

# Chair Letter

CHRIS BRIGGS

*Tell me the old, old story  
Of unseen things above  
Of Jesus and his glory  
Of Jesus and his love*

Katherine Hankey

## What's the story?

Oh, that we would tell our stories, often, with passion! Stories of an encounter with Jesus, stories of transformation because of Jesus, stories which give testimony to what God can do in our lives, the church, and the world.

The power of story is so great. I wonder if in some parts of the church we have pushed out story and eased in programmes, strategies, and budgets instead. Don't get me wrong. I'm not against programmes and strategies. In fact, in many ways my mind wants to organise things into such. Of themselves they can be helpful. Sometimes we need to structure things when we sense what the Spirit is doing so that we are well placed to catch the wind of the Spirit. I think the Wesleys were very good at that. The problem comes when we build the structures, strategies, and programmes thinking that the Spirit will automatically fill them or that this will mean people share faith more easily. It can result in 'having

a form of godliness but denying its power' (2 Timothy 3:5). It is a dangerous position to be in.

How did the disciples go about telling their story? Their training programme had been walking and talking with Jesus for a few years. Their method was to start walking and talking some more when Jesus was gone, walking to the ends of the earth. As they walked, they were to make disciples. They shared their experience of Jesus. They called others to experience Jesus as well, because by his death he brought people into relationship with God. It was relational. If only we could encourage people into encounters with Jesus and not so much with programmes. Faith and life bubbling up from within, is more likely to share the excitement that Jesus brings than programmes. Again, I am not against programmes. One of the greatest programmes I have used regularly is the Alpha Course. I believe that Alpha has been God anointed, but it is clear that, even with Alpha, story plays such a central and important part.

We will be familiar with the way that films and television programmes often use a façade for scenery. In the old westerns, small towns could sometimes be built of outward façades. All sorts of buildings would be there but there was little or nothing behind the façade. They were lifeless. Let us encourage story from people – stories of, and about Jesus. They are full of life, and are life-changing! If there were enough stories that were passionately and naturally shared, maybe we wouldn't need so many programmes. Let us be the best storytellers about Jesus.

As we devote this edition to story and song, we might also remember the good work of so many hymn and song writers who have helped us

sing not only our story but the great story of God's love for the world and those in it, and his amazing plan for salvation. Methodists were renowned for their singing. We sang our theology. Sometimes there was a little more affection for the hymnbook than the Bible within the Methodist people, and we must be careful there, but maybe it was because Charles Wesley in particular was so good at getting the story into song.

As we think of God's story, and story in song, I am reminded of something that I do every now and again in worship. I invite the congregation to be still and listen for the song of heaven; to prepare to join in with the worship that is constantly offered to God; to join their voices with that of the angels in Revelation 15:3-4

*Great and marvellous are your  
deeds, Lord God Almighty,  
Just and true are your ways, King of  
the nations.  
Who will not fear you, Lord, and  
bring glory to your name?  
For you alone are holy.  
All nations will come and worship  
before you,  
For your righteous acts have been  
revealed.*

Story and Song, woven into our discipleship and an expression of heaven itself. I want to hear more!



*Chris Briggs*