

AUGUST 2020 NEWSLETTER

Give praise to the **LORD**, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.

Glory in his name,
let the hearts of those who seek the **LORD** rejoice.

Look to the **LORD** and his strength;
seek his face always. (*Psalm 105:1-4*)

Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in
his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise
him for his surpassing greatness. (*Psalm 150:1-2*)



IVYBRIDGE METHODIST CHURCH

Sharing Life
Sharing Faith

Dear Magazine Reader

I hoping in faith that as you read this article during August that we will have arranged a multiple baptism service. As I write this article there are three people who have already said that they want to be baptized. Why is this and what does it mean?

The Bible is quite clear on the matter. There are several key Scriptures which can help us understand what it really means. Let's dust off our Bibles(!) and have a look:-

What the Bible teaches about Water Baptism?

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------|
| The meaning of baptism | - | Romans 6:1-12 |
| Jesus was baptised | - | Mark 1:1-11 |
| A command from Jesus | - | Matthew 28:19-20 |
| The command carried out | - | Acts 2:37-41 |
| | - | Acts 8: 26-40 |
| | - | Acts 16: 29-34 |

What is 'Water' or 'Believer's' Baptism?

The word 'baptism' is from a Greek word meaning to dip, submerge or cleanse by washing. The word was used for dyeing cloth and involved immersion. It was also used when speaking about a ship that was sinking under the water. Christian baptism was by total immersion for those who believed and there was no long period of training before it. At a believer's baptism the opportunity is given for the person being baptised to say a few words why they are being baptised and what difference Jesus Christ has made to their lives.

Water baptism is an outward sign on an inward reality. Those who trust Jesus Christ and have accepted Him as their personal friend and Saviour have been made new! Baptism is a sign of washing and letting go of the past and accepting the new life that only Christ can give by the power of His Holy Spirit.



* How is it done? *

* It has been my privilege over the years to baptise many people – in the *
* sea, in rivers, in swimming pools, water tanks, in prison and occasionally *
* in a church building! Like the true Church of Jesus Christ they have been *
* a right mixture of people – from children, to teenagers, to parents and *
* grand-parents, ex-drug addicts and dealers, sex offenders and Church *
* Stewards! All wonderful people who have been and are being *
* transformed by the love of Jesus Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit. *
* So the practicalities are – we stand in the water, which is normally about *
* three or four feet deep. There is normally someone to help, so that we *
* have two people in the water along with the one being baptised – Health *
* & Safety! ☺ *

* I then ask them three vitally important questions which are: *

* Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? *

* In obedience to the call of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, do you *
* repent of your sins and renounce all evil? *

* With the help of the Holy Spirit, will you be obedient to the call of *
* Jesus Christ for the rest of your life? *

* If they answer ‘yes’ to the above, I then say, *

* “On confession of your faith, I now baptise you in the Name of the *
* Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” *

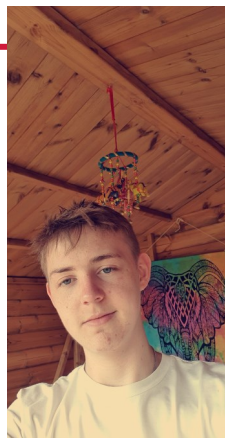
* Then we lower them into the water making sure they’re completely *
* submerged before bringing them straight up. Often the congregation will *
* say with great joy the shortest form of the Creed, which is ‘Jesus is Lord’ *
* with lots of cheers and applause. It is a happy and profound moment for *
* us all. *

* It is a wonderful picture of God’s transforming power and the hope of all *
* that is to come. If you’re reading this article and, as yet, haven’t been *
* baptised in that way, and would like to take this next step in your *
* journey with Jesus Christ please let me know and we can have a chat. *
* Maybe the Lord is calling you? *

* With every blessing in Christ Jesus *

* *Rev Mark Lawrence* *

* Acting- Superintendent Minister *



My name is **Harry Palmer-Brown**. I'm part of Ivybridge Methodist Church. I have just accepted a placement at **SWYM** (South West Youth Ministries) in IMC. For those of you who don't know, SWYM is all about putting young people into youth work alongside churches to give children a positive Christian role model and reach out to those who don't know Jesus or the love of Jesus. Most of you can look up SWYM if you want to know more, but you can't look up why I'm so passionate about going down this path in youth work.

As a kid I was always getting into trouble and doing things I wasn't supposed to which led to a place I didn't want to be, and most people don't either, but it can be a vicious cycle that is hard to climb out of. I have been very blessed by God and the people who around me who have supported me this past year. They have given me a hang out of the cycle and the opportunity to put all my experience from my past to help young children, who were just like me, to see that there are better options out there and Jesus will always help you if you let him. I feel if I had had access to youth clubs and other similar things I could have prevented a lot of trouble I got into. I want to be that positive influence on them, to let them see my past and how far I've come. Hopefully it will let them realize that God can do wonderful things and can completely elevate your life and put you in a place where things are good. That is what I want for all the kids I work with, to make sure they know that even if they think their future is dull or they aren't good enough for this or that, they will be where they were meant to be with God's love.

Bittaford Methodist Church Roof Replacement – update on fund raising



After much prayerful consideration, the Plymouth and Devonport Circuit has generously agreed to give a 20% grant (£4,195.03) towards the cost of replacing the roof and installing roof insulation at Bittaford Methodist Church. The Trustees and Congregation of Bittaford wish to express their heartfelt thanks to all the Members of the Circuit for this considerable and much-needed grant.

We are also heartened with the response to the Crowdfunder appeal being run via the Calor Rural Community Fund competition and so far £260 has been raised. Many thanks to all who have made donations.

However, the total cost of the work is estimated at approximately £21,000 and we still need to continue with our fund raising efforts, particularly as the coronavirus pandemic has meant that we have had to cancel some proposed fund raising events.

If you wish to help with our fund raising campaign then donations can be made via Bittaford's bank account with Lloyds Bank in Ivybridge – the sort code is **30-94-58** and the account number is **00017727**. If you wish to Gift Aid your donation, please contact me for details.

Once again, many thanks for your prayers and support.

Thank you
*Stewart Edward, Treasurer,
Bittaford Methodist Church*

Visit our website at
www.ivybridgemethodistchurch.co.uk

If you wish to contact Tony regarding the website you
can do so at **mrmerrit@icloud.com**

Below is the next instalment from David Moulder.

4. The Second Chapel

The population of Ivybridge grew over the years, and attendance at the chapel grew with it, but then during the 1850s the Methodists saw an explosion in their numbers. John Allen must have played a key role in this. He bought the Stowford Paper Mill in 1849, and was resident in the town from 1859. He increased the production of paper from 4 to 30 tons a week, employing many of the workers in the village, both men and women: many of these workers chose to attend the chapel. To cope with this increase, the first chapel was demolished in 1860, and rebuilt on the same site, at a cost of £800.



A recent photograph of the rebuilt chapel

A newspaper reporter attended the opening of the new building, and told his readers that it is "situated in the heart of the beautiful and picturesque village of Ivybridge. Both the exterior and interior are remarkable for their simplicity, combined with elegance. 'When unadorned, adorned the most', seems to be the motto chosen by the Wesleyans in general. The whole building is neat, and well finished. On the outside is placed 'Wesleyan Methodist Chapel' ". He said that about 200 people came from



Plymouth by train to celebrate the opening. The service was led by the Rev Samuel Romilly Hall, who took Romans 6 verses 6 – 9 as his text, and “preached a most excellent sermon, concluding with an eloquent appeal to his hearers in aid of the chapel fund, which he stated hardly amounted to £400. He said that he had had some experience in connection with the building of chapels, and the average cost was £3 per sitting. Theirs had been built very inexpensively, and he complimented them upon the handsome edifice which had been completed. At the conclusion a collection was made, and the fact that over £37 was collected is in itself a very strong argument in favour of the voluntary principle.”

Tea was served in a large room at the mill. Some of the attendees are listed, and they included a Mr Sherwell, maybe a son of William Sherwell, whose memorial plaque was on the wall, (see part 1 of this History for his story). The room was “tastefully decorated with flowers, evergreens, mottoes, &c., and the tables were covered with paper, which acted excellently in lieu of table cloths. Through the kindness of Mr Allen the visitors were allowed to roam through the paper mills at pleasure, and most of them availed themselves of the opportunity offered.”

A second service was held in the evening, and at 10 o'clock a special train was put on to convey the visitors from “the three towns” back to Plymouth.

Some years later, another reporter came on a visit, (presumably on 16th July 1874, when the congregation had outgrown their building once again, and the foundation stone was being laid for the present church). He described the 1860 building thus: “as pretty a chapel as one could wish to see, and possesses the unusual merit of enabling all present to see the minister in whatever portion of the building they may be. On the ground floor upwards of 300 persons can be accommodated, and the school children, who number about 100, are provided for by a comfortable gallery.”



As you can see, the Sunday School had grown as rapidly as the congregation. In 1852 there were 8 teachers and 40 children, and by 1869 there were 42 teachers and 230 children on the roll. For the Sunday School anniversary in 1864, 500 hymn sheets and 500 tickets were printed. The Sunday School had its own library, and in 1868 it had 82 readers borrowing its 140 books.

Most of the adult members were divided into “classes”, following Methodist custom. Classes met regularly, and members were expected to attend. In the schedule for June 1865, six class leaders are listed, five men and one woman, with between 10 and 17 members each.

In 1864 we find the first mention of Ivybridge being in the Plymouth Circuit, having belonged to the Ashburton Circuit since the first chapel opened in 1813.

In 1867 Ivybridge was given a resident minister for the first time, with membership standing at about 80.

A note in the history of the Congregational Church tells us that in 1868 “Weekly united prayer meetings with the Methodist brethren have been started.”....

The Sunday School report for 1873 recorded that there were 38 teachers and 192 children. It ended thus:

We think this report should not be closed without recording that – the choicest and best of all fruits of Sunday School instructions have crowned the labours of the Teachers (in conjunction with our Minister) during the year. The Divine Spirit has applied the saving fruits of the Gospel to the hearts of many of our Senior Scholars, both Boys and Girls, and we gratefully record that about 13-14 of them have given evidence not only of a desire to flee from the wrath to come, but also of a sound conversion, and have been received on trial for Church Membership. We pray that this may be only the droppings of the shower, but that many more from this blessed Institution may be drawn into the fold of the Good Shepherd. Amen



JULY/AUGUST NEWS

If you have anything you would like to include in the **Church News** please let Judy Jago know by ringing her on 01752 894829

Life is beginning to settle into some things we recognise and hopefully by the time you read this Church opening maybe on the cards. We continue to pray that you are all well and safe.

Just a few bits of news this month beginning with two special decade birthdays. Sue Flood celebrates her 80th on 14th August and Pam Shead her 70th on August 16th. We send much love to you both wishing you many happy returns and hope you are able to celebrate well within the rules!!



Many will remember James Crudge - he and Emma are now the proud parents of Noah who was born early July. We send our congratulations to you both and to Grandparents Sue and Tim.



We were sad to hear that Kirsten Knowles is not well at the moment and is under going a series of treatments. Kirsten, we send warmest love to you and pray that all goes according to plan and you are back to full health very soon. We will continue to pray for you both through this time.

Many congratulations to Lucinda Jago who has recently become a Sister in the A&E Department at The Royal Berkshire Hospital Reading. It's a fantastic achievement Lucinda and we send our very best wishes for the future.



We also send warmest congratulations to Harriet Pope who became engaged to William on the 5th July on the lovely Bigbury beach. We wish you every blessing as you plan for your new future and pray all goes smoothly.



Our congratulations to Tom and Jo, now Duckering on their marriage, Tom is Kate and Robin's son.

Picture taken of Kate, Tom, Jo and Robin on 18.07.20.



Coping with Coronavirus in Cambodia

Thank you, IMC, for your continued financial and prayer support of Cambodian Communities out of Crisis.

How have we, and how has Cambodia, been adjusting to 'life, but not as we know it'?

Although there has been no enforced lockdown, all schools have closed. The students we support at Asian Hope International School (AHIS) adapted to online learning with mixed success. We heard of one who was struggling with a poor Internet connection and another who needed a lot of help from his hard-pressed working mother. According to the Ministry of Education, 'schools with high prevention standards against COVID-19 will be allowed to resume classes first,' so please pray that AHIS will re-open soon. 50% of students at state schools have no access to online learning.

Churches have not been allowed to hold services in their buildings since March. Our friends in the village church at Chheu Teal have been able to meet outside, but now the rainy season is in full swing that may not be so easy.

The two ladies that are spearheading our mission to Chheu Teal, Chanthoeun and Sokha, have at our request largely kept to their homes until recently. However, they have now begun to meet together for prayer, Bible study and planning. Chanthoeun and two friends were able to visit the church at Chheu Teal recently.





Face coverings on public transport, Cambodia-style
Chanthoeun (centre) and her friends en route to Chheu Teal

Meanwhile, I have been conducting a daily (Monday to Friday) Bible study in the Khmer language via Skype for Chanthoeun and Sokha with much hilarity over my mispronunciations and limited vocabulary. Please pray for these two ladies and ask the Lord to provide opportunities for them to identify widows, orphans and needy people in the village and share the gospel and the love of Jesus with them.

Cambodia's economy is likely to be hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak. 400 garment factories have suspended operations. Tourism has collapsed and is unlikely to recover while the government's policy of requiring each visitor from overseas to deposit \$3,000 on arrival to cover the costs of testing, quarantine, hospital treatment and funeral remains in force. Our friend Phearun, who runs the Cambodia for Christ sports ministry, has lost his job. We have been able to make an emergency grant to cover a month's food for his pregnant wife, young son and himself, but he needs a reliable, long-term source of income. Please pray for him.

As I was writing this article a friend sent me this scripture, which I think is just the right note on which to finish and to request your prayer of faith for Cambodia.

I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. (*Psalms 27:13-14*)

Myers

For those who missed it here is Carolyn's Vice-President Speech

There's an old Christmas song that I used to listen to on an Amy Grant album called 'Breath of Heaven' which reflects some of Mary's possible thoughts on carrying God's son.

One verse of this song has always meant a lot to me in the various roles I have been called to fulfil but never has it had more significance to me than now.

'Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place?
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of Your plan
Help me be strong, help me be, help me.'

When I went to conference last year I arrived with no intention of offering to stand again for this role but had said to God that if someone asked me to stand I would take that as a sign and then test the call. As it turned out lots of people suggested I stand again and the rest is history! As soon as I realised that I had been elected I was overcome with terror and felt that I was completely inadequate for the task – I felt that there must be many more qualified and able than me but at the same time believed, and still do, that God must have a plan and a purpose in this calling and believed he had called me in the words from the book of Esther, 'for such a time as this.' Little did I know what 'such a time' it would turn out to be as so many things are different to how I expected them to be!!

I have received a lot of encouraging words and Scriptures sent to me in the last year and love this quote from Heidi Baker in her book 'The Hungry Are Always Fed'. She says:

'God is not about using the mighty, but the willing. He is not into using amazing people, just ones who are prepared to lay their lives down to him. God is not looking for extraordinary, exceptionally gifted people, just laid down lovers of Jesus who will carry his glory with transparency and not take it for themselves.'

The immense honour of being elected to this role is to me, an opportunity to bring glory to Jesus in any way I can. I would love it after this year if someone could say that they have come to know Jesus, or that they have been encouraged to use their gifts in ministry, or have grown in their faith.



That I am in this role at all is highly unlikely and testimony to God at work in my life.

I grew up in a non-Christian home but had started to attend my local Methodist Church through joining the Girl Guides and going to their parade services. As a teenager I was full of fear and terribly insecure and now realise I was one of those really annoying teenagers who must have driven the leaders in my youth group to distraction!

I had been going to church for a few years but had not at that point asked Jesus into my life. At the time I felt that I had to try to be a better person and that God wouldn't love me unless I could be really good. Then when I was 15 I went with my family to a Dick Saunders Crusade visiting our town and heard a message that God loved and accepted me as I was and that evening I invited Jesus into my heart and life and for the first time realised that my salvation didn't depend on my own works but in receiving the mercy and grace of God through what Jesus had done for me in his death and resurrection. It was so liberating to know it didn't depend on me to just try harder or be better!

I was hungry to change and to know God, to serve Jesus, to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit and to be obedient to his call on my life. Though I was full of fear, was terribly insecure and lacking in confidence, I can testify to God's transforming work in my life little by little over the years. At my baptism shortly after becoming a Christian, someone gave me the verse from *Philippians 4 vs 13* which says, 'I can do all things through Christ Jesus who gives me strength.'

That has become my life verse and I have clung to that promise when God has led me to do things and go places I would never have thought possible, giving me confidence and strength to go through the doors he has opened even when I have felt afraid and inadequate.

Hopefully at some point in the coming year I will be allowed to visit some of your Districts and Circuits and share fellowship face to face! You will get to know me better over the year but if I had to describe myself I would tell you that I am an introvert and though I like socialising, get exhausted from too much peopling. I am an activist and get bored easily. I can be flippant and say inappropriate things. I love Jesus but hate dead religion. I can't stand fakery and love truth and honesty. I enjoy a wide variety of worship but feel most at home when things are informal and involve movement and rhythm like the exuberant style I have experienced in Africa and Brazil.

Having been overlooked, rejected and bullied in the past, my heart, and the passion I believe God has given me is to be sensitive to those who are often overlooked in our world and in our churches.

I am married to Mark who is a presbyter and together we have had the privilege of serving God in several circuits around the country, as well as overseas. We have always valued and appreciated the everyday miracles that we see as we minister to ordinary people doing extraordinary things for and with God. We have observed and been in awe of many faithful servants of God whose names will never be known by anyone but God, who quietly serve and demonstrate God's love day by day. I pray that in this role, I will be an encouragement to ordinary people and help to build people's confidence and self-esteem. I am forever thankful for the work that God has done in my own life and believe that if he can use me he can use anyone to fulfil his call. I love to pray with people and will pray with and for anyone who will allow me to!

I am an evangelist and long to draw people to know my Jesus and to grow in their relationship with him and as a teacher build people up in their faith. I'm excited to be inducted as Vice President at the same time as we launch the God for All evangelism strategy and as we engage with the Methodist Way of Life commitments as a tool for discipleship and growth.

I often feel most comfortable being around people who are not Christians because that is where I have found the most honesty and integrity about matters of faith. I hope I demonstrate to people outside the church that you don't have to be weird to be a Christian! You can be normal! I love the stories of Jesus which show us that he must have been a fun person to be with otherwise he wouldn't have been invited to so many parties or accused of being a glutton and a drunkard and children would not have gone anywhere near him – as a teacher, parent and grandparent I know that kids are most attracted to people who are genuine and fun!

As we read about Jesus we see that he repelled religious people and attracted sinners. It saddens me that as the church we often attract religious people and repel sinners.

God gave me the theme of this speech before Covid-19 hit our world. I felt that he wanted me in this speech to talk about the church. In the light of the corona virus and the immense changes in our world I prayed and reflected on whether God still wanted me to retain this theme and feel that it is just as relevant as ever, if not more so. The church still has a vital role to play, and we are seeing the church adapting to reach people in new and exciting ways that a few months

ago we would never have dreamed possible. As we emerge from this pandemic in the coming months, we will be forced to look at new ways of being church and that is in many ways a good thing.

There is an old Spaghetti Western from 1966 called 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.'

I felt that God dropped this film title into my head as a reflection on the church! Only I am renaming it, 'The Good, the Mad and the Ugly.' Because I want to end on a positive, I am going to start with the mad and the ugly!

You know they say that you can moan about your own family but no-one else is allowed to so forgive me if this part rings home to some or causes offence! I promise this is coming from a place of deep love for my church family.

The media often portray the church in negative terms, making us sound at best dull and lacking in fun and at worst, judgemental, narrow, controlling or even abusive. Sadly some of the criticisms levelled at the church are true but the secular media don't tell the whole story.

So first of all, the mad!

There are crazy things that happen in churches that someone from outside would have a hard time getting their head around.

During my forty plus years of being a Christian and twenty five years of being a Local Preacher, I have observed many weird things in churches – none of whom shall be named!

I've been told off a lot! Including but not exclusively, for sitting in the wrong seat, parking in the wrong place, using the wrong tea towel, teapot, cups, putting said tea towel, teapot, cups back in the wrong place, putting things on the piano, putting things in the wrong place on a noticeboard or on the wrong board all together, removing something from a noticeboard without permission (usually out of date posters or photos!), doing a children's action song, not doing a children's action song, wearing the wrong clothes and moving a box of tissues - some people really need to get a life!

Church chairs warrant a telling off rule book all by itself! I have stacked them too high, not high enough, put them in the wrong places or in front of something, laid them out in the wrong order, not enough or too many to a row, too far apart or too close together, or at the wrong angle. Handling chairs in a Methodist Church is a minefield!

I've been asked to do some things that have made me uncomfortable. If I'm honest sharing the peace usually makes me feel awkward as does looking around the room sharing the grace but that could just be me. I've also been asked (or sometimes told) to hold hands in a circle to pray or sing, hold hands with the person next to me, wave my hymn book in the air, repeat a response in a prayer time that is so long I can't remember what it is, shout responses to the preacher, turn to the person next to me to look at them with love, to tell them they are beautiful that I love them, or to tell a complete stranger a deeply personal thing about myself!

Sometimes churches can be a bit like walking into a time machine. I read of one church that was holding a 1950s style worship service – or as many churches just call it, a worship 5. service! I notice when watching *Call the Midwife*, set in the 50s and 60s that they use the little cups and saucers that appear in most churches I have been a part of – most of you probably know the ones I mean that come in pink, yellow, green or blue! There always seem to be hundreds of them and none of them ever get broken or thrown away even when a church has bought a set of new mugs!



We live in a strange world in the church at times. We can overcomplicate things, get embroiled or side-tracked by policies, plans and strategies, get hooked into minutiae that doesn't matter in the overall scheme of things and worry and argue over things that just aren't important and have no relevance to the Kingdom of God or reaching a lost world with the love of Jesus. We have often lost simplicity and forgotten to keep the main thing the main thing.

When Mark and I visited Uganda couple of years ago, we went with a pastor to a church he and his wife had planted in a remote village. All they had was a sheet of tarpaulin for the children to sit on, a few plastic chairs and a drum and with those few bits of equipment started a thriving church. Now they have a little building but the church began in a really simple way and it really spoke to me of how we sometimes lose that sense of simplicity in the church. Strangely, this latest crisis and the cancellation of all our usual events and meetings has forced us to go back to a simpler approach in many places.

So there are some things in the church that just seem a little mad but there are also some aspects of the church that are just plain ugly.

I know I am not alone in having experienced some of the ugliness of the church. I have listened to many stories from people over the years who have been hurt in some way by the church.



At one end of the ugliness spectrum are things like not being made welcome in churches. Mark and I always try to worship at a Methodist Church whenever we are away from home on a Sunday and have had mixed experiences. At one fairly small church, where it was obvious we were visitors, we were not welcomed or spoken to as we came in and found our way to a seat, nor were we spoken to at the end of the service. It broke my heart to think that we could have been people seeking God, or struggling with problems and seeking some love and support. Or people who had summoned up the courage to visit a church – who would probably never dare darken the doors of a church again.

At another church after navigating our way through the bewildering array of instructions in the car park, we fought our way through the heavy, closed, wooden doors to find we had walked in at the front of the sanctuary – everyone was chatting and stopped still to look at us walking in – then resumed their conversations!

We have witnessed visitors to our own churches being ignored or pushed aside by congregation members as they dash to sort out their rotas or chat to their friends.

I have heard congregation members telling visitors off for sitting in their seat. I have witnessed critical congregation members tutting and rolling their eyes when a reader makes a mistake or someone's child makes a noise, or when young people come in dressed in a casual way.

Then moving along the spectrum I have experienced and witnessed unkindness, criticism, discouragement, bullying, controlling behaviour, inappropriate touching and comments. The most vicious verbal attacks I have ever received have been from people in the church.

And at the other extreme of the ugliness spectrum, we know the church has engaged in more serious concerns such as racism, sexism, homophobia and abuse. The recent protests following the murder of George Floyd in the USA have brought to centre stage the racism that is evident not just in our society at large but also in the church, historically and right up to the present day. I heard only a couple of weeks ago from a minister in our connexion from an overseas connexion who told me that ministers from overseas connexions regularly receive racist comments from congregation members. It sickens my heart and I imagine how Jesus must weep when that happens and in any situation when people in the church behave in such sinful ways that are nothing to do with living in the Spirit of Jesus.



When we lived in Lincoln, Mark and I used to go with a team to the local New Age fair and take a Christian stand offering prayer for healing and wholeness along with Christian literature. Many of the people we spoke to and prayed with said they didn't have a problem with Jesus, but had been hurt or abused by the church. I think there are probably a lot of people out there in our communities who have been hurt, overlooked, bullied or abused by the church and we have to face up to that reality – the church can be ugly at times.

BUT despite all that is mad and ugly about the church I still believe with all my heart that the church of Jesus Christ is awesome! At its best there is nothing like the church on this earth – she is an amazing force to be reckoned with.

I've had the privilege for the past couple of years of attending the Open Doors World Watch List Launch at the Houses of Parliament. (Open Doors is a Christian charity supporting the persecuted church around the world and they produce a list each year of the most dangerous places to be a Christian). Over 100 parliamentarians attended the last time I went and I was encouraged when one of the MPs said that despite the media portrayal of the church, MPs of all parties and beliefs think highly of the church and know that we are involved in all aspects of society seeking to improve people's lives.

Every week we record and watch Songs of Praise which I know is a blessing to millions of people, especially during this time when people can't get to physically sing together in churches. I am often inspired by stories from ordinary Christians across the nation who are doing amazing things for God as he leads them in their own communities. It's wonderful to hear stories of how God raises people up to develop innovative and creative ways of sharing the love of Jesus in their locality. I'm also encouraged to see the many different congregations taking part in the hymn singing crossing barriers of age, race and background – there truly is nothing like the church on earth!

During the recent Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown, churches have been finding new ways of being church and it's been inspiring to see the flexibility and energy as churches have found new ways to engage with their communities, especially those who are isolated and vulnerable. It's also been encouraging to see all the different prayer initiatives and the incredible generosity of God's people as they seek to help those who are struggling, here and overseas. A person from a local church asked my husband, 'What is the church doing in this crisis?' He reminded her that the church is made up of each one of us and that even though we can't meet together physically at the moment, each of us has our part to play in being church to our families, our



neighbours and our communities. Now more than ever we remember that the church is not the building but the people – we are the people of God, his family, and no amount of building closures can prevent the church from being who God intended us to be.

We often have a narrow view of the church and get bogged down with our local situations but I have a real passion for the Global Church of Jesus. One thing that I find awe inspiring about the church is that you can be anywhere in the country or the world and know that you can find family.



I have had the experience of worshipping with Christians in lots of different places in the world, most recently on my visit to the Methodist Church in Brazil. Here the church is growing at an amazing rate and I was blown away by their passion for God's word, their commitment to prayer, their systematic and strategic approach to evangelism, theological training and pastoral care and the exuberance and joy of their worship. During the year to come I hope to share some of the key principles of church growth that I have learned from the church in Brazil as I believe they can also be applied to our church here in the UK.

We also see the amazing work that is done in our nation and across the world by the many Christian charities which often cross denominational barriers. I know that most of you will be aware of the wonderful work that is done by our own relief and development fund, All We Can. I have been privileged to have been a trustee of AWC in the past and can't speak highly enough of the first class team and their amazing creative and professional work as well as the way that they honour God in all they do.

If we had been having a conference offering, my half of that collection was going to be sent to SAT-7, a charity I am privileged to know and support. They work across the Middle East and North Africa using satellite TV programmes to bring the Christian gospel, education, discipleship, encouragement and training to people who often can't worship freely in public. During the Covid-19 pandemic their work has been even more appreciated and they have been able to specifically create programmes addressing some of the issues faced by people under lockdown.

I believe that as individual lives are transformed by the love of Jesus, transformation of families, communities and nations will naturally follow – this is why I am passionate about evangelism. People don't need dead religion they



need Jesus. Only he can truly transform hearts and attitudes and remove habits, addictions and prejudices in people's lives. In the Wesleyan revival which birthed Methodism, we see evidence of this – as people came under conviction of sin and turned to Jesus, they began to live differently and the society of the day was completely transformed – social justice was one of the fruits of lives and hearts changed by knowing Jesus. Oh how we need a revival of the Holy Spirit's power again in our church, nation and world.

Although we are individuals who make up the church and each have our part to play, I believe that we are stronger together as a corporate witness of God's love - as small groups, as societies, as circuits, as a connexion and ecumenically alongside our brothers and sisters in other churches. Together we shine more brightly in the darkness around us. I pray that it won't be long before we can actually worship together again and be an encouragement to each other as we share fellowship once again.

When I despair of the church it often helps me to reflect on what Jesus thinks of his church? In Ephesians 5 vs 25-27 we read:

'Jesus loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.'

We often feel that the burden of growing the church falls completely on our shoulders but in Matthew 16 vs 18 Jesus said to Peter:

'I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it.'

This reminds us that the church belongs to Jesus not to us – he is the centre – it's not about you or me or our preferences or desires but the church is here for Jesus. I heard a story of one congregation member on the way out after a service said to his minister, 'I didn't really enjoy worship today,' to which the minister replied, 'That's ok it wasn't for you anyway!'

The church is here to bring glory to Jesus and to show his love to the world. To do that we need each other so that each of us can use our skills and gifts and play our part in the body of Christ. As we read in 1 *Corinthians 12 vs 12 – 31*, each one of us is needed to make up the body and each of us has a role to play, however insignificant we may feel that role may be.

Nothing on earth is dearer to the heart of God than his church. If you hurt any part of the body you also hurt the head. And it must break God's heart



when his church don't behave in a loving way and cause hurt and pain to people within and without.

You may be someone who is not a part of the church – either the Methodist Church or any other part of the body of Christ. Maybe you're someone who has never invited Jesus into your life. If that is you, I would encourage you to find out more about Jesus – maybe read the gospel of Luke in the Bible, join an Alpha course or other course that explores what Christianity is about or speak to a local Christian that you trust. Or contact me if you want to know more about what being a Christian is about.

Maybe you are someone who used to go to church but for some reason you stopped going. Perhaps someone offended you, hurt your feelings, overlooked you, disappointed you, discouraged you or didn't appreciate you. Maybe someone bullied or tried to control you, or perhaps someone abused you in some other way.

If that is you, I want to say sorry on behalf of the church and tell you that is not how God intended his church to behave. I encourage you to give all of your pain and disappointment to God and to allow him to take your grief, your pain, your anger, rejection, bitterness and grudges.

You may need to seek help and support if you have suffered abuse of any kind at the hands of the church. It may be a long process but I pray that you will allow God to bring you his healing. Then I would encourage you to seek to engage with the church family again. To use your skills and talents to serve and encourage others.

You may be someone who has been in church all your life but has never actually asked Jesus into your life. In the story of the prodigal son, we hear about the rebellious son who left the father's house and went his own way but there is another son in the story. This son had been in the father's house all along but didn't have a close relationship with his father. If you have never invited Jesus into your life or received an assurance that you are a child of God, I encourage you today to ask him into your heart and life.

If you are part of a church which has become a cosy club and has stopped being concerned for those around you, or know that your local fellowship is operating in a spirit of legalism instead of grace, I encourage you to put Jesus back at the centre and allow him to have his church back. To recommit to fulfilling the great commandment to love your neighbours and the great



commission to make disciples of all people. To pray for the prodigals who have left the church because of the way they have been treated and to live like the welcoming, loving father instead of the self-righteous older brother.

For those of you faithfully serving God in and through the local church I want to bless you and encourage you to continue to use your gifts to play your part in the body of Christ. I pray that over this coming year I may have opportunity to encourage you and help you to grow in your walk with Jesus either through writing or by speaking to you, hopefully in person but if not, virtually! I also pray that we may have the opportunity to have some fun along the way!

My prayer is that each person hearing or reading this speech will know that you are loved by God, that you are immensely valuable to him and that he has a plan and purpose for your life. We are all part of one body – let us live in the truth of that so that all may see Jesus in us and be drawn to him, and find their life in him.

My remit for this speech was to tell who I was, to share a bit of my testimony, to tell the church what they need to hear and to encourage – I pray that with God's help I have fulfilled that remit and look forward to working with you all in the year to come as together we seek to bring glory to Jesus and extend his kingdom on earth. May we, Christ's body here on earth, work in love and unity so that his church may be pleasing to him and his name be praised through all the world. Amen.

Carolyn as Vice-President

If anyone would like to be added to Carolyn's prayer support group please e-mail her on:
markcarolyn1983@gmail.com



My grand babies watching Nanny on the TV

From the Editor

If you would like to include anything in the **September Newsletter**, please let me have details by **Wednesday 19th August** in any of the following ways:-



- ◆ send it by email to: imc33chris@gmail.com
- ◆ ring me on: **01752 892341**
- ◆ post it through my letterbox at: **33 Julian Road, Ivybridge PL21 9BU**
please put your name on it

Blessings,
Chris Reed

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Since the middle of June I have been following Nicky Gumble's Bible in a Year. Finding it really good so far. The 1st of July started with this, and I thought Mark would find it interesting and he suggested that I put it in the newsletter.

An online survey listed all the qualities that people expect from 'perfect' pastors:

They preach for exactly twelve minutes.

They are twenty-eight years of age, but have been preaching for thirty years.

They work from 8 am until midnight every day, but are also the caretaker.

They frequently condemn sin, but never upset anyone.

They wear good clothes, buy good books, drive a good car, give generously to the poor and have a low salary.

They make fifteen daily calls to parish families, visit the housebound and the hospitalised, spend all their time evangelising the un-churched and are always in the office when they are needed.

They are also very good-looking!

Christmas Angels

Yes, it's that time of year again – the start of the great 'Christmas Angel Knitting' marathon! Originally, last year was going to be the last, however due to the effects of coronavirus, I thought that Ivybridge will be in even more need of blessing over the Christmas period. So, all you lovely 'knitters', it's time to get those knitting needles clicking again!! Let's see if we, as a church, can in some small way bless as many people as possible in our community this Christmas.



LAST YEAR'S 600!

The Aim: To share God's love and to bless the community we live in with a free Christmas decoration that comes with a message of hope at Christmas-time.

The Idea: Knit lots of angel decorations, attach a message of Christmas hope, and in one coordinated event leave them in (hopefully) hundreds of locations across our community for people to find (this is known as "yarn bombing").

Where did the idea originate? We got the idea from a friend of mine whose church in Fleet in Hampshire joined in last year (she is Sue Butterfield, who used to live in Ivybridge, so many of you probably know her). However, the idea originally came from the North Shields and Whitley Bay Methodist Circuit near Newcastle. In the past three years they (and churches like ours across the country) have knitted over 90,000 angels, and some of them have turned up as far away as South Africa!

What do we want you to do? Get yourself and your friends knitting angels – we need hundreds of them! (Last year we made over 600!).

Where do I get a pattern for the angels? There are already hard copies of the knitting pattern available on the noticeboard in the Concourse at church, or you can download an electronic copy from:

<http://www.christmasangel.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Christmas-Angel.pdf>



or if you prefer crocheting, then you can download a crochet pattern from:

<http://www.christmasangel.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Christmas-Angels-Crochet-Pattern.pdf>

What will we do? We will collect the angels from all you avid knitters (there will be a collection box in the Concourse at church from November onwards), and we'll print and attach the Christmas message labels; then on a date in the few weeks before Christmas we will organise the yarn bombing (if you want to be a part of this, please let us know and we'll rope you in). At the time of writing the exact date for the bombing has not yet been agreed.

Happy Knitting ☺

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