



The greatest need that we have in our lives, after the last couple of years we've experienced, is a sense that there is hope in this world. Some of us have experienced great loss over this period, for some it's been disruption, and for many it's just been a long test of mental, emotional, and physical will. These last couple of years have caused some of us to doubt our faith and lose grip on the things we used to hold to so tightly. But, Jesus brings real hope to the whole world, which is why, as the title implies, **hope is here!** But how does Jesus bring hope? Here are four ways in which He brings hope:

### **Hope for the Weary** (Matthew 11: 28 – 30)

We were created by God to live with a healthy cadence in our lives - yet, too many of us are living 'on the edge' in every area of our lives. We fill our calendars to bursting; we can't say no; we live with a harmful drive to achieve; and we have lost hope that it will slow down anytime soon! But, Jesus offers us a wonderful gift when He says that He has come to give us rest, and that this rest is found in a grace that doesn't demand that we jump through hoops or get everything right. The rest that Jesus offers us is an unmerited favour for anyone who comes to Him, and this grace is best experienced in community. We can learn from Jesus as we learn from one another. When we 'do church' with one another, we lift one another up, we protect one another's boundaries and we carry one another's burdens. We don't have to live each day so exhausted by simply trying to keep up - we can allow others to help us. We must realise that we are 'human beings'

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and not 'human doings'. We are loved by God and that is enough. We need to practice saying 'no' and receiving the grace of God while investing in relationships that make us healthy.

### **Hope for the Broken** (John 8: 1 – 11)

There is no worse feeling than when our sin finds us out. Being exposed can leave us feeling broken and ashamed. Often this brings us to 'rock bottom'. Many of us can relate to the woman caught in adultery in this passage. We may have failed in different ways, but they have the same result! The woman was going to pay the price for her sin - until she met Jesus. What hope she must have felt as the stones began to fall at the feet of her accusers, and she was given a second chance to 'go and sin no more'. If we feel broken today, hope is here. Jesus is still offering forgiveness and a fresh start. The Church should be the place where grace is found easily, and forgiveness is extended quickly. If you think about it, there's nothing that Jesus can't forgive, and because we've been forgiven, we should extend forgiveness to others. Jesus loves us just as He finds us, but He loves us too much to leave us there. We must offer the brokenness of our lives to Christ and choose obedience. We must forgive others and welcome them into the family of faith.

### **Hope for the Underdog** (1 Samuel 17: 20 – 50)

David was only a young boy when he decided to go toe-to-toe with a Philistine giant. Everyone else was too afraid to fight because it seemed like more than they could overcome - and they were right! The only way this battle could be won was by trusting God to intervene. On his own, David was an underdog, but with God, he was an overcomer. There is no enemy you can face in this life that God cannot give you the victory over - but you must trust in Him! When the Church comes together in great faith, there is nothing it cannot do. The Israelites were fearful until David stepped up in faith, and sometimes a community of believers needs someone to go first. That step of faith, though, can ignite others to follow. Remember,

our God is more powerful than any force in the universe, and together with Him we can do amazing things! If God is with us, there is nothing we cannot overcome - so choose faith over fear.

### **Hope for the Doubter** (John 20: 24 – 29)

When life gets tough, it is easy to doubt that things can get better. The disciples had watched their friend be crucified then buried in a tomb - and they were devastated! Even though the other disciples had claimed to see Jesus resurrected from the dead, Thomas did not want to get his hopes up, only to be disappointed again - and he doubted their story. It wasn't until Thomas saw the scars on Jesus' hands and side that he was filled with hope again. Some of us have experienced such tragedy and pain that we too struggle with doubt, but we need to know that Jesus has overcome death and, if we have eyes to see it, is active in our lives today. The Church must become a place that is safe for those who have doubts - the evidence for God is best revealed when it is lived out authentically in community. There is evidence that Jesus has risen from the dead and is at work in the world today; and Jesus is not afraid of any doubt we have and will meet us right where we are. We simply need to have the courage to trust that Jesus has overcome death and look for evidence all around us!

So, let's always remember that Jesus is:

- Hope for the weary
- Hope for the broken
- Hope for the underdog
- Hope for the doubter

and where Jesus is, there always is hope, and we must believe that he is here with us today - *'For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.'* (Matthew 18:20)

When people gather in the name of Jesus, that's what we call church, it's what we call fellowship. We trust that the gathered church is an empowered church. So, let's believe today for those in our communities who are struggling to find hope, and let's resolve to share that hope with them so that they too may have the same hope that we do!

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**Gail and Daniel Castro** are still living at the Rock of Horeb Centre, but trust that, in His time, the Lord will provide a suitable house for them. The Centre is continuing to function, though not at the same pace as in the summer. In October, a team of fifteen OMS missionaries spent a week doing practical tasks around the camp which was a great encouragement. They are also praying that

the Lord would continue to use them to encourage many people in the Camarma church in their faith and ask for prayer that the church leadership might be sensitive to God's leading and also the needs of the congregation. Some are ready for more discipling, while others seem to have fallen away and need encouragement to return to the fellowship. Amid all the current uncertainty, they were hoping that both Melissa and Ruth would be able to join them in Spain for Christmas.

**L. and P.** have been back in North Africa for about three months now. However, during the month of November, they held various meetings with UK churches, some via Zoom and others using a previously prepared video. One of the Zoom meetings was with the Northeast circuit, so some of us there were able to get a good update on their ministry and were also able to cover various issues in prayer. L. is continuing with her counselling and coaching work, some of which she is still doing online. P's project work has up to now had to be slimmed down, as some of the team have not returned to the field. However, he himself is focusing on several needs in the villages he visits: methods of irrigation; planting drought resistant trees and poultry farming. All of these have been found to improve the quality of life for the people. We were also able to pray for several contacts by name, some showing interest in the Gospel, others sadly in danger of turning back.

**Liz Greenhalgh** has had a lot of upheaval over the last eighteen months. There have been a number of major changes to her ministry, the main one being leaving her work with the women's rehab unit. She has also moved out into a house, which she has been sharing with Robyn, a fellow-worker, and they have now also been joined by a new colleague too. On top of all that, there have been the effects of the pandemic. However, at the time of writing, many aspects of ministry have got going again. Liz thanks the Lord for His keeping power and His guidance in her ministry. She visited one of the more recent beneficiaries of the food kitchen and the lady accepted an invitation to church where she was made very welcome. In addition, her 14 year old daughter has joined the youth group which is growing fast.



Liz continues to be involved in a reading project/after-school club, which currently has six children attending. As there are two adults at each session, it is more beneficial for the children to learn in such a small group. Liz finds the children to be such a delight and they really love to come as they learn together through fun activities.

After sharing prayer together on one particular occasion, one of the boys picked up a Bible that was on the window sill. Liz read to them John 3:16. After a discussion about its meaning, three of them invited the Lord into their life and Liz prayed with them, alongside two others who had already done this at an evangelism programme.

Liz gives praise and thanks for the reading project coming together and for how God is working in the hearts of the children. She asks for prayer for the children to continue to grow in an understanding of who the Lord is and what He has done for them, not just at mind level, but in their hearts

*Anne Fambely, OSM Committee*

## CELEBRATIONS AT THE COMMISSIONING SERVICE OF GEOFF CHAPMAN

On Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, at a special service in All Saints Church West Camel, Geoff Chapman was commissioned as an accredited preacher in the Independent Methodist Connexion.

Unfortunately, due to storm Arwen, Shaun Newton, Connexional Educational Organiser, who would have done the commissioning, and Dorothy Kendrick, Connexional Past-President, were unable to attend due to cancelled trains.

The service and commissioning were led by Ray Ursell, the church's own minister. Greetings from the Bristol Circuit were brought by Terry Sweet. Geoff's wife, Elizabeth, read from Romans 10: 9-18.

Geoff told the congregation that, although he had served

as a Methodist local preacher for fifty-three years, having joined the Independent Methodists, he felt it right to obtain official accreditation. He hoped to continue to follow his calling as God gave him the ability, since he believed that the Christian gospel, with its message of hope, was never more relevant than in the troubled times in which we live.



From left: Ray Ursell and Geoff Chapman.

The service ended with Charles Wesley's hymn, 'A charge to keep I have', and was followed by a buffet tea.

*Geoff Chapman, West Camel*

# 2022 - a year to campaign to End The Persecution

says **Fiona Bruce MP, Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief**

*For those persecuted simply for what they believe, may next year be different...*

For most of us there is a positive sense of new beginnings at the start of a year. But, for too many around the world, there is little which is positive to look forward to.

There will be no New Year celebrations for Maira Shahbaz, a 14-year-old Christian schoolgirl in Pakistan, kidnapped last year from just outside her home, raped, 'forcibly married', forced to convert to Islam and even when she managed to escape finding no justice through the legal system there, and now living in hiding with her family in fear of their lives.

Nor will Chang Weiping be able to look forward to this New Year. He is a lawyer in prison in China, forced to sit on a tortuous 'tiger chair' for up to six days at a time, and facing round the clock interrogations, subjected to prolonged sleep deprivation, with a lack of adequate food and hygiene facilities. All because he represented clients in support of their freedom of religion or belief.

Nor will Valentina Baranovskaya, a 70-year-old Jehovah's Witness woman, be looking forward to 2022 with her family. She is in prison in Siberia for breaching the Russian criminal code – as is her son. Simply for being a member of her faith - the Jehovah's Witnesses are a banned extremist organisation there.

And, teenage Christian Leah Sharibu, kidnapped along with 113 other schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria, will spend her fourth year apart from her mother Rebecca. Brave Leah is the only one of those schoolgirls not to have been released – because she has refused to renounce her faith.



Fiona Bruce MP in the House of Commons with Mervyn Thomas, Founder President of CSW meeting Rebecca Sharibu, mother of abducted Nigerian schoolgirl, Leah. (Photo courtesy of Fiona Bruce MP)

Nor will Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo, leader of the Monte de Sion Independent Church in Cuba, be with his wife Maridilegnis and their children. He has been detained in prison, charged with crimes including 'disrespect' and 'public disorder,' at risk of a ten year prison sentence and subject to brutal beatings. Maridilegnis says,



Cuban Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo and his wife Maridilegnis Carballo (Photo courtesy of CSW)

*'I have been married to Pastor Lorenzo Rosales for more than 20 years and we have served God since then. He is not a criminal; he is a man of God. I am very afraid for his life, my children and I plead for help - cries for help which we lift up to God.'*

All of this has happened to these people, and is happening to countless millions of people of different faiths and beliefs around the world today – simply because of what they believe. Yet, the right to believe is a fundamental one – as Article 18 of the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights states, *'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.'*

But, today that is far from a reality for many around the world - believers are losing their jobs, education, homes, livelihoods, families, freedom, access to justice, even life itself; they cannot meet with others to worship, they are being discriminated against, marginalised, beaten, threatened, tortured and killed.

And, the extent of this in the 21st century is not only simply staggering but largely unrecognised – it is estimated that over 83% of the world's population live in a country where their right to practice their faith or belief is restricted, for many severely, and often by their own government. It is also estimated that 80% of the persecution globally is against Christians. And, this gravely disturbing phenomenon is growing. Even during the Covid pandemic, members of religious groups around the world have been scapegoated – blamed and ostracised – for the pandemic in their countries and excluded from health treatments to alleviate it.

Do you remember the campaign started by the churches in this country 'Stop the Traffik?' That ultimately led to the Government passing the Modern Day Slavery Act to tackle the scourge of human trafficking – particularly of young girls into prostitution – in this country. So, people of conscience engaging and campaigning can make a difference!

As the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, I am therefore initiating a new campaign – 'End The Persecution', encouraging people from churches across the country to come together to champion freedom of religion or belief and to support those in other countries who are persecuted, in the hope that many of them will be able to approach the next new year with hope, rather than fear or dread.

To find out how you and your local church can support this campaign please see <https://endthepersecution.uk/>

For more information about freedom of religion or belief and the worldwide persecution of so many, visit Christian Solidarity Worldwide's website – <https://www.csw.org.uk>

**Fiona Bruce has been Member of Parliament for Congleton since 2010. She is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group in the House of Commons and is the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief.**

*Please do pray for our Connexion*

FOR OUR CHURCHES  
FOR THE CONNEXIONAL OFFICERS  
FOR CIRCUIT REPRESENTATIVES  
AND FOR ALL DEPARTMENTAL GROUPS AND COMMITTEES



## CHRISTMAS IN RAMSEY

Our theme for Christmas this year at Ramsey IMC was based on some designs by Tim Price, using lines from carols and Bible verses, on which he based talks for our online services and services in church. They were also the basis for a Christmas tree that we decorated in Ramsey Town Hall entitled 'A Christmas Carol'. This was part of

the town's 'Festival of Trees'. Members of the church met to assemble other decorations depicting Christmas Carols which were added to the tree.

Along with this, there was a Christmas Carol quiz, where participants had to name the carols which the lines came from. A prize was awarded to the winner at our evening Carol Service. *Keith Price, Ramsey*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALLEN!

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, the Fellowship of Providence Dewsbury IMC gathered for worship. Our Fellowship is small, with an average congregation of ten, but on this particular day, we welcomed with great joy, a congregation of approximately forty people!

Allen Leather, a long-time member of the Providence Fellowship, celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, and he knew exactly how he wanted to mark this special occasion. Allen invited his friends and relatives to come to worship God and afterwards, to join him for a celebratory tea at the Chapel.

It was a wonderful day. People joyfully worshipped and heard the word of God. After the service, we moved into the schoolroom to enjoy the party and share fellowship together.

Allen lives his faith every day, and with a generous heart, he asked that in lieu of birthday presents, the money be donated equally between Providence IMC and the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service. The total amount donated was £370.

We had a great day, worshipping God and celebrating 80 years of Allen's life – a life lived in the Lord. We wish him many more years serving the Lord and bringing joy to those around him.

*Doreen Hopkinson, Dewsbury*



## GOOD NEWS for Everyone!

formerly known as GideonsUK

Good News for Everyone! The name may be new but, as the UK arm of the Gideons International, the organisation has been operating in the UK since 1949 and its work will be familiar to many.

Sadly, it became necessary for Gideons UK to part company with the international association when, in response to equality legislation, the UK charity revised its membership criteria to allow both men and women to join in their own right and on the same basis. Previously, women could only join if their husband was also a member, and their role within the Gideons was often restricted. Unfortunately, the international body could not agree to those changes and, like the Canadian Gideons a few years previously, the UK Gideons had to leave the international association. However, unlike in Canada, Gideons International had registered the Gideons name in the UK as a trade mark, so the UK association had to find a new name.

The aims of Good News for Everyone are unchanged. We want to introduce others to Jesus and share his Word when and where we can. We still seek to place scriptures in hotels, prisons and hospitals; to offer them to school pupils and to others in personal witness; and to work as a non-denominational arm of

the Church. Membership, previously restricted to business and professional men (and their wives), is now open to anyone that is a member in good standing of an evangelical Protestant church or assembly, except for members of the clergy.

As we were working through the changes, Isaiah 43:19 (*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*) cropped up time and again. God is doing a new thing with us, and perhaps this became clear when the launch of the new name more or less corresponded with the breakout of Covid. In no time at all, avenues of scripture distribution that had previously been open to Gideons UK were closed or severely restricted. Some schools continued to accept scriptures, albeit the boxes had to be quarantined for at least 72 hours in case someone handling them had contracted Covid, and it was no longer possible for members to visit schools to hand out New Testaments in person. Hotels had to close for months on end, and the practice of leaving scriptures for successive guests to read did not fit easily with requirements for deep cleaning.

However, God was indeed doing a new thing. Good News for Everyone has launched an

illustrated glossy A4 format magazine, entitled simply *Hope*, which includes John's Gospel in full, along with a selection of Psalms that, as it says in the introduction, have been chosen 'within the general theme of offering hope in the midst of a challenging situation'. There are also several 'where to find help' references, based on those found in the Bibles and New Testaments that are still distributed. Feedback shared at my local branch showed that many people found the *Hope* magazine format more readable than the much smaller print of the more conventional scriptures.

*Hope* magazines are made available, free of charge, for churches and individuals to use in their outreach, and have been supplied to foodbanks to distribute with supplies. The magazines can be obtained through your local branch, or from Good News for Everyone, Western House, 24 George Street, Lutterworth LE17 4EE. May they help bring many to a saving knowledge of Jesus in the days to come.

*Brian Rowney*



# President's Jottings

## Hope in the God who is Faithful – Derek Barron

Hope is needed as we enter 2022. I read a devotion in which there was an acronym for hope.

### HOPE:

#### Holding On with Patient Expectation

I remember a phrase as a young man (a long time ago now) that I've never forgotten. *'When you're at the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.'*

I have learned, however, that hope is so much more than holding on. Hope is filled with patient expectation in the one who controls the future. It's not about what we can do, it's about an expectation of what God **will** do. God **will** make a way.

The Old Testament book of Lamentations offers some helpful spiritual advice for dealing with such uncertain times.

Most people think Lamentations was written by the prophet Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He had been an eyewitness to the destruction of the Temple and the city, so he wrote his laments or sorrows to stunned and depressed Jewish exiles who were now slaves in Babylon.

There is something about this book of the Bible that is unique. The Hebrew title for the book is *'Eka'*, which is translated as, *'How!'* with an exclamation point.

The opening words of the book are, *'How deserted lies the city once so full of people!'*

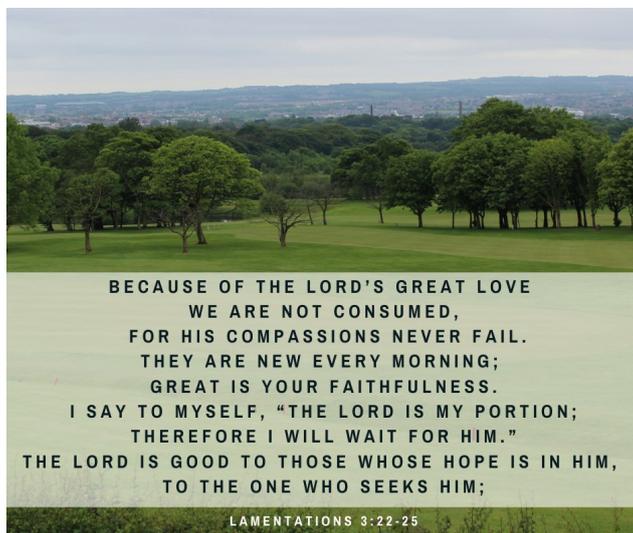
Only later did Jewish tradition adopt the name *'Lamentations'* because of the depressing subject matter.

Maybe some of you are saying, *'How'* as we enter into this new year. *'How did this happen? How did we get here? How did I end up in this situation? How are we going to get through this?'*

I've heard the same expressed many times throughout years of ministry.

I've talked with families as relatives die: *'How could you let this happen, God?'* I've stood by bed sides and heard: *'Why, God?'* I've gone to homes and heard some say, *'I'll never pray again, because God doesn't hear my prayers.'*

How do we restore Hope?



In Lamentations 3:20 we read: *'It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.'*

Then, in Lamentations 3:40 we read: *'Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.'*

*'Because God is faithful, we need to live in hope every day.'*

Corrie Ten Boom was one of the heroines of our Christian faith.

Corrie Ten Boom was right when she said, *'Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.'*

I don't know what 2022 holds, but I know who holds 2022.

*Derek Barron has since resigned as President for health reasons. This article was submitted before his resignation.*

## HOW QUICKLY THINGS CAN CHANGE!

Early in September, Sue and I headed off to Norfolk on a long awaited late summer break. Despite the forecasts, the weather was excellent and we enjoyed warm sunny days in beautiful surroundings. Little did we know how quickly things would change!

On the Tuesday of the second week, the whites of Sue's eyes turned yellow, but she refused to see a doctor as she felt fine and didn't want to ruin the holiday. By God's grace, the following day, we were in Norwich and just happened to pass an NHS Walk-In Centre. A trip to Norwich A&E rapidly followed and obstructive jaundice was diagnosed. The doctor advised that we enjoy our last two days but see our own GP, face to face, on return home. Well, that was the beginning of a whirlwind. Over the following weeks, Sue underwent many tests and scans and was diagnosed with cancer, having a 2cm tumour in the head of the pancreas. This was removed in a nine and a half hour operation on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October

at Liverpool Royal. The tumour had grown to 7cm on removal. Within a day, Sue was encouraged up onto her feet and out of bed. At the time of writing, some six weeks post op, she is regularly walking 6km per day - a truly miraculous recovery! A six month course of chemotherapy is expected to start in January and we know that there is a long journey ahead.

Jointly, we decided to write this article for a number of reasons. Firstly, to thank the Lord Jesus for His wonderful provision in difficult times, not least in early diagnosis and His peace and strength throughout. Secondly, we wanted to thank all of our brothers and sisters, at Friars Green, in the wider Connexion and beyond, for standing with us in prayer and love. We have truly been astounded by the cards, flowers, phone calls and practical support that you have shown along the way – your prayers have been phenomenal and God has heard – please keep praying. Thirdly, we wanted to make people aware of the

importance of acting early.

Pancreatic cancer is notorious at growing undetected and Sue's case was pretty much textbook. With retrospect, the yellowing of the whites of Sue's eyes was accompanied by a slightly suppressed appetite and slight change in bowel habit. There was no pain or any other signs and, if it had not been for the jaundice (yellowing), it could have gone unnoticed. Please do not hesitate in seeking medical help should you need to.

As you read this article, Christmas will be a fading memory, but the reality of Emmanuel, God with us, is our enduring hope. Life is not always an easy journey but the past months have affirmed us in the fact that, *'He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.'* (Isaiah 40 v.29). Together, Sue and I believe that, *'Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.'* (Isaiah 40 v.31) and we trust the Lord Jesus to carry us in the palm of His hand.

Thank you again for your love, prayers and ongoing support.

*Ken & Sue McDermott, Friars Green*



# An Interview With..

## JOANNE LEWIS ATHERTON

### Can you introduce yourself?

My name is Joanne Lewis. I live in Mosley Common, Worsley and attend Atherton IM Church.

I was born in 1967 two months premature. As my parents had already lost two babies before my birth, I was christened immediately as it was thought that I wouldn't survive. My Mum always called me, 'Her Little Miracle'. Since birth, I have had over 40 operations due to being premature.

I have always felt that I am in God's hands and that He blesses me every day.

### What are your first memories of attending church?

Growing up, I attended Holyrood C of E Church in Swinton. My Mum took my brother and I to both Church and Sunday School.

### How were you introduced to Independent Methodism?

It was through my best friend, Jayne Handley, who I live with. When I was 15 years old, it was Jayne who nursed me at Salford Royal Hospital. The day after my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was re-acquainted with Jayne when, yet again, I had to undergo major surgery. For the six weeks that I stayed in hospital, Jayne looked after me.

To cut a long story short, Jayne invited me into her family and then introduced me to Atherton IM Church. Once there, I became a Youth Club leader (until we had to close due to lack of numbers). I became a member of the church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1999. Subsequently, I became more involved and hold several positions.

### Can you describe some of the significant events on your Christian journey?

As I have previously mentioned, I have always felt blessed by God, and that He has always had His loving arms wrapped around me. I never had an epiphany – God is just there in my life. Always has been, always will be.

When I was eleven, my Dad died suddenly and unexpectedly on Father's Day. This event changed our lives forever and had a massive impact. Two years ago, my Mum also passed away suddenly and unexpectedly, exactly forty years after my Dad. These two events have had a significant impact, but I know that God is always with me and that He never gives us more than we can handle with His help.

Jayne suffered with breast cancer fifteen years ago and, just before her ten years of being cancer-free were up, she was diagnosed with a tumour in her spine, which



From left: Jayne Handley and Joanne Lewis

has now spread to other places, lately her liver. She is such an inspiration to everyone. She is so positive, and I feel truly blessed that God brought us together. God is good and He continues to bless us both every day in so many ways.

### Which Christian leader/teacher/preacher has made the greatest impact on your life?

All speakers of God's work have an impact on me. I believe that our Heavenly Father places His message

on preacher's hearts so that when they speak the words that God has given them, they are the words that we need to hear.

Daily, I listen to Rick Warren's 'Daily Hope' message. These messages of hope bless and inspire me.

### The theme for this issue is 'Hope'. Is there a Bible verse which on this theme which has a significant importance to you?

From the very first time that I heard Jeremiah 29:11 many years ago, I claimed it as my own.

### What are the strengths of your church?

Atherton IM Church is such a warm, loving and welcoming church fellowship.

Over the years, we have all tried to do our best to welcome new people into church from their very first visit. We do try not to go overboard, but if they are in need, we try to help. Even though many, once they are 'sorted' stop attending church, this doesn't put us off. We welcome everyone with open arms and we pray that God will see the rewards of our efforts one day.

### Name your favourite worship song and explain why it is important to you.

'Father I place into Your hands' by Jenny Hewer. The words say it all!

### Which Christian writer/book would you recommend?

There is only one – the Bible.

### Beyond Christian activities, what are your other hobbies?

Due to having more bad days than good, I spend most of my time reading books, as I find that these can transport you out of the day to day.

We also have a caravan in Wales, which is near to both the sea and the countryside – it's like Heaven on earth! There, I marvel at God's wonderful creation which surrounds me.

### In which ways do you see God leading you as we come out of the pandemic, both personally and in your church?

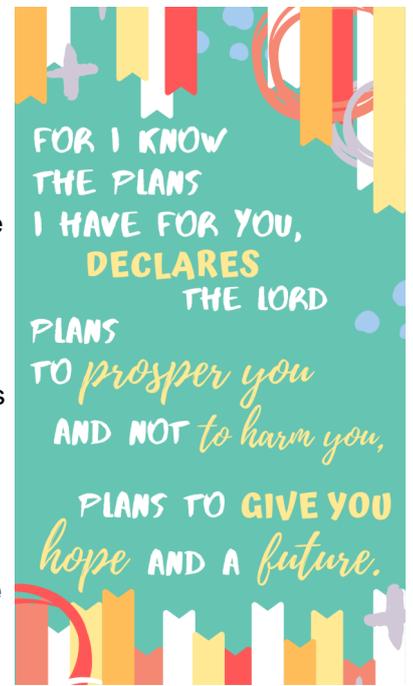
Personally, it is still early days. We have been shielding for such a long time that, at the moment, we are taking it one day at a time, following where our God leads.

For church, since the pandemic, we are much closer, not only as a fellowship, but as a church family.

During the pandemic, we started a church WhatsApp group, which we will continue. Each morning and evening, Jayne shares a couple of Bible verses, and we also use it to share prayer requests and what is going on in each other's lives. This has been a tremendous blessing to all.

### How can we pray for you?

Pray that God would continue to be with me and bless me and that, by His grace, I may continue to serve Him. Pray also that Atherton IM Church would lead more people into the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.



# Welcoming a New Minister

## CELEBRATIONS AT THE COMMISSIONING SERVICE OF PAULINE SMITH

A 'packed Church' is not a phrase you often hear nowadays, but almost 100 people were privileged to attend the Commissioning Service of Pauline Smith on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. The service was held at the newly refurbished premises of Bethel Church, Wigan and what an amazing service it was! Pauline's family is very involved in the ministry, as her late father Harry Hughes was a Minister at Bethel for many years. The second hymn of the service was, in fact, written by Pauline's father and sung to the tune of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance (Land of Hope and Glory). Pauline's brother, John Hughes, is a lay-preacher in the Wigan Methodist Circuit, whilst brother-in-law David Nellist is a Methodist Minister in America and her sister, Glenys Nellist, is a well-known author of children's' Christian books. Both travelled from the USA to be at the service and another brother journeyed from Switzerland.

After an opening by Shaun Newton, Connexional Education Organiser, the service was led by Bethel Minister, Christine Ormerod, who spoke of Pauline's extensive involvement in the changes to our church buildings, especially in decision making, as well as practical help. Christine said that Pauline 'was a blessing and a star during lockdown'. She produced a weekly service by Zoom and even delivered printed copies to those without the 'online expertise'. This was instrumental in keeping the fellowship together and enabled us not only to continue to worship, but has resulted in higher attendances than before lockdown!

All this took place at a time when Pauline was working as a social

worker and studying for her Student Ministers' Course. Just prior to lockdown, Pauline also went

to the Middle-East with Asia Link to distribute Bibles in Laos. She also gives her time to work in Wigan, in the early hours of the morning, as a street pastor and some of her colleagues were at the service to support her.

Norman Prescott, Wigan Circuit Secretary, briefly offered words of wisdom and encouragement to Pauline to 'learn to sometimes say no' and to ensure that she did not overstretch herself.

In her testimony, Pauline told how, in her early years, her family lived next door to a little church in Wigan, where her Mum and Dad were caretakers and where Pauline would stand in the pulpit, pretending to preach like her dad.

When she was eleven years old, Pauline and her sister Glenys went to a Christian Endeavour meeting at Orrell Post Methodist Church, where they both gave their lives to Jesus.

Following this, she said her life was full of ups and downs and at one point she moved away from the Church, but 'God had his hand on me all the time and brought me back. I never thought that in 30 years' time, I would become a Minister'. She concluded with words from Philipians 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'

In her address, immediate Past President Dorothy Kendrick spoke about 'endurance' based on a passage from Hebrews 12. She



From left to right: Shaun Newton, Len Ogilvie, Christine Ormerod, Derek Barron, Pauline Smith, Hilda Rolfe, Dorothy Kendrick and Norman Prescott.

emphasised that we all need encouragement on our Christian journey, including our Ministers.

The 'Charge of Ministry' was led by President of the Connexion, Derek Barron, and was followed by the Commissioning Prayer, graciously led by Hilda Rolfe. Pauline knelt at the communion table as David Moulson (Bethel) and John Hughes (Pauline's brother) both prayed as they laid hands on her.

Very appropriately, this moving act of dedication was followed by the augmented choir singing 'Consecration Hymn' - Take My Life and Let It Be.

Prior to the final hymn, Connexional Ministry Organiser, Len Ogilvie, presented Pauline with her Minister's Certificate, together with gifts and flowers from the Connexion and Bethel Church.

What better hymn to close such an outstanding service with, than Stuart Townend's wonderful hymn - 'In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light, my strength my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground ... Here in the power of Christ I stand.'

Following the service, everyone was invited to partake in a specially prepared 'covid buffet' together with lots of chat and fellowship, to round off an excellent day. 'Great the joy when Christians meet!'

Eileen Melling, Bethel Newtown

## DEDICATION AT MILL LANE

After all the lockdowns, it was good to celebrate the dedication of Arthur Nicholas Morgan at Mill Lane, Bristol, when his parents Helen and Sam brought him along to introduce him to the Christian family on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> of October.

The dedication service was taken by Mill Lane Minister, Tony Argent. We pray that God will guide this family through the years ahead.

Hazel Chapple, Mill Lane



## LOWTON CONCERT

On the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2021, Lowton Church hosted an afternoon with Paul Jones and his wife Fiona Hendley.

Paul told us his early life as a cathedral chorister, losing his faith, becoming an atheist, his meeting and marriage to Fiona and becoming a born again Christian after being invited to a Luis Palau crusade by Cliff Richard.

We were treated to Christian, secular and Christmas songs. Paul and Fiona joined the congregation in tea and coffee fellowship after the concert.

Alan Nixon, Lowton



On behalf of the Connexion, I attended the Christian Aid AGM on the 23rd of November. Key events were the retirement of Dr Rowan Williams as the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the election of Dr John Sentamu in his place and the formal adoption of the new Articles of Association. In addition, it was announced that the chief executive officer, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, is leaving to take up a position with the United Nations. The search for a new CEO is under way.

I took the opportunity to hold informal discussions with various Christian Aid officials including Rev John Plant (British Church Relations Lead) and Nick Georgiadis (Director of Fundraising and Supporter Engagement). The objective was to try and identify ways in which IM Churches can become more engaged with the work of Christian Aid. The following projects were suggested as initial thought/discussion starters:

**Just Scripture**

This is a programme in which groups of Christians from across the world meet online to explore Scripture together.

Its purpose is to:

- strengthen solidarity, rooted in faith, between communities from

the Global North and Global South

- equip and encourage us to be people who challenge injustice, and change the systems and structures that perpetuate poverty and inequality across the world
- amplify our collective prophetic voice

**Community Partnerships**

The Community Partnership programme gives supporters a way to engage with a specific project in one of the countries where Christian Aid works. The distinctive feature of this programme is the match-funding element. Match-funded projects are ones where Christian Aid has secured institutional funding to support its work in a specific way, and the institutions agree to match any funds that are raised from Christian Aid's supporters at a ratio of at least 3:1. The current Community Partnership project is rights-based, working with minority communities in Bangladesh. Along with its partners, Christian Aid is training members of minority communities in how to engage in civil society, and to amplify their voices so that they can know and claim their rights.

**In Their Lifetime**

This is an innovation programme that looks to be agile in response to developing situations across a variety of countries. Supporters of the 'In Their Lifetime' programme contribute money to a fund that is then able to meet needs and take advantage of innovative and constantly developing ideas quickly when opportunities arrive. It's an exciting programme to be involved in as it's all about innovation and finding new ways to support people most effectively. It has more of a global focus and the impact of the work can be seen across different communities around the globe

However, everyone I spoke to was keen to stress that fundraising, though important, is not the only way of supporting, and that weaving a Christian Aid strand through the ongoing worship and prayer activities of the denomination is just as, if not more, important.

The day was rounded off with a closing service which included a rousing rendition of 'Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah', led by the Welsh contingent, and which confirmed the reality of an earlier comment made by Dr Rowan Williams, 'Christian Aid is not just an effective humanitarian aid organisation, it is a community of believers'.

If there are any questions, comments or ideas, please do get in touch. *Geoffrey S Matthews*

Tel: 07568 589569

Email: [christianaid.representative@imchurches.org.uk](mailto:christianaid.representative@imchurches.org.uk)

Christian Aid Website: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

**NEWS FROM NELSON**

Dear friends, we have so much to report from Nelson that it is difficult to know where to start!

The last two years have been a challenge here, just as it has been everywhere. We have been blessed with many activities on social media during lockdown, including Zoom Sunday School, the weekly service via Facebook and ongoing Zoom Bible study. Some of these continue and it is apparent that, even in adversity, our God gives us ways to reach out to others.

Whilst much has returned to normal, there are still members of our church who are vulnerable and unable to attend. We ask that you, like us will

hold these most vulnerable individuals in prayer.

Covid also caused a pause in our church's ongoing work to join fellowships with Nelson Baptist Church. The Baptist Church was in need of significant building work and our fellowship has suffered from declining numbers. Covid has enabled more reflection and prayer and thus, following a member's vote, the decision has been made to move forward with joining the fellowships.

Now, both the Asian Christian Fellowship and the Romanian Christian Fellowship have moved from the Baptist building to meet in the IM building. We look forward to

the Baptist fellowship joining in the coming months.

The building here at Nelson is, as a consequence, much busier. Please pray for patience, humour and tolerance for all involved in this process. So, that together, we may all become a beacon of Christian activity helping the community of Nelson.

Finally, as a fellowship we were delighted when one of long-standing members, Connie Coles celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. In true Connie style, as an excellent baker and a someone who gives joy to those around her with her positivity and smile, she provided cake after our morning service.

*Ruth Smith, Nelson*

# In the Joy of the Lord

## **Alan Chisholm**

### **South Hylton, NE Circuit**

A full church celebrated Alan's life, following his passing on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, aged 82 years. We thanked God for his life of love and faithful service.

Alan attended Sunday school from an early age, became a committed Christian in his 20s and continued to work for the Lord in many ways over the years, especially enjoying work with children and young people, and using his accountancy skills as Church treasurer and North East Help Link treasurer.

His lengthy illness curtailed physical activities, but enhanced his prayer life, and he was a great support to Anne in her ministry, since they came together in 1965.

His love of cricket (playing and later watching) and of Mozart's music gave him much enjoyment.

We thank God that he is now with the Lord he loved, claiming the promise which he quoted on many occasions, 'I go to prepare a place for you.'

*Lucy Pearson*

## **Joyce Greenhalgh (1939-2021)**

### **Kirkhall Lane, Leigh**

Our sister in the Lord leaves us with a powerful testimony to remember her by. Suffering with cancer and coming towards the end, she was, in her own words, ready to meet her Saviour.

An active commitment to the fellowship of Kirkhall Lane for many years will certainly be missed, as will her valuable friendship, encouragement and love. Yet it is her steadfast faith at the most critical time which bears lasting memory.

Even at the bedside, in her final few days, Joyce would say, 'I'm all right, I know where I'm going, I'm not afraid.' Her words will bring to mind the very testimony of Scripture for all of us at Kirkhall Lane for many years to come (Job 19:25-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Joyce passed to the higher life on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November. God bless her.

*Susan Stone*

## **Beryl Kay**

**(30<sup>th</sup> October 1925 –  
18<sup>th</sup> November 2021)**

### **Roman Road, Failsworth**

Beryl began attending at Roman Road thirty years ago when Blackley IM Church closed, although she was very active in Connexional life for many years before that. She had a heart for Overseas Missions, writing and supporting our missionaries on the mission field as well as serving on Overseas Missions committee.

She was born in Manchester and, during the war, was evacuated to keep her safe. She left school at fourteen and worked in an office in Blackley village, as well as being a Sunday School teacher and Guide captain. When she was thirty-five years old, she trained to be a teacher and taught needlework at Plant Hill School. When her husband died in 1979, Beryl learnt to drive, which opened up a whole new world for her, and she was still driving 'Ruby' to church until March 2020 when the pandemic forced her stay indoors.

Beryl loved holidays – family holidays in Wales and Devon and touring holidays with friends. Christmases



were often spent with her family in the Lake District and she would tell us at church of the fun they had had hiding presents and playing silly games. She joined in many of our Church weekends away - taking part by leading prayer times.

She led the 'Take A Break' group at church for many years and always put together a varied and interesting programme with guest speakers from Mission Aviation Fellowship, Tools with a Mission and Our Daily Bread amongst others. She encouraged the attenders to develop their creative side with banner making, screen printing and poetry readings.

She continued to preach regularly when she came to Roman Road and, during the pandemic, wrote messages, read by others to record and send out when we were unable to meet or read in church when we resumed worship. She helped out in the church office on a Thursday morning until 2020 and would often pop into our 'Pramtime' group, who were meeting at the same time, to see what the children were doing, making her way gingerly through the toys!

She loved her garden and, in the summer, would invite the 'Take a Break' group to Blackley to meet in her garden. When she was 90, she had a party with fireworks in her garden and we had sausages and apple pie outside. Beryl was as excited as a 10-year-old with the fireworks and declared she was 'too excited to eat!'

Beryl always cared for and was interested in others and, just before she died, she wrote from hospital that she thanked God for family, loving friends and kind neighbours and asked Him to continue to bless them.

*Elizabeth Barron*



## **Sheila Krysa**

**(5<sup>th</sup> February 1930 –  
8<sup>th</sup> November 2021)**

### **Roman Road, Failsworth**

Sheila was born in Failsworth, the third of four girls. She enjoyed school and passed the entrance examination for grammar school. Unfortunately, like many of their contemporaries, her parents would not let her attend as they didn't believe in the value of girls' education. She always regretted

not being able to take her education further and her eagerness to learn new skills was a theme throughout her life.

As a young teenager, Sheila became responsible for caring for her mother. Whilst her sisters went out to work, Sheila was responsible for running the home. She often reflected on what a difficult period of her life this was and what sheer hard work without the labour-saving devices we now all take for granted.

Sheila attended 'The Mission' (as Roman Road Church used to be known locally) as a young girl and church was a massive part of her whole life. During her years as a carer, her mother ran the Ladies Afternoon Meeting, when a speaker would be invited and tea and biscuits served after the meeting. Sheila often spoke about her early memories of attending from when she was just 8 years old and later of helping to set out the desk for the visiting speaker.

Church became important to her socially, as it was the only fun she had and was a place where she could let her hair down.

Many long hours were spent in rehearsing for

pantomimes and preparing for the Christmas Fair, as well as regular coach trips and games on the park.

Sheila married Henryk who was Polish and Sheila will always be remembered for her Polish greeting: three kisses on the cheek, first one side and then the other. It didn't matter who you were – everyone was greeted the same. Sheila taught herself Polish, she loved the country and its traditions and enjoyed travelling overland and meeting Henryk's family. She often talked with fondness of her Polish family.

Family was important to Sheila. Her extended family included her Goddaughter Sue, who she visited whenever we went to Llandudno on a Church Weekend away. Then, she had her church family too and she prayed for her different families every night, praying that God would protect them, guide them and lead them to know the love and joy that Sheila herself experienced in knowing God.

Sheila had many talents - she was an expert dressmaker, learnt pottery design and loved all kinds of arts and crafts. She sought to keep up to date – going for computer lessons in her 80's to the library.

Sheila had cared and nursed Henryk for the last ten years of his life as he battled dementia. Towards the end of her life, Sheila also succumbed to this cruel disease and although she did not recognise her family, her faith in God never wavered. Sheila's trust in God never faltered and she bore testimony to His upholding and grace. Sheila supported many in our church family in need of comfort, offering welcome and time and she will be greatly missed.

Elizabeth Barron

*In Heavenly Love Abiding*

## BOOK REVIEW

**Title** The New Testament In Its World  
**Authors** N.T. Wright and M. Bird  
**Published** SPCK, 2019  
pp 987; Hardback £ 30.00  
(Also available: Workbook; Video lectures; Audio lectures)

This a book for the church – general readers, students, scholars and pastors and it can be read at each of these levels. It is a book to have at hand, to read or dip into. An introduction to the historical, literary and theological background to the New Testament, it also acts as a one volume prefatory commentary to the whole text that sometimes challenges arguments widely accepted in the twentieth century and still commonplace. A true compendium, it is at the same time very much concerned with faith and mission. A single sentence from the treatment of Romans may illustrate the way the authors integrate theological themes with pastoral concerns throughout the book:

*'In Paul's mind, justification by faith means fellowship by faith; baptism into the Messiah and reception of the Holy Spirit provide the necessary resources for moral transformation; and the lordship of Jesus must enable Christians from very different backgrounds to live together as family despite disagreements over essentials.'*

Building around Wright's multi-volume 'Christian Origins and the Question of God' and other books such as 'Surprised by Hope', Bird and Wright, scholars from the Evangelical tradition, have together assembled a text book that is Bible-centred, skilfully structured, illuminatingly expressed and above all thoroughly engaging. Beginning with the historical and theological questions around the origins of Christianity, the book

## Audrey Yvonne Phillips (nee Settle), aged 79 South Hylton, Sunderland

Audrey was born in 1941 in the Hendon area of Sunderland. Until she was a young adult, she belonged to the fellowship at the former Ebenezer Independent Church in Cairo Street where she gained a solid grounding in the faith. However, she and her family then moved to an area on the outskirts of the town and her association with the Cairo Street chapel came to an end, though some of us still kept in contact with her. During this time, Audrey often attended a local URC church with her young son.

After her husband died in 1994, Audrey was introduced to the fellowship in South Hylton, which was not too far from where she lived. At first, she came to the W.A. meeting on a Monday afternoon. Then, before too long, she decided to attend Sunday worship. During this time, she gave her heart to the Lord and was soon present not only at both Sunday services, but also the midweek Fellowship and Bible study meetings.

Audrey's health had never been good, and in recent years she was not able to be at church as much as before. In the last two years, she didn't manage to get out of the house much at all, but we were able to visit her from time to time or keep in touch with phone calls. She always enquired about all her friends at the church and liked to be kept up-to-date with all our activities.

Audrey finally passed away peacefully in hospital on August the 14<sup>th</sup>, just four weeks before her eightieth birthday, knowing that she was going home to be with the Lord.

Our thoughts at this time are with her son, Neville, and his wife, Karen, as well as with her niece, Vivienne, and her family.

Anne Fambely

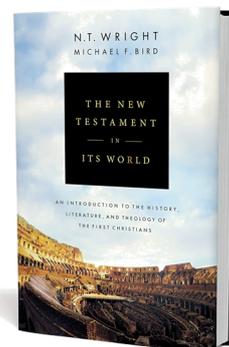
goes on to explore Jesus' beliefs and aims and the Easter story before particular studies of Paul's letters and the four Gospels (Acts is included with Luke). The remaining letters and Revelation are followed by a discussion of how we have arrived at the New Testament as we now know it.

There are sections of the book, clearly intended for the full-time student, that will challenge some readers. They are worth ploughing through, if only to warn first, of the complex setting of the NT origins and second, of an over-simplistic approach to the NT text. We are a long way beyond pointing to the AV or any other translation as the verbally inspired word of God, but we can certainly point to the authority of the scriptures.

Structurally, the book has everything a student could want; an extensive bibliography; full scripture and subject indexes; numerous plates, tables and maps; plus many 'asides' that answer the kinds of questions many will want to ask. Each chapter has an 'At a Glance' panel that summarises the aims and expected learning in order to direct readers in their study. The general reader would be free to ignore all these but I suspect they will not want to.

Should you buy the book? You will certainly profit from it in understanding and ability to serve the Church in faith and mission. Should the Connexion supply it to its students? That would depend on the student. Some may welcome it; others may be put off simply by its size and the time demands it will make. Every student would benefit most by sharing it with others.

Derek Yates



# Encountering Jesus

My Testimony: Ben Donohoe

Roe Green

I was only a young child when I first heard about Jesus. My parents, who were not Christians at the time, were invited to a house group when I was about five years old or maybe even younger. This was a weekly group run by their friends, where they shared the Gospel with them. I suppose the modern day equivalent would be like an Alpha course. It was in this group that my Mum decided to give her life to Jesus. I remember seeing her be baptised and from that point on, she was an active member of the church.

Even though I was very young, I observed my Mum and her relationship with God grow. She would regularly host people for prayer and the miraculous seemed to follow them. It just seemed to me that she had something so amazing. When she had a need, God was there. For my Mum, there was and still is always hope. I could see the importance of Him in her life and it was so attractive to me. I wanted this relationship with Him for myself and so I decided to give my life to Jesus.

I'll never forget the moment that I gave my life to Jesus and became a Christian. I was in my mum's car and I was just desperate to have Jesus in my own life. I asked Him to be my saviour and checked with my Mum that I had done it right, because I wanted to be sure that I would get my relationship with Jesus. I really don't know what I was expecting it to be

like, but the presence of the Lord filled me there and I had an encounter with Jesus that I have never forgotten. I think the strongest feelings I could describe from that moment were of simple love and peace from God. It was so beautiful and that same God who was with me in the back seat of my car has been my friend throughout my life.

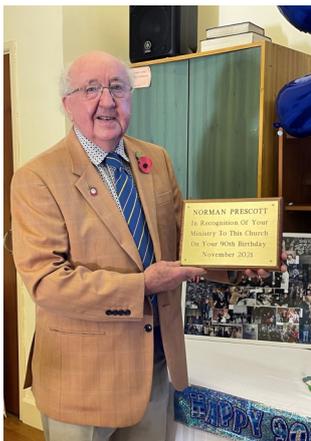
Since giving my life to the Lord, I have seen Him do many amazing things. He healed me of stomach pains at age twelve, He filled me with the Holy Spirit and He gave me the honour of being able to minister to people around the world. My relationship with Him has been my hope and my anchor throughout my life. I wouldn't know what to do without Him.

I hope that my testimony is an encouragement to you. If you are a Christian and you're praying for someone to come to know Jesus, there is hope. My Mum and I became Christians, because of those who shared with us. Let your light shine for those around you. My testimony is proof that no matter how old they are, anyone can have an encounter with Jesus. I was young, but there is no age limit with God. If you've never had an encounter with Jesus before, I encourage you to talk to Him and get to know Him for yourself. You won't regret it.

## 90 YEARS YOUNG

Norman Prescott celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November.

After conducting the Remembrance Service, he was presented with a plaque by his brother, Bill, on behalf of the church fellowship at Lamberhead Green. The plaque



recognised Norman's long and faithful service as a minister on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was also presented with a small olive tree by

Anne Jones, again on behalf of the fellowship.

Following the morning service, a lunch was held in the Sunday School and members of the church fellowship attended along with some friends of Norman and Rita.

A lovely time was had by all as they fellowshiped together and memories were jogged as they looked at many photographs covering Norman's 90 years.

We thank God for Norman, his ministry, service and his long life and hope and pray that he will have many more years to come!

Norman would like to thank family and friends for the kind thoughts, prayers, presents and cards which he received. These indeed made the birthday special.

*Andrew Prescott*

## NEW MEMBERS AT HOPE STREET



On Advent Sunday, we were delighted to welcome five new members into the church family at Hope Street, Spring View.

Sarah Heaton, Emma Gore and also three former members of Westwood Church, Ula Brown, Tom and Brenda Hampson.

We thank God and ask His blessing on each one of them and our fellowship going forward.

*Andrew Rigby,  
Hope Street, Spring View*

## AN INVESTITURE AT WINDSOR CASTLE

Two years after being awarded the honour, Bill and Pam Hampson were finally able attend Windsor Castle for Princess Anne to invest Bill with an OBE for 'Services to vulnerable people overseas.' Congratulations Bill.



## Connexional Addresses

### Past President

**Dorothy Kendrick**  
37 Holts Lane, Pitsies,  
Oldham, OL4 5NJ  
0161 624 7503  
past.president@  
imchurches.org.uk

### General Secretary

**Brian Rowney**  
17 Humber Road, Astley,  
Manchester M29 7HL  
01942 879642  
general.secretary  
@imchurches.org.uk

### Financial Administrator

**Alan Britton**  
32 Massey Brook Lane,  
Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0PN  
07764 923705  
financial.officer  
@imchurches.org.uk

### Safeguarding

Please contact the Resource  
Centre for all enquiries.

### 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

### 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  
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editor@imchurches.org.uk

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## Five Minute Message

### I don't do January, but I do have hope!

Andrew Rigby, Hope Street, Spring View

January is definitely not my favourite month of the year: long dark nights, dreary cold days in the middle of winter, after the wonder and beauty of Christmas. Family and friends have said that I suffer from SAD (seasonal affective disorder) not that I'm grumpy or moody or anything...

January is the longest month of the year, well that is the way that it seems to me. It drags on and on and on. The only good thing about January is that as the month goes on, you begin to notice, slowly but surely, the days get longer and lighter as the sun sets a little bit later every day.

Slowly but surely, we have the hope of warmer, sunnier days, not immediately but ahead of us. You know it's true, even though you don't see it, there and then because that is what lies ahead, that is the truth, that is the future promise.

It's true because that's the way God planned it. So, that even on dark stormy days, we have the promises of light. We can have hope.

In life, none of us know what lies ahead; none of us know the future. We know there will be good times and bad times, good days and bad days. We are told to live one day at a time, which is the best advice because each day has enough worries to deal with. But, thanks to Jesus, we can look forward and have hope for the future.

If we are in Christ, if we have accepted Him as our Lord and Saviour, we don't need to fear our past, our present or our future. Jesus is our hope and He brings light into our darkest hours.

*'Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ... and that you, O Lord, are loving'. Psalm 62: 5-8*

When we are discouraged by circumstances and situations, Jesus loves us and He is our certain hope.

Even on bad days, dark days, sad days when the storms of life hit us hard and overwhelm us, we can know, and have hope that the Lord's unfailing love and mercy still continues, as fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise.

We all want and need hope - something to hope in, something to hope for in the future. Sometimes we hope, but then we let hope go. At other times, the problem is that we hope in ourselves and do not put all our hope in Jesus. We can be sure, we can have faith, God can give us hope even on our worst days.

Our hope is faith in what lies ahead. Hope gives us a purpose and a destination. Because of Jesus, we don't need to fear of missing out on what is ahead. Jesus is the one who gives us reasons for our hope, through God's word in the Bible.

We live in a world that has largely rejected the Bible's vision of any future hope. We see the results of that all around us. The hope we need is not about keeping your fingers crossed. True hope does not come naturally because faith in Jesus does not come naturally. It comes through believing in Jesus, through the Cross, through faith in his death and resurrection

as the only way of forgiveness and eternal life. Faith is our confidence in the Word of God, which tells us that we are saved by Grace through faith. That is hope!

We know the hope we have is not wishful thinking, it's not just wishing that things will be better. It's not pie in the sky. It's not just a promise of something better when we die.

The promise of hope is something better right here and now, and in the future, as the fulfilment of God's promises and plan of salvation. Our Christian faith gives us a different outlook and that is the way God planned it.

With Jesus, our whole life is a journey with a purpose. We have to share our faith with others at every opportunity. I always thank God for all those people who shared God's word of hope with me and shared my Christian journey and allowed me to share theirs.

There are so many hymns and songs that express the hope people have found through faith in Jesus and by discovering the Bible is full of hope.

God's word is clear about the hope we have in Him. That faith and knowledge gives the hope of eternal life that God has promised to all those who believe in Jesus Christ.

It is the hope of glory, our living hope. Romans 4:1-5.

# Connexion

The magazine of the family of Independent Methodist Churches

The last day for articles to be submitted for the March / April issue of the Connexion magazine is Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February.

The theme for this issue will be 'Faithfulness'.

Please could all articles be sent either directly to the Resource Centre via post, or by email to [editor@imchurches.org.uk](mailto:editor@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!*