

Once in Royal Davids City

*Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.*

*And through all His wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He.*

*For he is our childhood's pattern;
Day by day, like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.*

*And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love;
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.*

*Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.*



over the stable. Stable (His birth) and the cross (His death) eternally linked.

We remember these words of Jesus from the cross, 'It is finished!'. Not the end. He was crying that He had accomplished what He had set out to do – sin and death were defeated and on Resurrection Sunday, the grave was empty. Jesus was alive! Forgiveness of sin restored relationship with God, eternal life was there for all who believe and accept the gift. The darkness of Good

Friday was forever replaced by the glorious light of Easter Day.

Why begin an Easter meditation with a Christmas carol? Because you cannot separate the events of Easter, the crucifixion and Jesus' resurrection, from Christmas, the birth of the Saviour in that stable in Bethlehem. The babe of Bethlehem is the Christ of the Cross.

other good enough to pay the price of sin, He could only unlock the gates of Heaven and let us in'.

Some years ago, when decorating the chapel for Christmas, I put a nativity display on a table and was moved to place a wooden cross behind it. As I completed the display, the sun came out and the shadow of the cross could be seen

Friday was forever replaced by the glorious light of Easter Day.

Norman Prescott

In this issue

Page 3 : From the Connexion

Page 7 : In the Joy of the Lord

Page 9 : A Year in the Life of...

Page 5 : Be Wise 6

Page 8 : Let's Celebrate

Page 11 : Hilda Rolfe



Education Scheme Study Weekend February 2024 – Fellowship, Friendship & Excellent Teaching



no longer need a Saviour.” The article on the front cover was a post of his from 7th April 2023.



The weekend was entitled “The What and Why of Preaching”. Six teaching sessions took us through

biblical preaching, historical preaching and so much more. Shaun Newton as Education Organiser once again provided an extremely good speaker steeped in Biblical truth and yet up to date. Pushing us out of our comfort zones on the Saturday, we were set a task to prepare a short, time limited sermon on a Bible verse from a selection given. I know the majority of us felt stretched but it was a really useful exercise and provided learning on our skillset, whether we were students or had been preaching many years. The theme continues at the October study weekend with “Preaching in a 21st Century World”.

As usual we enjoyed wonderful hospitality at the accommodation and a brisk walk on the Saturday afternoon burned a few calories whilst clearing our heads for the



rest of the weekend’s study.

Although a few of us may have rested in a different way back at Thornleigh!

We were also blessed with

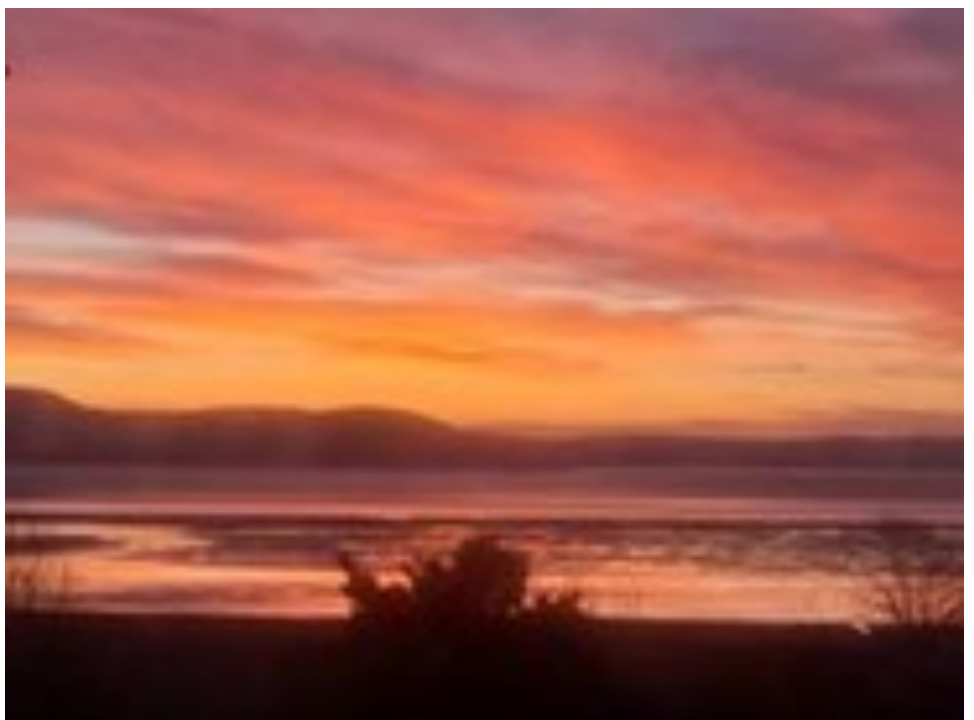
the prayers, epilogues and short communion service taken by our fellow attendees. On the Friday evening Dorothy Kendrick paid tribute to Hilda Rolfe and we all remembered her love of these weekends, of her students and mostly of the Lord and sharing his love with others. As you can imagine tears were shed but as we were remembering Hilda, there was laughter too. Many thanks to Dorothy for the loving way she led our epilogue that night.

We were blessed with good weather and Gill Tweddle shared her photograph of this beautiful sunrise on Sunday morning. I must remember to ask for her room next time I go!

Lisa Green

The last weekend in February was the first Education Scheme Study weekend of the year. Held as usual at Thornleigh in Grange Over Sands the subject was “The What and Why of Preaching” by Aaron Edwards, a theologian, writer and preacher. His books include ‘A Theology of Preaching and Dialectic (T & T Clark, 2018). For 7 years he was the lecturer in Theology, Preaching and Mission at Cliff College, before which he was a Teaching Fellow at the University of Aberdeen, where he completed his PhD. He lives near Sheffield with his wife and five homeschooled children, currently awaiting the arrival of their sixth child. He has over the years spoken and lectured on the theology of preaching at the Wesleyan University in Ondo, Nigeria.

He has been flown to Washington to speak at the International Religious Freedom conference and breakfast. He is a firm believer that “Christians need to become less embarrassed by the content of their Bibles”. Last year he was dismissed from Cliff College for posting on a social media platform that he felt “Homosexuality is invading the Church. Evangelicals no longer see the severity of this because they’re busy apologising for their apparently barbaric homophobia, whether or not it’s true. This *is* a ‘Gospel issue’, by the way. If sin is no longer sin, we



From the Connexion

FEBRUARY CONNEXIONAL COMMITTEE ROUND-UP

By Alison Tipping, Medlock Valley Circuit Representative

Connexional Committee 3rd February 2024—Downall Green IM Church

The meeting was chaired by Dorothy Kendrick as President, and we were joined by Chris Elsdon for a short presentation on the Connexional Website at the beginning of the meeting. He gave an update on what he has been working on so far on behalf of the Connexion. Another presentation was given later in the meeting by several members of the High Legh group, who shared their vision with us.

General Secretary's Report

Connexional Committee further discussed the meeting which had previously been proposed by Grapenhall, following responses from 25 churches. It was agreed that we arrange three meetings, one in the North East, one in the North West and one in Bristol on 27th April, where members of churches can discuss the future of Independent Methodism and related issues. Details will be sent out to the churches. This year's Annual Meeting will elect the members of the various departmental committees for the next three years. Virtually all the committees are under strength, so we are asking people to consider whether they could assist the work of the Connexion in the following areas: Admin Group, Church Support Group, Finance Committee, Ministry Committee and Overseas Missions. Please contact any of the organisers to find out more about their work. Len Ogilvie is standing down after Annual Meeting so we will be looking for a Ministry Organiser and there is a long-standing vacancy for an Admin Secretary. All officer positions are subject to re-election each year, and anyone interested in these roles is invited to contact the current post holder to find out what work is involved.

Administration Group

Connexional Committee approved the purchase of a franking machine, which is now in place at the Resource Centre. Based on the lower cost for pre-franked mail rather than postage stamps, it should pay for itself in just over a year. Alan Harrison has resigned from the Admin group. We are grateful to him for providing support to the churches on IT and data protection issues over the last 5 years, both as Communications Officer and as a member of the Admin Group, as well as for reorganising the conferencing facilities at the Resource Centre. The premises at Blackpool have now been sold, and there is some local interest for the premises at Croxton which may lead to a sale. A land registry issue has also been resolved for the church at Baildon Green, which was sold in 1994. Room bookings for Annual Meeting will be needed soon, a request will be going out to churches.

Church Support Group

Lisa is continuing working with the Review Group re bible studies and evaluation process. There has been no further progress on Church Support Worker Northeast Plus, which has been put on hold until the North East project progresses. Meetings have been held with several churches, and 7 or 8 churches are currently waiting for a visit. Church Support have been trying to highlight the churches who are on Facebook. This has been successful and appreciated by churches who don't normally communicate with Connexion. Hope Christmas Books were sent out to churches in the mailing, as an example of what churches could be doing. We know Bryn Church delivered 500 books in their area. Chris Elsdon started working for us in November and he has constructed a dummy website so far, as shown to Connexional Committee at the start of the meeting. It is hoped that the website will give a presence to all IM churches, even if they do not have their own website.

Ecumenical Officer Report

On December 12th Bill attended a 'Meeting for Advent' at No.10. Other attendees were campaigners for 'freedom of religion and belief'. Bill has been advising/informing the 'All Party Parliamentary Group on Pakistani Minorities' about the persecution of Christians in that country. The Prime Minister sadly wasn't in attendance, (urgently called to the 'covid enquiry') but Michael Gove gave a speech emphasising the Government's commitment to religious freedom worldwide. The theme for this year's 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' (18th - 25th January) was 'You shall love the Lord your God.....and your neighbour as yourself' – reflections on 'The Good Samaritan'.

Overseas Missions

Liz Greenhalgh - Liz continues her work in Romania. Her ministry is split into several areas: Youth, after-school activities and Prison chaplaincy among the women. Daniel and Gail Castro - Daniel is continuing his role as a part-time pastor, they are attending midweek activities at several IM churches in the Manchester area. With regards to OMS, they are in a transition as they have a new director. Daniel and Gail have both taken on the role of member care within OMS UK and are helping in different aspects of the transition. They will also be co-leading a short missionary trip to Ecuador in the summer of 2024. This could be an opportunity for people from the Connexion who might be interested in joining them on this trip. There was further discussion on how the Connexion may best support them going forward, given their change in role. L and P - P continues to organise training for groups of women and mixed groups from villages. The training is organised in partnership with other organisations; local, international, authorities and civil society. L continues to coach international women, mainly Christians, serving the Lord, mainly in Tunisia or other countries in the Arab world, but also further afield.

Most of the training that she gives is to equip French speaking Christian leaders to use coaching skills and also to become coaches. She also trains English speaking Christian leaders and also locals.

Education Organisers Report

There is no change to current Student numbers. are down by one, as one student has now completed their studies. Following the passing of Hilda Rolfe, Shaun has been in touch with all the students for whom Hilda was Tutor and is determining their position. He is in touch with a number of people through the [Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals](#) to determine if any would be willing and able to provide tutoring and assessing services. This was agreed some years ago and will come at a cost. The working relationship with Cliff College has come to an end, as we are now involved with the Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals, and progress is being made with AWE on formulating courses. The study weekend takes place on 23rd -25th February 2024, with the speaker Aaron Edwards. The Ministry & Leaders' Conference, now renamed the Fellowship and Bible Conference will take place on 19th-20th April 2024 at Garstang Country Hotel & Golf Centre, speaker Paul Baxendale.

Enabling Group

Members of the group have continued talks with MET (Methodist Evangelicals Together) in working towards the formation of the AWE (Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals) Academy.

The work with AWE is moving quickly forward in the area of training as mentioned in the Education Organiser's report. In addition, several prayer initiatives are being set up to encourage the denominations involved to meet and pray together, beginning with the 14 National Leaders prayer on 2nd February and an in-person meeting of the AWE Leaders to be held at the Resource Centre in May. Prayer is seen as vital by all the denominations involved and the Enabling Group is seeking to encourage corporate prayer events across our Connexion of Churches in addition to opportunities of meeting and praying with others within the AWE group.

The Administration Group have requested the Enabling Group to review all Connexion and Association policies and to ensure these are stored centrally at the Resource Centre, also for copies to be issued to all Trustees and Employees. The Church Statistics Form has included extra questions regarding Trustees within local churches and there is opportunity for churches to request training for Trustees if required. The Review group have now compiled their report which was discussed in the meeting. There will be further discussion after feedback from the regional meetings in April.

Finance Committee

The funds from the sale of Blackpool church premises have been received. Most churches have now been paid the £4K gift that was previously agreed. All current

grant applications have been dealt with and the accounts for 2023 are now due to be finalised.

Northwood Centre

High Legh Christian Fellowship are continuing to use the Centre every Sunday. Tuesday and Wednesday have been requested as their additional days, from last Connexional Committee meeting, but have not been officially signed for yet. It was agreed that a rental agreement will be drawn up on a rolling basis and will be reviewed every quarter for another year. A business plan for the Northwood Cottage is still ongoing. David Okell is considering resigning from his position as Site Manager for personal reasons, therefore we need to start considering appointing a part time Site Manager. The Management group are still responsible for the day to day running of the premises and for advertising and managing bookings for the cottage.

Safeguarding Report

Successful training sessions for churches were recently held at Bryn and Astley Churches. We are looking at setting up our own data base for Disclosure and Barring Service in conjunction with Due Diligence so we can keep a more available list. Graham Edmondson has offered to take up more of the safeguarding work to help with support for Marilyn.

Alison Tipping, Medlock Valley Circuit Rep.

UKRAINE APPEAL

Mount Zion Church, Pemberton are supporting the people of the Ukraine who are desperately in need of the following items:

Walking Aids - e.g. Folding wheelchairs, Zimmer Frames, Crutches, Walking Sticks, and Plastic Boot-like Splints

Medical Items - e.g. Dressing Packs, Dressing Pads, Bed Pads, Bandages, Plasters, Un-opened ointments and creams, Catheters, Catheter Bags, Stoma Products.

If you are able to supply any such items, they would be gratefully received at the Resource Centre, Fleet Street, for forwarding.

If you are unsure about suitability of items you are intending to donate, don't hesitate to contact the Resource Centre.



L. & P. enjoyed attending the wedding of their friends Alan and Katie at the end of January.

They hope to be able to visit their former country of ministry early this year and are praying that the Lord will open doors for them.

They are also planning to be in the UK in July. If your church or circuit would like a visit, please let them know.

BE WISE 6—WISDOM



Inspired by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Course, 'Be Wise', thoughts on Whole life Christian Discipleship. A series of articles of what it means to be a disciple of Christ in the 21st Century, 24/7.

One of the main aims of 'Be Wise' is to transform Christian Theology and principles into everyday behaviour that transforms the lives of Christians so that they can become a more effective witness for Christ. Today we live far more complex lives and are confronted by many difficult choices but when making decisions how often do we seek God's wisdom?

One of my lifelong ambitions, and I achieved it in 2015 was to visit the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Hagia Sophia means Church of the Holy Wisdom. It was built in just six years by the Byzantine Emperor, Justinian 1 and was completed in 537 AD. For nearly a thousand years it was the largest church building in the world. It has an immense 32 metre main dome. It is an amazing building and when you enter you feel the sheer spirituality of the place. As Christians we believe that God is ever present everywhere but, in some places, you just feel that presence more strongly and the Hagia Sophia is just one of those places.

The seeking of God's Wisdom was prominent not only throughout the

Old Testament but very much so in the early centuries of Christianity. Seeking God's wisdom was seen to be a very important part of life hence the biggest and greatest Church in the world was dedicated as the Church of the Holy Wisdom.

Seeking God's Wisdom

My thoughts turned to God's Wisdom following the events in southern Israel on October 7th, 2023. The events on that day and what followed. Trying to make sense of it, who was in the right and who was in the wrong, not only now but over the past seventy plus years and even before that. More importantly how can all the hostility, misery and suffering be brought to an end. I am not going to exercise my personal theories, but I do believe that there has been a lack of wisdom on both sides and from other world leaders over many decades. Acting wisely and the use of wisdom has sadly been displaced by the actions of self-interest and revenge.

All wisdom comes from God and its absence not only has an impact on global events but also on our day to day lives as we interact with those around us at work, at home and in our Christian fellowships. How often do we make the wrong choices by following our own selfish judgements and desires and not seeking God's wisdom?

A King who asked for Wisdom

King Solomon, son of David is a figure in the bible we associate with wisdom. In the first book of Kings, we read about how Solomon made a sacrifice to God, and this resulted in God appearing to him in a dream and asking Solomon what he wanted from God. In response Solomon asked for wisdom to enable him to rule and guide the people more wisely. We read that this pleased God, personally answering Solomon's prayer, and promising him great wisdom because he had not made a selfish or indulgent request or requesting the death of his ene-

mies.

We see demonstrated when Solomon was called to adjudicate between two women. The Old Testament regularly pulls no punches when it describes situations, and this incident is no exception. Two women living in the same house, described as prostitutes had both given birth to sons. Sadly, one in her sleep had rolled over her baby resulting in the baby's death. Waking she swapped her own dead baby with the live baby of the other mother. The other mother realised what had happened and both claimed that the live baby was theirs. The dispute over who was the rightful mother clearly escalated and was brought before the King.

Solomon was wise enough to understand that only the real mother would care for the welfare of the child and so acted, in what appeared to be a cruel way, by ordering that the child be cut in half to establish the baby's real mother. This resulted in the true mother being identified as she genuinely cared for the child and would rather him be given to the other mother than be harmed.

Shared Wisdom

Solomon is believed to be the author of several wisdom books in the bible including Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. Also, he is credited with the apocryphal writing of the Wisdom of Solomon. I wonder how often we explore these writings. I often use the beginning of Ecclesiastes, chapter three, 'A Time for Everything' when conducting funeral services because to me it speaks about life as we experience it with all its ups and downs. Another reading that you will be familiar with is in Ecclesiastes chapter four, 'The two are better than one' reading.

The Book of Proverbs, another set of writings attributed to Solomon, is a part of the Bible that we do not often read. Perhaps it is a book that we avoid because there is a truth in

every line, sometimes very uncomfortable truths. However difficult or inconvenient the messages on those pages are, it is God's wisdom shared with us through Solomon writings and presented for our benefit. We either follow that wisdom or we ignore it and suffer the consequences.

God's Word gives us a structure of wisdom on which to build and run our lives and provides the basis for making the right choices and decisions throughout life. Unfortunately, humankind has a natural tendency to ignore wise advice.

Aligning ourselves with God

In the LICC course 'Growing on the Frontline', one of the co-authors, Charles Hipsley wrote: - (I've taken the liberty of changing a couple of words for easier understanding.) *As the author of Proverbs reveals, the Bible is full of God's design for how we should live. If we 'turn our ears to wisdom' and 'apply our hearts to understanding' then 'wisdom will enter our hearts and understanding will guard us'.*

Hipsley, then goes on to state that to do this we must 'love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbour as ourselves' (Matthew 22:37-39). He also advises that we must not just read God's word but deeply receive it, to let it soak into us and help us engage our whole selves – mind, emotions, soul, and body – helping us to become wholly aligned to God's wise ways.

To achieve this, it is suggested that an ancient prayer tool known as *Lectio Divina* should be practiced. When reading a passage of the Bible, we should read it slowly and then re-read it two or three times. Ask yourself, what stands out for you in the passage? Then spend time in prayer considering the verses. What would you like to say to God about it? Talk to God about what you have seen in these verses, and then sit quietly with him in silence for a minute and let it sink into your heart.

Let us return to our starting point in the pursuit of God's wisdom contained in the Word, the Bible. Today we live in a far more complex world that is vastly different from

the one that Solomon knew. In the Bible we have the raw wisdom not only recorded by Solomon but by many others which has been handed down by God. What we read is a framework; guidelines to help us face everyday events. God's Word doesn't always provide us with definitive answers that we are seeking for specific situations. The question is whether God speaks to us in other ways in addition to His Word?

Triple Listening

John Stott, Christian thinker, author, and worldwide evangelical leader as well as being founder of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity calls for followers of Jesus to exercise what he called 'Triple Listening'. That to seek God's guidance and wisdom in our daily lives, we listen to what the Word (the Bible) has to say, what the world brings to our attention, and what we can learn from one another in the context of the 21st Century and any given situation we find ourselves in. We therefore need to ask God to speak to us through his printed Word, that He speaks to us of what is going in the world today, and that He speaks to us through our interaction with each other.

We must remember that our God is a God of the present, the here and now. He is not just a God of the past. He is a God of an ever-changing creation of which we are but a part. He knows our situation and the complex world in which we live, and He is there when we turn to him for wisdom and guidance.

Our complex world of today asks us to make many more decisions than those of past generations. Thinking just about life's basics, career choice, choice of partner or not, where to live, when to change jobs, all the things that we will be confronted with throughout life. God's Word doesn't give the direct answers we so often yearn for and so we must look to Him speaking to us in other ways.

Following God's Wisdom

Just over twenty years ago, I was faced with a number of decisions over a very short period of time that would affect myself and my family in many ways. My career working

for the National Telecommunications company had taken me to work at a location an hour's drive from home. We could have moved to what is a lovely part of the Welsh / English border, but I had to consider other family members. Having worked in my new role for a few years I was approached firstly about a position that would involve a large amount of travelling, and then about another career move that would have given me considerable financial rewards. Finally, an opportunity arose to leave for a complete career change after working for the same company for thirty-five years. What choice should I make?

I believe that God gave me the wisdom to learn from events that were happening around me at the time. Over the previous two years, I had witnessed the death or serious illness of a number of my colleagues who were all about my age, fifty. Two had severe strokes which left them completely incapacitated and needing lifelong care. Two died from cancer, one of which was particularly quick. Another fellow manager suddenly died from an abdominal aortic aneurysm. Finally, somebody who I had recruited to the department in which I worked was killed after falling asleep at the wheel whilst driving home after a nightshift.

I believe that God spoke to me through those events. Life is too short. I have other things for you to do. So, I took the company wide offer to be released not knowing what the future would hold. In the event it was a further nine months before they let me go and during that time the lives of my wife and myself were turned completely upside down when Gill was diagnosed with a spinal tumour whose removal left her completely wheelchair dependant. God sees what's coming around the corner when we don't. The result was that I became a full-time carer but this has also allowed me to do other things within my church and beyond that otherwise I would have been unable to do.

Final thoughts on Wisdom

Dr Dave Benson, the Director of Culture and Discipleship at LICC

and the author and presenter of the 'Be Wise' course during his first lecture focused on Wisdom. He quoted, that in the simplest terms, "Wisdom is reading and living the patterns of life well." How true that is. He also quoted others who had written about wisdom.

"It's discerning the way the world actually is and acting toward our ultimate goal." (Mark Strom, *Lead with Wisdom: How Wisdom Transforms Good Leaders into Great Leaders.*)

"Wisdom is about trying to integrate knowledge, understanding, critical questioning, and good judgement with a view to the flourishing of human life and the whole of creation." (David Ford and Graham Stanton, *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*)

How would you describe Wisdom? This was the question asked by Dave Benson at the end of the session on Wisdom. Here is my response.

All wisdom has its source in God, but God makes that wisdom available to us all in various ways. We find much of it in scripture but also by listening to what God has to say to us through the world in which we live and the people that we engage with. To receive all the benefits of God's wisdom we must fully engage with God.

The nature of God's wisdom is pure and unblemished. Without question it is *good* in the fullest sense of the word. There are no faults with it, and it will not lead you astray.

God's wisdom clearly defines how we should lead our lives but there are no guarantees that we will have successful or fulfilled ones. What God's wisdom will do if we follow it without deviation, is that it will enable us to face all the challenges and difficulties that life throws at us.

We will fail as individuals, as a society, and as the church if we do not seek and follow God's wisdom. This will result in us walking away

from "Shalom", a state where we will experience complete harmony with God, our fellow humans, and the world in which we live and where we will be able to be inspired by the joyful wonder of our Creator and Saviour.

The final word of wisdom goes to the writer of the Book of Proverbs, and it is wisdom that we should all follow.

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding Then you will understand what is right and just and fair – every good path.

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Proverbs 2:1—2, 9—11

**Rob Brooks
Grappenhall**

In the Joy of the Lord

Hilda Rolfe

30.01.1929 — 02.01.2024

South Hylton, North East Circuit

In January we gave thanks for the life of Hilda. The Church and hall were overflowing as we held a celebration and thanksgiving service. The service was led by minister, Anne Chisholm, with music provided by organist, John Blyth. This followed a committal service led by Martin Bolt.

We were able to share together in memories of Hilda's long and busy life, in which she was a blessing to so many people.

Hilda preached at our morning service on 31st December, sharing an inspiring and uplifting message. She died in hospital on 2nd January.

We remembered with gladness her work for the Lord. Hilda served originally at Robert Street Church, before being called to serve overseas, when Hilda began training as a midwife in preparation for this work.

Margaret Staples joined us to share stories of Hilda's work at the Donald Fraser Mission Hospital in South Africa (see overseas mission article). We were also joined by Sunderland Male Voice Choir, who sang the African Prayer, in honour of Hilda's love for South Africa and the work she carried out there.

We then praised God for her work after returning home in 1974 to care for her aging parents.

We remembered Hilda's work in the church, in various capacities. Her work also extended to the Circuit and the Connexion, especially valuing her work on the Ministry Committee for many years.

We thought of her contribution to Midwifery services in the area. The work she undertook with Social Services, and the time she spent in Durham Prison, teaching.

There are many reasons to bring gratitude for Hilda's life. She was a dear Sister, colleague and friend to many.

Our condolences are with nephew Michael, niece Gillian and their



families. We pray that as they thank God for their dear aunt, they may know His special blessings.

The service was closed with the hymn, Thine Be the Glory, remembering Hilda, and a testimony of her witness to the Lord, with almost 200 voices raised in praise and thanks.

Lucy Pearson

South Hylton

Keith Price

1st November 1950 - 8th October 2023

Ramsey Church, Liverpool Circuit

Keith Price came to know the Lord in Smith Street IM Church (which became Greenacres) in Oldham. He became part of the IM Home Missions team in the late 1970's. As part of this team he visited the Ramsey Church (Isle of Man), and saw their need of help. However, the work permit situation on the Isle of Man made it difficult for him to just move to the Island. It was some time before this was resolved.

After gaining a BA in Religious Studies, Keith moved to the Isle of Man. In 1984, he married Heather, and in 1986 became a Connexional Minister. When Heather's father, Billy Alexander died that year, Keith had just finished the minister's course and was able to become the new minister, although it was a few months before he was inducted. Billy had been the first Connexional minister in the Ramsey church and had served for 29 years. Keith the second, was in his 37th year as minister.



Keith brought news of what the Holy Spirit was doing in the eighties, something little was known of on the Isle of Man in those days. While he was waiting to move to the Island he arranged for some of the young people to attend the Young People's Weekend in Blackpool, where they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

His desire was always to move the church in the direction that God was moving. The transition from what the church was like then to what it is today has been sensitively done.

When Rachel (his daughter) came back from her Church Leadership Course 2011 to 2012 we started

the New Life Project. You may call it a church plant within a church. Now the whole church is ready for a new name, to better describe who we are. Thanks to Brian Rowney we found out how to do this.

The church agreed, on 1st October, to launch the new name on the 131st Church Anniversary on the 29th October. At that time we expected Keith to be with us launching it. One week later on 8th October, he died. We went ahead and launched "New Life Ramsey" Independent Methodist Church as planned on 29th. He had led us through to the new chapter of the work.

There were no traditional hymns at his funeral, just the worship music he loved. There was a clear gospel message with plenty of opportunity for those present to turn to Christ. The talk, eulogy and words from Rachel all encouraged those who filled the church to make sure of their eternal destination, as Keith had done.

The Price Family Ramsey IM

Let's Celebrate

Atherton IM

On 17th December we held our 3rd Sunday in Advent service, which was led by our Choirmaster Gordon Carlton. Although we no longer have a performing choir we still base our



Service on past choir pieces. This year the congregation sang (in good voice) and as always felt the warmth and Love of our Lord in the various songs from the piece 'Beautiful Star of Bethlehem'.

After the service, we had our Christmas themed Bring and Share Lunch, complete with Christmas crackers, carols, and lovely Christmas music.

Our epilogue was led by John Barlow. We were blessed as we celebrated with our sister Joan Ashton (who has returned to live in the UK from America).

On 24th December we held our Christmas Eve service led by Jayne Handley and Joanne Lewis. As always Jayne and Jo gave an uplifting and thought provoking service. Friends and family joined the congregation as we looked forward to celebrating

our Dear Lords birthday.

We send all our Love and Blessings for a peaceful and healthy New Year.

Judith Twist Atherton IM

Noble Street

On 19.11.2023 we held our 155th Church Anniversary. Our guest speaker was Mr Roger Stone.

As we are a church without a minister (and an organist/pianist) we rely heavily on visiting speakers. Some from The Independent Methodist family and others from brothers and sisters in Christ in our locality of Bolton. We wanted to invite some of the speakers and their wives and husbands who had given up some



West Camel IM

Our second united all-age “Lego Service” took place on Sunday 21st January, led by Ray Ursell. After some singing, there was an animated ‘Lego’ film of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Then, young



of their precious Sundays to come and bring the word of God to us.

Some of the speakers’ spouses have also helped by playing the piano for us, as we are bereft in that department too. We had a great turnout and it was nice to see our church fullish even if it was only for one Sunday. It was also a change for the speakers who had the chance to listen rather than be the speaker.

So, Mr Stone was under no pressure at all, just a congregation of lay preachers!!!!

It was a great service followed by a buffet tea. Good fellowship enjoyed by all.

Thank you to all who came and supported us.

Lesley Warburton
Noble Street

and old set about making “Lego” models. They were given the choice of The Feeding of the 5,000, The Prodigal Son, or Jesus preaching from the Boat. As it happened, everyone chose the



latter, and some good models were produced.

Our half-term Children's Holiday Club on 13th February went very well. The children made model thrones and crowns, and learned about two Bible kings - David, who killed Goliath, and Joash, who



became king at the age of seven. They also enjoyed songs and games.

Geoff Chapman
West Camel

A Year in the Life of a Church Support Worker

Hi, as part of my role as Church Support Worker for 2 days a week I get to meet with a lot of different people and churches. Last year I had the opportunity to visit and join with a lovely selection of our Connexion. If you would like to chat about how things are going at your church or how you'd like to move forward, please contact me on cs.worker@imchurches.org.uk.



At the beginning of 2023 my first visit was to Trafford Christian Life Centre to visit their Prayer Evening. It was a change from their usual being in the Church itself with worship to start. There were about 40 people attending of

a variety of ages and a few families.



first time in 3 months I could brush my teeth with my right hand and sleep without pain. Since then, the Church has welcomed more and more new members and even

When Dennis Ryan asked if anyone wanted to come to the front for prayer, several did for baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing, and confirmation of calling. I received healing in my shoulder that I was awaiting an injection and therapy. God truly blessed me that night and for the

planted a fellowship in Huddersfield due to a following on their YouTube services and Facebook live streaming of services during the pandemic.

My next visit was one I don't get to make often due to my own Church prayer meeting being on a Tuesday morning. That week however, I managed to get to Moorside for their monthly Coffee Morning. It is always a blessing to meet with the fellowship there and other friends for our Astley and Oldham churches. Whilst there, a mum, grandma and two toddlers came in and Dorothy Kendrick sent me to my car for 'supplies to amuse' the children. This led us to bring our 'Welcome' bags out of storage (we had a couple of examples left) to give to the

Church for such occasions.

Just down the East Lancashire Road was the lovely Church of Roe Green. The Church had started a youth group on Friday nights and was looking for help finding a youth worker, this was a difficult one as whoever I asked was so busy with their own church. We even drew a blank with the Manchester based charities who train youth workers. Since then, with the employment of another 2-day Support Worker – Joy Higham, we hope to help them.



As she settled in her role of maternity cover for Connexional Services Manager Laura organised a cake and coffee event for

Dementia Awareness at the Resource Centre and it was held in Lamberhead Green's Sunday School room. I managed to be given some cakes from the local Pantry and attended. It was a lovely event and brought those who had the opportunity to travel a chance to meet up whilst allowing local community members the chance to come back into the church.

As part of the Connexional Committee which I attend as an employee I got involved in the Business plan development for the Northwood Centre and attended a fellowship evening there run by the High Legh Christian Fellowship. The Church Support Group always have their Annual Away Day at Northwood which is a true blessing to the group members as we pray and prepare for the Annual Meeting.

In July we had a short but pleasant Annual Meeting which whilst officially only being for a day, gave the chance for an enjoyable weekend away. New Silksworth arranged a fellowship evening on the Friday for those who had travelled up early and I managed to set up a small area showing what resources are available from Church Support whilst also helping with the Renewing Our Calling review. On the Sunday morning, a very enjoyable time of worship was had at Hettenle-Hole church. A good opportunity

to check in with more churches and people than usual, see how Churches are getting along and if there was anything we could do to help.



It was about this time that I began receiving charity donations from the Heinz factory in Wigan and so boxes of summer tins to help families were

distributed from the Resource Centre and since then catering sized tins of baked beans have found themselves across the Connexion! Useful for breakfasts, coffee mornings, cafes, messy church, toddlers – beans on toast evangelism!

Following summer holidays, I attended 2 conferences online, one was the Global Prophetic Alliance event in Glasgow and the other was the Church & Culture Conference in Mecklenburg USA. Both were very informative in their own ways and hopefully enabling me to have an up to date understanding of global Christian trends, events, and speakers.

I had the privilege of attending the Study Weekend at Grange and a very timely teaching on multi faith evangelism was given by Gerard Charles who had spent 10 years church planting among Muslims in Northwest China with OMF. He is currently their North England representative. It was definitely needed and perhaps more training to help our Churches understand Islam and other faiths in perspective to Christianity could be sought.

I missed the Sunday morning as I was preaching at Roe Green's Harvest Service and was blessed by the wonderful gifts of produce the neighbourhood had dropped off during the weekend and during the service for a local charity. It was wonderful to see faith and works in action.

A few weeks later I was back along that stretch of the East Lancashire Road to our Tyldesley Church. Following a few years of prayer and seeking the Lord they are blessing everyone with the refreshment that reflection has served them. An

evening of worship was enjoyed by many, including several members from our local churches! It was good for old friends in Christ to see one another after such a long time of no in person events for our Connexion.



In October the Church Support group was joined by Joy Higham of our Bryn Church as a part time Support Worker. Bryn have a

monthly café for breakfast etc. so Marilyn and I bobbed round for breakfast, we enjoyed the company of Phil Jump and his wife and Joy. Amazing who you meet at I.M. food events!



Next stop was off to Bethel, Colne with Joy and Marilyn for a Church Support meeting with members who wanted advice on the building, energy bills and the way forward. What a joy to meet with such faithful people, we were as encouraged as hopefully they were. Joy was especially interested in their snooker room – a fantastic evangelism tool with a weekly group meeting together. It was also a treat for myself as I had last been there in 1991 with our young people's group having a sleep over in the Sunday School room!!



A visit to Astley Off the Rail's sparked the idea of a Circuit version to travel from one church to the next. This was a really

lovely all age event that happens about 3 times a year. Not just for train enthusiasts either! Fun was had by all ages, but it was also an opportunity for people to see what the building looked like, meet people from the Church and share food. A really loving atmosphere could be felt by all who came into the building.

The Christmas season brought a visit to Keble Street, Ince. Such a tremendously gifted church with



crafts and food and love for one another and Jesus. Whilst preaching I had spotted their luncheon club was having a

Christmas fair, what better excuse to pop over and see how things were going.

What did we find but Anne Cheers enjoying her lunch! What a lovely surprise.



A trip to Mount Zion, Pemberton's Christmas Craft Fair introduced us to wonderful talent and an outpouring of love for

their neighbourhood in the form of fundraising and collections for the Ukraine and support for local homes for those with differing abilities as well as older people. Yet another group full of love and fellowship.

Next up was an amazing Carol Service at Bethel, Wigan. This was a wonderful Circuit event and had visitors from afar as well, well as far



as Oldham and St Helens! The love and hugs and continued comments into the New Year of people saying how fantastic it was to be

together in Christ worshipping Him and seeing one another again.



Wigan is made up of some very different churches and whilst we may love banding our 'independent' brand about,

there was a lot of love shown that night. I personally have felt such encouragement going round our churches in person after compiling the very small amount of returned review questionnaires at the beginning of last year as part of Renewing Our Calling.

And so to the beginning of this year. The full contingent (Marilyn, Joy and I) went to Hindley Church to discover unbelievable gas bills and Joy (now designated the bill

expert) is currently investigating further. Yet again, although feeling frustrated by financial attack and a lack of able bodies, the faithful few encouraged us and we left talking of coffee mornings and Lego building children's events.

The support for one another in our churches carries on unofficially even when Circuit events have stopped or reduced. The love we have for one another has been evident at all the churches I visit, whether it is including our brothers and sisters on our prayer lists or visiting church events, sharing on Facebook, or giving a call to make sure things are all right. The support systems we have when we get out there and visit our churches warms our hearts and faith that we are not as apathetic as often painted. There have been many other emails, phone calls and zoom meetings with other churches and Connexional staff but generally a year in Church Support, albeit for 2 days a week, has been busy, challenging and rewarding. I look forward to another year supporting our churches working for God's kingdom.

Lisa Green

HILDA ROLFE DONALD FRASER MISSION HOSPITAL, VENDALAND 1958 – 1974



Hilda became a Christian in her late teens. A few years later she was called to work in Africa while at the Keswick Convention. At the time she was working as a secretary, but soon began training to be a nurse and midwife. She was led by the Lord to the Donald Fraser Mission Hospital in the remote Ven-

daland region of South Africa., where she worked from 1958 until 1974, when she returned home to care for her elderly parents.

Her journey to South Africa took two weeks by sea, followed by a long and arduous journey inland, often over mud roads. Her first period of ministry was for five years.

She had expected to find a hospital consisting of mud huts, but in fact there were extensive and well-equipped buildings. The hospital had 275 beds including wards for medical, surgical, children, maternity and infectious diseases, along with outpatients, pharmacy and classroom. The staff also visited 12 clinics in surrounding villages. Tuberculosis was rife and Hilda cared for those patients in the isolation unit where she worked for two years. She then moved to the

maternity department before becoming matron in charge of the whole hospital in 1970.

She later reflected: 'I wondered about my ability to cope, but was reminded that personal strength and gifts alone were insufficient for the task, there was a need for a daily walk with God.' Hilda certainly was an example of someone who walked closely with God and influenced many others.

On leaving Bible College in Scotland she was given promises from the Word of God from Isaiah 43 verses 1 – 3. These verses remained precious to Hilda throughout the rest of her life. There were many times when she had to cross swollen rivers when visiting the outlying clinics. Sometimes vehicles could get stuck. If she had to cross on foot there could be dangers of

Connexional Addresses

Connexional President Dorothy Kendrick

president
@imchurches.org.uk

General Secretary Brian Rowney

general.secretary
@imchurches.org.uk

Financial Administrator Alan Britton

financial.officer
@imchurches.org.uk

Acting Safeguarding Officer

Marilyn Riding
cs.organiser
@imchurches.org.uk

Business Department

Registered Office and Resource Centre

Fleet Street, Pemberton,
Wigan WN5 0DS
01942 223526
resource.centre
@imchurches.org.uk

Connexional Services Manager Kathy Pringle

01942 223526
resource.centre
@imchurches.org.uk

Association Manager Laura Pendlebury

01942 223526
association.manager
@imchurches.org.uk

All Officers' Addresses

can be found in the Directory which is obtainable from the Resource Centre.

All articles for the magazine should be sent to the Resource Centre postal address or via email to magazine@imchurches.org.uk

Connexion Magazine

ISSN 0141 - 4372

Independent Methodist Churches

www.imchurches.org.uk

crocodiles!

Above the entrance to the hospital were the words DZINANI LA YESU (in the Name of Jesus)

The mission statement of the hospital was that "In the Name of Jesus" their purpose was to

- Heal the sick
- Preach the Gospel and
- Teach and train African nurses.

Hilda embraced this statement and was fully involved in all three areas .When she later became matron she oversaw the running of the whole hospital and remained particularly committed to the maternity department. Her day began at 6am when the night staff checked off. She would be busy all day until her late rounds of all the wards checking the patients and encouraging the night staff. She was also on call during the night!

Each morning started with prayer and all the hospital workers, cleaners, maintenance staff, gardeners and others would gather in the outpatients' department. Later in the morning many nurses and midwives would gather for their morning prayers. Prayers were said on the wards at the beginning of each day too. Ward services were held on Sundays and Sunday School for the children. Some of the staff visited the villages to hold Sunday Schools. Some attended the local church on Sunday mornings There were regular prayer meetings, Bible studies and Nurses' Christian Fellowship meetings. Hilda took an active part in all these activities.

Hilda especially loved Christmas in the hospital. She made sure that each child in the hospital received gifts of clothing, a toy and sweets. Many of these were sent by friends and prayer supporters in our IM churches. She also organised and loved the lamp-lit carol singing round the hospital, its compound and local villages.

Hilda was committed to the ongoing training of midwives and nurses. The programmes were commended by the South African Nursing Council and developed so that Donald Fraser nurses could take the appropriate examinations in order to qualify.

Hilda was an amazing person, full of energy and fun! She had a great love for her African patients and colleagues and was often heard to say that she learned to expect the Lord to answer prayer from the example of the African believers. She said that she went to Africa with great plans of changing things for the better – which she did. However, she herself learned to have a total reliance on God and that "the most important thing we need is Jesus."

On her return home Hilda served for 14 years as Connexional Overseas Missions Organiser and over that time supported over 20 missionary personnel.

Anne Fambely

On behalf of Overseas Missions Committee



Connexion

The magazine of the family of Independent Methodist Churches

The last day for articles to be submitted for the May / June issue of the Connexion magazine is Monday the 15th of April. The theme for this issue will be 'Trust'.

Please could all articles be sent either directly to the Resource Centre via post, or by email to magazine@imchurches.org.uk

Just a quick reminder that ideally all photographs need to be digital. Do ensure that safeguarding principles are followed by asking permission for the publication of any photographs and for the articles where people are named and/or can be identified.

Thank you for all the articles – please keep them coming!