit where you are as part of the 'Remember to Forget' tour, please contact my PA, Janet Walker: janet.walker@metrevive.uk / 07799 068 539 and we will be glad to begin to make plans. For more information, go to metrevive.uk/RTF

FOREVER NEW

I do hope I will be able to see you at a local MET:Revive event in the Autumn. Until then, may we all have eyes to see the 'new thing' springing up, hearts prepared to receive it, and voices ready to proclaim it to a world in desperate need of the God whose old ways are forever new.

REV DR DAVID HULL

Rev Dr David Hull, Lead Pastor of Freedom Church Bristol, serves as MET:Revive's Ambassador and Chair of the Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals (AWE). His ministry with MET:Revive focuses on teaching, preaching, and encouraging evangelical Methodists across the Connexion.



Partnering Together on the Isle of Wight

BRIAN HARLEY

Brian Harley shares about the growing partnering initiatives with Christians across the island

I spent the first 30 years of my life in and around London and found myself going here, there and everywhere for Christian activities. Having now been on the Isle of Wight for over 30 years, I am very aware what a difference that stretch of water makes! You really know who you should be partnering with, as it is not practical to travel further afield on a regular basis even to Portsmouth or Southampton, although some do for work.

The island is home to over 140,000 people and is served by well over 100 churches of all different flavours. It is a highly tourist-dependent economy, so we have the added joy of welcoming many visitors to the island and to our worship services. I find this a source of great encouragement and some folks keep in touch online. It has generally stayed as quite a 'white' community, but things have been changing over recent times, and some congregations are now becoming more diverse.

I moved here in the mid 90's and soon made a connection with others in the immediate area and with like-minded folk across the island through Evangelical Alliance links and local Keswick Bible gatherings. In 2001 a group of us invited Walk of 1000 Men for a week of outreach which got groups working together in

various towns. Where I live in Shanklin, this awakened a fresh sense of unity and shared activity. Rob Whillier from the Community Church in Cowes had also begun to create a website and e-news service bringing together information about all the churches and events on the island.

Things developed further with the HOPE 08 initiative, when mission events and acts of kindness took place in a number of locations around the island. We organised one big celebration on Pentecost weekend with thousands gathering at Newport football ground with music and worship and displays by around 80 organisations and local ministries. The team that put this together then decided to get behind Rob's vision and we morphed into the Wight Church Network team. This is an informal group made up of around 15 people from various church backgrounds and from different parts of the Island. This has actually involved five Methodists, including Marian Izzard.

Over the years, we have organised various events and prayer initiatives, one regular feature being an All-Island Worship Gathering at the start of each year where we often invite a speaker to bring some inspiration and encouragement to the island Christian community. This January, we welcomed Patrick Regan (co-founder of Kintsugi Hope) to speak on mental health issues and well over 300 gathered to worship together and to hear his heartfelt and challenging message. We were led in song by a talented band of young people drawn together from various churches, which was very special. Nearly 40 leaders came together the next morning to hear Patrick's thoughts about wellbeing for those in leadership.

“

...bring some inspiration and encouragement to the island Christian community.

”



Visiting speakers in previous years have included: Gavin Calver (Evangelical Alliance), Roy Crowne, (Hope Together), Andy Frost (Share Jesus International), Pete Greig (24-7 Prayer), Malcolm Duncan (Kensington Temple) and Rachel Jordan-Wolf (Hope Together).

There have been several leaders' breakfasts over the last couple of years – meeting on a Saturday morning in a church on the island. Some of us meet in more local networks but it is good to bring people together from across the whole Island – it is only 25 miles across. I feel it ought to be possible to know every Christian minister here, but this never quite happens with all the comings and goings!

We have done a number of things to bring people together over the years, such as putting on several

musicals with Roger Jones and team from Christian Music Ministries with a local united choir. We are about to welcome LICC again to run an evening on whole life discipleship and to share with leaders over another breakfast – we know the way to pastors' hearts!

Prayer gatherings have been a significant focus, and we are delighted to have recently appointed a recently retired couple, Revs Richard and Rajinda Buxton, as Prayer Mobilizers. They spearheaded a fabulous, united prayer initiative on the afternoon of Pentecost Sunday last year, called 'Free the Wight' with over 40 groups meeting around the coast and on high places at the same time to pray for the island. Free the Wight involved an hour of guided prayer where each group followed the same 12 topics in five-minute slots so that we prayed simultaneously with one voice. This was a

cause of great encouragement and blessing to many, and we trust that it has helped change the spiritual atmosphere on the island. Plans are afoot to do something similar this year.

We learned to pray on Zoom over the lockdown period and have just completed a 24-hour online prayer time made up of 48 half hour slots led by a range of people from across the churches. This was a brilliant thing to do in the winter period when people are less inclined to go out, and we had powerful times of prayer for many different aspects of island life and Christian ministry. I'm sure we'll be doing it again.

It has been great to serve together over the years and partner in the work of the gospel, as we seek to advance the Kingdom of God in this little breakaway corner of England's green and pleasant land. We don't have any desire to control what goes on here; we are simply here to serve and help facilitate shared activity, prayer and mission. There are plenty of good joint initiatives that we are not responsible for because things have naturally evolved as needs have been recognised. These include some long-term projects like Street and School Pastors, IOW Foodbank, IOW Youth for Christ, and more recently a local CAP Debt Centre, 24-hour events such as One Body Worship and a Creation Matters group (which seeks to encourage and inspire creation care on and around the island).

We pray that the coming years will see even greater cooperation among local Christians and that this growing sense of unity will lead to further blessing from the Lord, as Psalm 133:1 indicates: 'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!'

REV BRIAN HARLEY



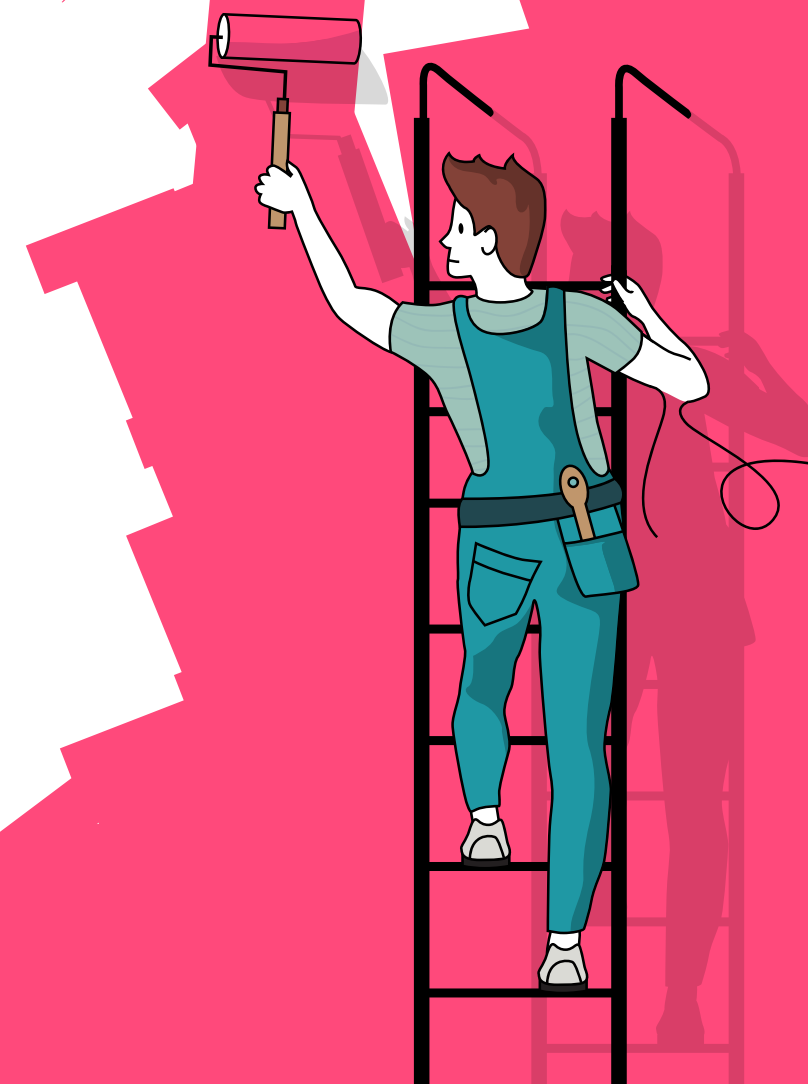
Rev Brian Harley is a United Reformed Church Minister and former Chair of GEAR, the URC's Group for Evangelism and Renewal. He serves as Chair of Wight Church Network Team, wightchurch.net



Partnering with Church and Community

NICOLA BRIGGS

Nicola Briggs shares the exciting vision of the Link Project in Ashbourne, Derbyshire



One of the exciting things in the Methodist stationing process is reading all the profiles of the circuits that are looking for new ministers. It can be interesting trying to guess what some of the statements actually mean. In November 2021, as I was praying through which of the profiles might be on my 'gold star' list as a Methodist minister 'on the move', I was intrigued by the following:

Ashbourne has a Mission Action Plan – A Plan for Growth, 2019-2024. Their leadership team monitors progress of the plan, the development of which is connected to the aspirational 'Link Project' which aims to develop the premises to create a 7-days-a-week Church and Community Hub. Flexible church seating layouts will offer the largest public venue in the town. Permission for the scheme has now been received. Fund raising continues. The Link Project is a key community project in Ashbourne Town Team's proposal for Derbyshire Dales District Council's bid for Levelling Up funding.

This all sounded very exciting: a church willing to partner with others in the community to respond to the needs and opportunities that presented themselves. One question, was this really the case? On visiting the appointment, we discovered it was indeed the case. We found people who were outward facing and wanted ministry in the church to be outward facing to the community and beyond.

As someone who is not knowledgeable in property areas, I wondered what gifts I could bring to all the significant gifts of the volunteers involved. I was told by the circuit stewards that they had the people on the team to do the day-to-day work, but were looking for a spiritual guide.

Having been 'matched' happily with the appointment, I can say it is a joy to be a spiritual guide to such an exciting project. A project that would have been impossible without good relationships with the traders through the 'town team', or without good relationships with the council – where our members are respected and trusted for their commitment to the project, their professionalism and their heartfelt views - that this project is for the community, not for the church members.



Heart shaped window: A window that is remaining as part of our listed building status. Through a window of the past we can see what is happening in the present to serve God in the future.



Pews being dismantled in October 2024



Hoarding signage



Worship space floor progressing January 2025



Volunteers of all ages lifting paving slabs to clear the ground

When the work is completed, we will indeed have a refurbished church building for worship. We will also be able to host events for up to 350 people; we will have meeting rooms of differing sizes for corporate, community or church activities and we will have our Cornerstone coffee shop with its fabulous cakes! All of the rooms will be completely accessible; we will have 7 rooms of hostel accommodation with a community kitchen and lounge facilities, plus 2 apartments to provide reasonably priced accommodation in a tourist hotspot. We will also have a community garden including the brook at the rear of our premises.

Looking into the future, the partnerships that have been built will ensure that we will indeed have a Church and Community Hub open 7 days a week. A huge amount of prayer has and is underpinning this project. An incredible number of hours have been spent by volunteers on tenders, bills of quantities, scoping and rescoping (due to inflation), interpreting legal documents and VAT regulations, ensuring we are complying with ecological needs (don't mention the bats!), meeting the requirements of being a listed building, preparing sales and marketing strategies for the new project as well as looking at employment needs and many more things.

In the last two and a half years I have witnessed some fabulous disciples of Jesus following their callings to deliver this project. I am the first to admit that I am blessed by the calibre and working life-experience of the volunteers. It goes without saying that many other churches would have had to bring in paid professionals to handle some of the things I have listed above.

This week I chaired a church council meeting and was once again blessed that God had called me to serve this circuit at this time so that I could partner with these incredible volunteers. I gave thanks for people who have been willing (and still are) to take steps of faith into the unknown and work with people who do not always share our call to make disciples. That said, these people know that at the heart of why we do this is because the community needs serving and that the community will benefit from this project.

To be in a circuit where people are willing to take holy risks, where people want their communities to know that God loves them and wants the best for them, where people believe growth is possible is an absolute joy, and not one I take for granted.

I encourage you to consider: who are the people in your community who God is calling you to step out and partner with?

REV NICOLA BRIGGS

Rev Nicola Briggs is Superintendent Minister of the Ashbourne Circuit in the Nottingham and Derby District and married to Rev Chris Briggs.



PRAYER FOCUS

THE LINK PROJECT IN ASHBOURNE:

Give thanks for the vision and those who have partnered together in this exciting venture to make it happen; the on-going development of the project and resources to complete the project; for openness and an embracing across the community to the Gospel of Christ, and the reaping of a great harvest of souls. (Acts 2:42-47; Philippians 4:4-7).

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH:

The Methodist Church: The President and Vice President of Conference, Rev. Helen Cameron and Mrs Carolyn Godfrey as their term of office comes to a close; the President and Vice President designate, Rev Richard Andrew and Mr Matthew Forsyth as they prepare to take up office; The Methodist Conference (26 June – 2 July), for all discussion and decisions to be honouring to God; for all in positions of leadership within the church to hold to biblical values and a return to Christian holiness. (1 Peter 1:13-16; James 4:4-10).

MET:Revive: Rev Chris Briggs a Chair; for the Executive and Trustees; for wisdom and discernment on the way forward; Rev David Hull in his Ambassador role - that individual churches will respond to a greater commitment to pray for revival; ongoing Bible studies and prayer meetings. (Colossians 1:9-11; Hebrews 13:20-21).

FOCUS ON NATIONAL ISSUES:

Prison System: Prison Chaplains; openings and opportunities for Christians to share the Gospel with prisoners; forming of programmes which will help transform the lives of prisoners and the recourses to allow this to happen; the Minister of State for Prisons, Lord James Timpson. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Isaiah 61:1).

FOCUS ON WORLD ISSUES:

Israel/Gaza: Pray for Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel and Yahya Al-Sinwar, Leader of Hamas, to continue the fragile peace deal; for the release of all hostages; for all Christians in both Israel and Gaza; for both Jew and Muslim to come to know Jesus as Messiah and seek peace and security in him; for an out working of God's will for the whole area. (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Micah 6:8).

Planet in Crisis: Give thanks for initiatives tackling our exploitation of the planet bringing renewal and change; conservation areas on both land and sea; projects supported by A Rocha; for other such initiatives; worldwide commitment to reduce all plastics and the funding of initiatives to discover environmentally friendly alternatives; the clearing up of polluted habitats. (1 Timothy 4:4-5; Isaiah 24:4-6).



Cliff College, Derbyshire, Joyful News Van, early 1900s

© Cliff College Archives 2010



Cliff College Students visit Central Methodist Mission, Johannesburg



Cliff College – Partnership in Sharing Joyful News!

ASHLEY COOPER

As I write this, I recognise that it will be my final article for MET:Revive as Principal of Cliff College. Over the past eight years, I have deeply valued the partnership between the College and MET as we have worked together to equip the Church in sharing the Joyful News. This partnership has not always been without its

challenges, but it has always been rooted in friendship, for which I am truly grateful.

Reflecting on this season of ministry, I am reminded that the mission of spreading the gospel and transforming lives through Christ is never a solo endeavour. It flourishes through collaboration, mutual encouragement, and a shared vision. As I prepare to pass on the leadership of Cliff College to Rev Dr Andrew Stobart, I want to celebrate the partnerships that have shaped our work and the transformation they have enabled.

A LEGACY OF PARTNERSHIP

Cliff College has a long and rich history of fostering partnerships that equip and empower individuals for mission. Since its founding, the College has trained leaders, missionaries, and evangelists passionate about sharing the gospel—or as early Cliff pioneers described it, the 'Joyful News.' I love that phrase, and it remains central to our vision today. The gospel is, by nature, joyful. Yet, in the face of challenging statistics and cultural shifts, the Church can sometimes appear joyless. But our message in Jesus Christ always brings joy.

This mission of sharing Joyful News is never undertaken in isolation. Partnerships enable the sharing of resources, the exchange of wisdom, and the

multiplication of efforts, allowing the gospel to reach further than any individual or institution could alone.

This model of working together is not just strategic; it is biblical. The early Church thrived through collaboration. Paul frequently acknowledged his partners in ministry—from the Macedonian churches supporting his work (Philippians 4:15) to the vital contributions of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3). Likewise, Cliff College continues in this tradition, engaging with a diverse range of partners to advance the mission of Christ.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

In recent years, Cliff College has recommitted itself to serving the Church—both Methodist and beyond—as we train and equip leaders for the future. Our partnerships span both the UK and the world, drawing upon the strengths of a global Christian community where mission flourishes and the gospel is communicated in diverse contexts.

One exciting example of this is our new BA Theology in Mission programme, launched in September 2023. As part of this course, we introduced a ‘Global Theology in Context’ unit, where students engage with theological perspectives from around the world. Our first unit took us to South Africa, where we partnered with the Methodist Church of South Africa to learn from their history, culture, and be immersed in it. This is partnership in action—learning, being challenged, and growing together as the body of Christ.

THE LOCAL CHURCH: A VITAL PARTNER

Churches remain at the heart of Cliff College’s mission. The latest iteration of TREK has strengthened our ties with Methodist churches across the UK, providing students with firsthand experience of what God is doing in diverse congregations. Every student at Cliff, at every level, engages in a local placement, ensuring that mission is woven into the fabric of their academic journey.

This is something I am particularly proud of from my time as Principal: no longer can a student pass through Cliff College without engaging in mission. It is no longer an optional extra—it is the core to who we are.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP: THEOLOGICAL EXCELLENCE WITH A MISSIONAL HEART

At its core, Cliff College is dedicated to theological education. We remain a proud partner college of the

University of Manchester, and we have recently secured validation for another five years. This endorsement affirms the quality of education our students receive, combining academic rigour with a deep missional focus. The Church today needs leaders who are both theologically grounded and Spirit-empowered, and it is our joy to help form such individuals.

At the heart of all these partnerships is the recognition that the gospel is bigger than any one institution or individual. Advancing the Kingdom of God requires a unified effort, transcending denominational, cultural, and geographical boundaries. This collaborative spirit not only strengthens each partner’s individual mission but amplifies the collective impact of the Church in the world.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As I step aside and new leadership takes the helm, I am confident that Cliff College will continue to build on these partnerships. Under Andrew, the College will forge new collaborations while deepening existing ones, ensuring that the ever-relevant gospel continues to transform lives.

By working alongside the Methodist Church in Britain, mission organisations, academic institutions, and you, Cliff College remains at the forefront of equipping and training the next generation to proclaim Joyful News. Together, we can accomplish far more than we ever could alone.

Christ for All: All for Christ.

REV ASHLEY COOPER

Rev Ashley Cooper has served as Principal of Cliff College since 2017 leading the college through a significant period of change. He has served as Superintendent of the Burslem Methodist Mission and a number of other appointments in the Methodist Church in Britain. From Summer 2025 he will move to be Executive Pastor of ChristChurch, Fairview Heights, Illinois, USA.



Friday 23 – Monday 26 May 2025

SEMINARS: We shall be hosting two seminars over the weekend

- **Saturday 24 May:** Methodist Holiness through it revival history
- **Sunday 25 May:** Holiness for a modern age

AGM: The MET:Revive AGM will be on **Bank Holiday Monday 26 May 2.30 – 4.00pm** (this will be a hybrid event – in person and on Zoom).



Friday 23 - Sunday 25 January 2026

Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay, TQ2 6RJ



HEROES AND VILLAINS: New Testament lessons in getting church right, and getting church wrong.

SPEAKER: Derek Burnside, Principal, Capernwray Hall Bible School



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SPEAKERS:
Rev Paul Smith, Supernumerary Minister in the South-West Peninsular District

Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, Local Preacher and former Methodist Mission Partner

Rev Chris Briggs, Chair of MET:Revive





Going for Growth

HOWARD MELLOR

Howard Mellor shares insights on growing congregations in the Methodist Church in the 1980's and how these might be revisited in today's context.

Have you heard the one about almost half of Methodist Churches reporting growing congregations? Really it is true, or at least it was. In case you are not convinced, here is a summary of the details.

This is not ancient history and only a mere forty years ago. We go back to the early 1980s. In those 'far off days' the Methodist Home Mission Division received the 'October count' from churches across the country. Every three years there was a deep dive to look at the number of members, attendances and community rolls. A report was sent to Conference the following year.

Astonishingly in the years 1980-83 over 30% of Methodist churches reported increases of at least 10% in membership or attendance or both. One of the Home Mission staff, Rev David Bridge, gathered a team of skilled researchers, church growth

specialists and statisticians. The numbers in 1983 were checked and found correct.

When the 1986 figures were reported it showed 47% of Methodist churches reported increased congregations. Indeed, the number of churches reporting increases of at least 20% between 1980 and 1986 was 600 (six hundred!). Of these 250 churches, a representative sample across the connexion, were chosen for detailed study.

The findings of the research group were published in a document entitled, 'The Missionary Shape of the Congregation'. It reveals, in considerable detail, the research undertaken, but more importantly highlights six features of these growing congregations. They were:

- The quality of pastoral care
- A fresh look at worship

- A ministry which relates to the needs of people at every phase of their lives
- A collaborative style of leadership
- Special emphasis on the ministry of evangelism
- The absence of a link between the number of churches looked after by a minister

'All these are strikingly ordinary!' As Revd Dr Donald English put it in the Foreword to this document, 'No church is excluded from the possibility of this kind of growth'.

In the recent changes to the structures of our church, the collective memory of the research was lost. Indeed, when in 2017 Drs Andrew Orton and Peter Hart from Durham University undertook their research into 6 (six) growing churches in the North-East of England, published as 'Leading

Together in Growing Methodist Churches', the earlier research was not known to them.

However, the five principles they identified were broadly in line with the factors identified by David Bridge and colleagues. In summary, Orton and Hart highlighted: welcome and hospitality, being responsive and inclusive to people, focussing on accessible spiritual development opportunities, collaborative leadership and being able to face change and overcome barriers.

One element was missing in both cases. In a telling sentence, David Bridge comments in 'The Missionary Shape of the Congregation': 'We know how to help people gather for worship, though we have not yet found the best way to help people gather specifically for prayer.' Meeting for corporate prayer is still either absent or a 'minority sport'.

This raises the questions about how we respond now to 'Missionary Shape' and begin to apply the learning for our church life today. My summary of all this is that we need to cut through the tsunami of admin and concentrate on sharing our faith, welcome all people to worship, serve the community, stand for justice and care for creation.

I recommend starting with prayer, then vision building and planning for what 'Missionary Shape' called 'intentional evangelism'.

How to do this? In the early days of Fresh Expressions (FX), Bishop Jack Nichols (then Bishop of Sheffield) was on the FX Board. I recall him saying that the best time for mission was between Easter and Pentecost. Days were lighter, he said, the weather was better, people were more hopeful and there are two bank holiday weekends to use. Now I have personally been involved in

many missions at different times of the year, but I concede he has something in such a timing. Lent is for discipleship and the season from Easter to Pentecost could be prime time for sharing faith. The post-Pentecost season could be for nurturing new Christians, exploring faith with people.

Let this short article be a challenge to engage prayerfully and as communities of grace in sharing our faith with others regularly. From time to time let us do so intentionally and 'offer Christ' to the circles of contact with our churches. If we start there the circles will become ever wider, the opportunities ever greater. You never know; we might all be surprised by the results.

REV DR G. HOWARD MELLOR

Rev Dr G. Howard Mellor is a retired Methodist Minister living in Winchester. He ministered in diverse congregations in four circuits. Between 1983 and 1994 he was Director of Evangelism for the Methodist Church based at Cliff College and then became Principal. He is hoping to produce a book by early 2026 on growing healthy churches and deepening discipleship.





The Forgotten Manifesto of Jesus

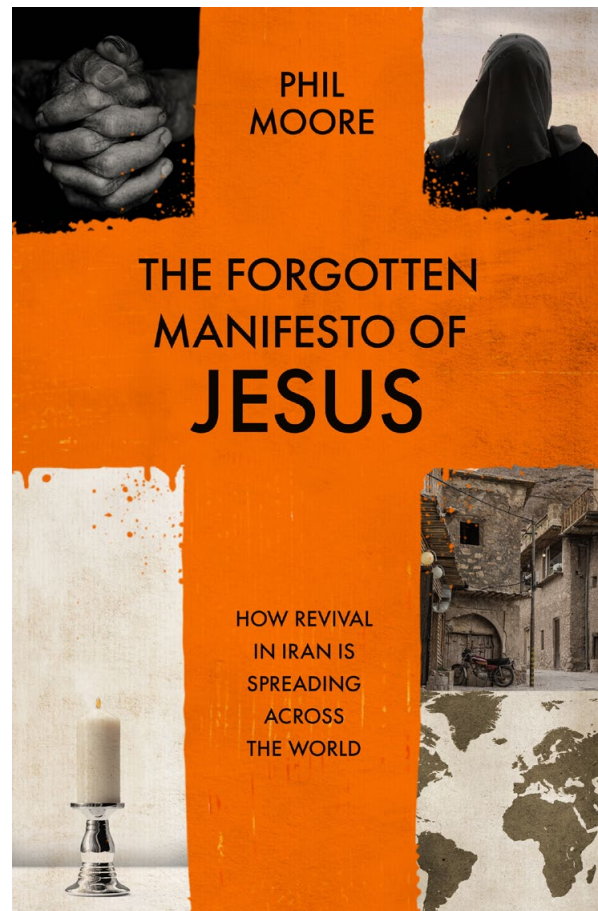
PHIL MOORE

London: IVP, 2024
ISBN: 9781789745184
pp 208
£12.99

The church in Iran is the fastest-growing church in the world – and for a very good reason. Every believer in the West needs to take the time to listen to what its leaders have to say.

That's what Phil Moore argues in his new book, 'The Forgotten Manifesto of Jesus'. Phil spent two years talking to some of the leaders of the underground church across Iran and discovering how millions of Iranians have come to faith in Jesus under the noses of one of the most restrictive Islamic regimes in the world. Now he invites the Iranian leaders to share their secrets with the world. What lies behind the revival they are seeing, and what does God want to say to the beleaguered churches of the West through their example?

One of the Iranian leaders asks the question: 'If the Great Commission matters so much to Jesus, do you really think he would have left it up to us to work out how to go about it?' He explains that their revival is rooted in obedience to the instructions that Jesus gives us for completing his Great Commission in Matthew 10 and Luke 10. When asked to reveal the secrets behind the move of God across their land, their reply



is disarming: it is all simply a matter of actually doing what Jesus tells us to do.

Half of this book tells how a tiny handful of Iranian believers came to view Matthew 10 and Luke 10 as 'the forgotten manifesto of Jesus' for reaching their nation. The other half charts what happened when they put their understanding into action. A massive gospel movement began to spread across Iran and then beyond its borders - into Iraq and Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and many other notoriously hard-to-reach parts of the world. The final chapters of the book describe how this gospel movement is continuing to spread, even starting to reach the unchurched areas of Western nations too.

This book is vital reading for any follower of Jesus. It invites us to sit at his feet to rediscover how he wants us to go about completing his Great Commission.

PHILL MOORE

Phil was a traditional church leader for two decades before he met the leaders of the underground house churches of Iran. Now he serves as a disciple-making movement leader, based in London but serving a wider team of disciple-makers across Europe. Phil is the author of the 'Straight to the Heart' series of devotional commentaries and of 'The Bible in 100 Pages'.

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