

INSIGHT



**HERTFORD METHODIST CHURCH
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE**

April - June 2021

REASSURANCE

If the mountain seems too big today, then climb a hill instead.
If the morning brings you sadness, it's OK to stay in bed.
If the day ahead weighs heavy, and your plans seem like a curse.
There's no shame in re-arranging, don't make yourself feel worse.

If a shower feels like needles and a bath feels like you'll drown,
if you haven't washed your hair for days, don't throw away your crown.
A day is not a lifetime, a rest is not defeat;
don't think of it as failure, just a quiet, kind retreat.

It's OK to take a moment from an anxious, fractured mind,
the world will not stop turning while you get realigned.
The mountain will still be there when you want to try again.
You can climb it in your own time, just love yourself till then.

Author unknown - submitted by Jen Doragh



A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER

A few days ago as I was leaving the building at Hoddesdon a man arrived to park in the car park. I watched, partly wondering if he was expecting to find us open, but knowing that probably he was just using the car park to pop to the post office on the other side of the road. I waited for him to finish parking and as he got out of the car I simply said to him "Hello, can I help you?" He explained that his wife was in the post office queue and he had something for her. He then thanked me for not 'having a go at him for parking in our car park'. This was followed really quickly by a question, "At one time I knew there were Jews, Muslims, Church of England; now there seem to be so many (I think he was talking about the different form of Christian Church really, as he looked at building), are they all worshipping the same God? It's confusing" he went on.

So we began talking, I learned quite a bit about his life experiences, a very interesting man. But also had the opportunity to share about how Methodism began, about how all Christian ways of 'being church' do indeed worship the same God, as do Jews and Muslims. One thing he shared about himself was that he was a musician and singer. He could play a number of instruments. I shared with him that perhaps he might be able to visualize all the different Christian denominations as separate instruments of an orchestra, all playing the same tune from offering a different sound. I explained a little of what I meant, of how the separate instruments all have a distinctive sound but when they come together as the orchestra we here so much more. It's a thought I feel worth expanding on and sharing now. For some it will be the sound of the string section that they are drawn to, for others it might be the power of the brass instruments perhaps, and still for others (me included) it would be the wind instruments, with oboe and flute. Each offers a distinctive sound, but when we hear them all playing the same piece together we appreciate at an even deeper level what the composer was seeking to convey.

For me, it is the same with our various denominations and traditions of church. Each one seeks to share the message of God's love, and the Good News of Jesus in its own distinctive way. However, perhaps the message of God's love for us, revealed in Jesus is more fully heard when the voice of the church is heard in harmony. Do we then enable people to hear as the composer and creator intend us to hear, and more than that to 'feel' what he is wanting to convey?

As we finished I blessed him (as you all know now I do all the time), for which he thanked me, and we went our separate ways.

What this brief encounter reminded me as that, as Peter encourages us, we are called 'always to be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' (1Peter 3:15)

I am convinced that people are seeking and searching. Let us have eyes to see and trust that God will give us the words to say.

I wonder when you last had that unexpected opportunity to share the Good News with someone, whether you knew them or not?

Debbie

BOOK THE DATE! - CHURCH AWAYDAY
at
High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon



Saturday 23rd October 2021

STREET PASTORING

“You are like angels in blue.”
“Can we have some pasta please?”

These are some of the many comments we get when walking up and down the streets of Hertford and Ware on a busy Friday or Saturday night. In answer to the second one, well, we just laugh and play along.



So, what is a Street Pastor?

It was set up in London by Les Isaac in 2003 and is basically ‘the Church in action on the street.’ Groups of Christians are trained to go out and be God’s presence in the busy night-time economy of our towns and cities.

What kind of things do we do?

We respond to whatever is going on around us. Prayer Pastors are an important part of our evening and so we start by meeting as a group (the duty Street Pastors and the Prayer Pastor) and pray for the night ahead. The prayer Pastor goes home but is available via WhatsApp if extra prayer is needed.

We then set out on our patrol taking a radio with us which is linked to CCTV central control. This way we can alert CCTV and other services to any incidents we come across.

We usually chat with the door security of the pubs and clubs. We generally have good relationships with door security and management in premises in the area. This gives us a ‘feel’ of how the town is that night. It’s then about checking up on people, especially as the night goes on. Often people get separated from friends and become vulnerable. This is not just young women but men too. Believe it or not, our lovely towns have many problems at night. I have seen drug dealers selling drugs to passers-by on Fore Street, mass brawls start in Railway Street, patched up bloody noses after a fight near the old post office, stood in the pouring rain holding a man to stop him from walking in the road and wrapping him in 2 space blankets to stop him getting hypothermia opposite Hertford Theatre. The list could go on; staying with a drunken woman and her friend who found it hard to cope until they could get a lift, preventing an abusive stranger taking advantage of a drunken young woman who had

no shoes on as they hurt her! Yes, we do carry flip flops, a very important part of our kit!

Over the years Street Pastors has grown to have groups all over the UK and even some abroad. Watched over by The Ascension Trust, we now have School Pastors, Rail Pastors (specially trained to work in areas where there are high numbers of rail suicides) and Response Pastors (they are specially trained to attend emergency situations in the UK needing some kind of relief response). There is a lot of work to do out there in our towns. You don’t need to preach your faith, in fact, it is discouraged. We simply act as loving Christians, a presence on our streets often asking ourselves WWJD? What Would Jesus Do?

The Covid pandemic has meant we have been out only a handful of times in the last year. It has also meant that a number of long-standing Street Pastors have given up for various reasons. Please pray for all of us as we move forward at this time and learn to adapt our behaviour as time goes on. We hope that when we can all go out safely again our group of Street Pastors will be out there making sure everyone is safe on the streets of our beloved Hertford and Ware.

If you want more information about Street Pastors nationally please look up The Ascension Trust online. As our church’s Street Pastor, I am happy to talk to anyone who would like more information or to know what specifically to pray about. Thank you for your support.

Yvonne Clarkson

Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.

Desmond Tutu

Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.



Nathaniel Hawthorne

THE LENTEN CROSS

It will be 30 years next year since we at Hertford Methodist first used the Lenten Cross and it is good to see it displayed again in the church window this year. Following an article in the Methodist Recorder in January 1992 by Peter Shilling at the Dome Mission in Brighton we decided to use the Lenten Cross in our church.

John Roberts (husband of Sheila) made our first plain wooden cross and thereafter we have made our cross from the trunk of the Christmas tree. Thanks go to Angela and Martin who most years have faithfully taken on the task of purchasing our tree and after Christmas forming it into a cross. Extracts from the above mentioned article follow:



Anne Gentry

'During my visit to the USA in 1988 I had seen a simple cross adorned by various symbols during each Sunday in Lent. I came back determined to introduce such a tradition in my own church. The first requirement was a huge Christmas tree. That was no trouble. Wherever I have ministered I have made sure that the family church has shared together in the excitement of decorating a wonderfully tall and real Christmas tree. The Christmas of 1988 at the Dome Mission was no exception, with a tree reaching 20 feet. This was ideal to use as our Lenten Cross the following Easter.

After all the Christmas celebrations were over, the tree was stripped of its branches and carefully made into a rough, but impressive cross measuring eight feet by five. I then created a liturgy that could be followed in the morning service from the first Sunday in Lent through to Easter Sunday. I tried to make it as simple as possible so that a different family each week, including the children, could lead us through it without difficulty. After a poem or verse, the symbol is quietly placed upon the cross in a pre-arranged position. Throughout it all the congregation stands in quiet meditation.

We first place upon the cross the bread and wine; symbols of the body and blood of Christ given for us all, a fact which began not at Calvary, but at Bethlehem. The following week we place the bowl and towel upon the cross. We remember that the Servant King calls us to live a similar life style. Next the money bag full of 30 pieces of silver. We remember that that is the value the world, even now, places upon the Saviour of us all. As the fourth Sunday arrives a purple robe is hung on one of the vertical

bars of the cross and a crown of thorns placed there, encircling where the horizontal and vertical meet. The mocking of Christ by the soldiers years ago finds an echo in our lives so often.

It is hard to place the whip upon the cross, but we place it there on Passion Sunday. We realise that with such an instrument of torture Jesus our Lord was scourged. Palm Sunday arrives and as we stand and rest a palm branch against the cross we feel ourselves with the crowd in Jerusalem years ago, and share in the triumphant praise of Christ as he is recognised, however briefly, as king.

In the darkly lit sanctuary on Good Friday, in utter silence but for the traffic passing by, two people (who dare) nail in three nails on behalf of us all. Some I have approached to do this within the service have refused – a sign, I think, of the realism the Easter Cross has brought to our fellowship. As the sound of metal hitting metal resounds around the church it is no easy experience. Tears often flow freely as the congregation is invited to kneel at the cross for prayer. Even the tree itself weeps with the sap latent within itself.

At the Dome Mission we share the triumph of Easter with all of Christendom. We have travelled along the Lenten Way and shared to some degree in the suffering of Christ. As the congregation begins to arrive on the day of the Resurrection, we each bring with us one spring flower to place on the cross. The previous weeks' symbols are removed and the transformation from the ugly to the beautiful happens before our eyes. Now the cross is resplendent in a mass of colour as the congregation, young and old, kneel for Communion.



In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit.

Anne Frank

Seen in St Thomas, Ensbury Park, Parish Magazine:

We are pleased to note that there has been a change of mind by the Housing Department regarding the name for the new Housing complex for the elderly. 'St Peter's Close' did seem somewhat inappropriate.

MY FAVOURITE HYMN: Richard West

What is my favourite hymn? That needs thinking about.

As a local preacher I have spent many hours reading hymns with a view to where they could fit into a particular service I was preparing. They would need to be appropriate to the theme and a particular part of the worship, with singable tunes as well as having appropriate words and understandable meaning.

Recently I was reading "Now the green blade rises from the buried grain" (SoF 306) because it is a seasonable Easter hymn, but the last verse hit me as being so relevant to this past year.

"When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:

Love is come again like wheat that springs up green."

I grew up in a church family. We moved from Baptist Sunday School, to Fellowship Group where I was a Covenanter, to Methodist Church, where I was a member of youth group and Sunday school teacher. When Jane and I got married we moved to another Methodist Church in Barking, where I was youth club leader. We came to Hertford in 1970 and joined Hertford Methodist where our boys came to Sunday school, and I eventually trained to become a local preacher. Both Jane and I have been closely involved in many church activities here – and we still are!

I think that, overall, my favourite hymn has to be "Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down" (SoF 503.) Although Charles Wesley must have written it several years ago - he died in 1788 - in three verses it says so much, and leaves me "lost in wonder, love, and praise!"

Editor's note: Charles Wesley was born in 1707 at Epworth Rectory, the 18th child of Samuel and Susanna. He studied at Christ Church, Oxford, and in 1735 became an Anglican cleric. That year he travelled briefly to Georgia in America with his elder brother, John. In 1738 he and John underwent a conversion to Methodism. He was happily married to Sarah and lived with his family in London and Bristol. Charles probably wrote more than 6500 hymns but this is certainly one of his best known. We

usually sing it to the Welsh tune Blaenwern, composed by William Penfro Rowlands (1860–1937), during the Welsh revival of 1904–1905. The tune is named after Blaenwern Farm near Tufton, Pembrokeshire. William sent his son from Porth to stay there with friends of the family to convalesce as it was thought the fresh air would assist his recovery, and he named the tune in honour of them.

Jackie Lawn



GOODBYES - ROGER WOOD

(27.7.32 to 9.12.20)

For many of us the most significant thing we remember about Roger will be music. For Roger music was the food of loving human relationships, and also one of the ways in which he expressed his love for God. Music was part of Roger's life from the very beginning in Hendon, as his father (Kenneth) was organist at one of the local Methodist chapels. The piano at home had organ pedals added, to help with practice! The foundations for Roger's faith were laid in the Methodist Church, and its youth clubs proved to be fertile ground for the growth of Roger's musical and dramatic gifts. Roger was an enthusiastic encourager of other people, especially young people.



His working life began as a trainee manager for W. H. Smith. Called up for National Service, Roger became a Conscientious Objector. Hoddesdon Methodist Church connections led to him working on a nursery at Nazeing which belonged to Mr. Harold Benjafield, Jill Geall's father.

Roger went on to become a Theatre Assistant at Hertford County Hospital, eventually finding his true vocation through training as a nurse.

Until recently Roger was still trying to contact and keep in touch with colleagues from those days. It was during this time that Roger met and married Liz, with whom he had five children - Peter, Wendy, Brian, Michael and Lindsey.

By now Roger belonged to Hertford Methodist Church where he was encouraged, and sponsored, to take organ lessons. As well as playing the organ, the profits from the sale of his pink coconut ice helped with fundraising! He was also a member of the drama group, taking part in, and even producing plays staged in our church hall. Later he joined Ware Operatic Society and took some of the leading roles in their productions, including Koko in *The Mikado* and the Major General in the *Pirates of Penzance*.

Nursing pay wasn't great, and Roger developed problems with his knees which resulted in him being advised to get a desk job, which he hated. One day, whilst working at *Fropax* frozen foods, there was music playing in the office which Roger recognised as the *William Tell Overture*. He began enthusiastically conducting with his fountain pen, accidentally splashing ink on to the freshly painted white office walls. He saw the funny side, but didn't work much at *Fropax* much longer! He moved on to do secretarial work at Goldings, the Dr Barnardo's Home. He loved working with the young people, especially as escorting some of them to be Wimbledon ball boys meant that Roger got a good view of the tennis on Centre Court. Closure of the Goldings home led to Roger working for Barclays Bank, which wasn't a good period of his life. During this time Liz became unwell, and she and Roger separated.

Wendy, then a lay worker at Coventry Central Hall, had arranged a trip to the Methodist Guild Holidays hotel in Sidmouth. On the Sunday morning her attention was grabbed by a man laughing his head off. Later in the week Wendy was up very early playing the piano; Roger invited her to accompany him to post his postcards! So began three delightful years of courtship.

Roger resumed his Methodist Local Preacher studies from 40 years earlier, whilst Wendy, supported by Roger, candidated for ordained ministry. Training for Wendy was to be at Queen's College, Birmingham, and the Chair of District told Roger that he couldn't go to college with Wendy unless they were married, so that decided things! At the end of

the year, one of the tutors thanked Wendy and Roger for sharing their first year of married life with the community at Queen's. As we would expect, Roger played his part in the musical life of the college, especially in worship, and he was given the award for best student by the College Librarian.

Roger continued to be very supportive of Wendy's ministry, accompanying her to Newport for her probationer appointment, and then encouraging her in superintendency when she moved to Kempston. Ill health resulted in Roger having to cease preaching, but he was very supportive of Wendy's part-time appointment in the Bedford North circuit.

During their time back in Hertford, living at Chauncy Court, Roger's electric scooter, 'Nippy', gave him a new lease of life, as he renewed contact with the local community and people.

Then it was back to Bedford, where Roger's diminishing health meant that he needed more nursing care. He moved to the recently opened Anjulita Court, with Wendy moving to one of the Ladyslaude Court flats on the doorstep. This seemed ideal solution. Roger loved being part of the Anjulita Court community, valuing the support and care of staff, volunteers and other residents – some of whom he had known during the time he and Wendy had previously been in Kempston and Bedford. He offered much to the community through his friendship, fun, his bad jokes, enquiring mind and, of course, his music.

(Extracted from Rev Andrew Hollins' tribute at Roger's funeral service.)

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(NCH) ACTION FOR CHILDREN – Supporting parents through lockdown.

The demand for parenting support during lockdown has grown as families have struggled to balance home schooling, childcare and work. Ruth Stokes from Action for Children reports on how the charity has responded.

In the middle of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, children's charity Action for Children launched a new service for parents. The advice website and one-to-one chat - Parent Talk - was a response to a growing number of parents needing help and guidance. In June the

charity and YouGov asked more than 2,000 parents how the pandemic was impacting them and their families. More than one in three parents said they felt out of their depth. Over a third said they were struggling due a lack of usual support. This reflected what the charity was seeing in its own services. In the first three months of lockdown, there was a surge of 417% to its existing digital parenting advice.

Parent Talk offers down-to-earth parenting advice, when it's needed. Parents can browse articles on the most common parenting questions, or talk one-to-one with a qualified parenting coach about anything that's worrying them. The charity sees parents come to the service with a range of needs, from emotional wellbeing and mental health to behaviour, development and co-parenting. The Parent Talk website builds on the charity's successful one-to-one chat service, which has supported more than 450,000 parents since its pilot in 2018. This includes more than 11,500 one-to-one chats.

Developing essential, continued support. Recent data shows that 90% of parents rate the support from one-to-one conversations at 4 or 5 out of 5, while 79% of parents say they feel supported after accessing the information, advice and guidance content on the website.

The site is reaching a large number of parents around the UK - between July and December 2020, it helped 233,647 families and the need for support remains high. That means that a priority for the team is now to ensure the service is sustainable for the long-term, to allow them to reach more parents when they need support.

Alongside this, they're using parental feedback and data to develop the service and help people find what they need as quickly and easily as possible. This feedback also helps the team see the difference they're making. As one parent said, "She [the adviser] offered more help to me in our short conversation than I've had in years of trying to get help for my son. I cannot thank her enough."

Find out more or get support by visiting Parent Talk on the Action for Children website.

"We're proud of our partnership with the Methodist Church, and grateful for the generosity of our devoted supporters. Their kindness never ceases to amaze us."

Karis Kolawole, Head of Faith Partnerships

WHERE ARE YOU NOW? - Revd Andrew Hollins

Thank you for the invitation to be the subject for this item in the *Insight* newsletter.

Some of you will know that, after my initial five-year appointment in Oxfordshire, in 1999 I became the somewhat reluctant Superintendent Minister for the Waltham Abbey & Hertford circuit. By the time I left, eleven years later, the Lea Valley North Circuit (as it became) had joined with our neighbours across the Essex border to form HAEBEA (the Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area). After John Butt was asked to move on a year earlier than expected, I added two happy years in pastoral charge of Hertford Methodist Church to my other commitments in HAEBEA.

As I didn't know where the Methodist Church would station me from 2010, I relinquished my role as District Ministerial Synod Secretary. I'm grateful for the wider experience of Methodism, beyond local church and circuit, which holding office for the District has given me, e.g. involvement in the transitional arrangements for the new Districts in and around London, plus the three years that I was privileged to serve on the Methodist Council.

The stationing process matched me with the superintendency of the eight churches in the Biggleswade circuit, which was planning a merger with two neighbouring circuits. My experience in HAEBEA was helpful with this and, in 2011, I became Superintendent Minister of the North Bedfordshire Circuit of 32 churches! Here, as elsewhere in my ministry thus far, I've had gifted and supportive colleagues. Seven of those colleagues have been probationer ministers, and it has been my privilege and joy to be responsible for their continued training in their earliest years of circuit ministry.

The circuit was unsuccessful in being matched with a minister in the stationing process for 2016. After much prayer and consultation I agreed to move within the circuit, from Biggleswade to Bedford, retaining the superintendency but changing the churches for which I had pastoral charge. During the eleven years I have been in the circuit, I have had pastoral charge for almost half of the circuit's churches – some, in very difficult circumstances, for only a few months.



