



1 John 1: 3b-4 “so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus

Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

Many of us will be familiar with hymn lyrics such as “What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms” or “Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like that to that above” and what these hymns demonstrate is the use of the word fellowship. Fellowship with God and also fellowship with each other but this does raise a question, of “What is fellowship?”

The Greek word for fellowship means a sense of a strong common bond; a shared experience or shared identity with someone. To share fellowship with someone is not just enjoying someone’s company, relaxing with them or socialising with them. It is much more than that, it is sharing an identity with someone.

Now it is true that the term fellowship is not confined to Christian settings, and it is often used in other situations where there is a common bond, so what is so special about Christian fellowship?

It is special because it is unique. For Christian fellowship is two-dimensional in being vertical and horizontal. For we cannot know true Christian fellowship with others unless there is true fellowship ‘with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ’ (1 John 1:3). The person not in fellowship with the Father and the Son cannot be a Christian and whilst we may form good friendships with such people

there is no true fellowship with them. It is fellowship not just friendship that is the true hallmark of Christian relationships and church.

So, what does fellowship mean for us as Christians?

Firstly, it demonstrates we have something in common. Christians may have nothing in common except one thing and that is a shared relationship with Jesus. Christians can have fellowship and share with each other because we have a relationship with Christ; we share Him in common. If we were to look around our churches, we would see this as being true. In many of our churches there is not often much we share in common with others, except a relationship with Jesus. Our interests, our homes, our professions and so much more may have little in common with others in our churches but by sharing a common relationship with the Lord Jesus we can share fellowship. Many of us were simply individuals with little in common until we came to know Jesus and as a result, we found that true Christian fellowship is primarily a relationship rather than an activity. In Acts 2:42, the young Church is reported as devoting itself to fellowship. This does not mean simply devoting itself to common activities but to developing their spiritual relationship, primarily to God. It was this relationship that produced

Fellowship

the active and practical sharing in other ways. Many of us turned this around. Some think it is the activities that produce the relationship. John reminds us that it is the relationship that comes first, then the common activities follow.

It is so important that we understand this. Fellowship means that we belong to each other in a relationship because we share with one another the common relationship we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fellowship also means we share in the sense of a partnership. As sharers together with Christ, we are automatically co-partners with Him as well as with other Christians in the service of God. The work of God is our work. We are called into partnership in the family business of God in seeking to extend His Kingdom and through that glorifying God. So, Christians, in fellowship with each other are called to be united in a partnership formed to glorify God by completing His work.

What enables us to do this in bringing us together and working together is the common relation in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone. Do we enjoy fellowship as John describes in the opening verses of his first letter? May God bless us as we seek to deepen our fellowship with Him and also with each other.

Shaun Newton



Sun rising on Roman Roads Easter Sunday
Breakfast Morning
-Helen Boswell



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14 - 20
May

Christian Aid Week

The appeal is centred around a story about Malawi and the wonderful Esther who bakes rolls using flour made from pigeon-peas.



Malawi Cyclone Update

Cyclone Freddy, the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record (lasting 34 days), has hit Malawi and Mozambique. This cyclone is the equivalent of a full North Atlantic hurricane season. Malawi experienced a year's worth of rain during the 4-week cyclone. The number of people affected by the Tropical Cyclone in Malawi continues to rise. Over 508,000 people are displaced and hundreds have lost their lives. There's also an increased risk of malaria and cholera in the immediate aftermath.



With pigeon peas, warm-hearted Esther is doing amazing things for her family.

Softly-spoken Esther Saizi, 54, radiates joy and warmth.

Esther grows some truly special pigeon peas on her farm - with

them she can bake delicious bread, support her daughter's dreams, and give her adorable little grandsons a happy future, full of love and laughter. But she wasn't always able to support her family so easily.

A fair price - at least

For 10 years, Esther grew pigeon peas on her farm, but she could never secure a fair price for her crop.

She was robbed in 2021 when Cyclone Ana washed away her crops, leaving her feeling desperate. But when Esther joined a pigeon pea programme run by our local partner - **Nandolo Farmers Association** - and started selling as part of a co-operative, she was able to earn much more.

'I was able to sell the pigeon peas at a better price with a better market,' she explains. 'It provided financial stability.'

The power of love, loss and legacy

A doting mother and grandmother, Esther adds that growing pigeon peas also helped her through the loss of her husband.

Previously, they worked together on their land. When he fell ill, they spent time talking about how she could continue to grow the peas after his death.

'My husband was a teacher in everything that he did,' she says quietly. 'Therefore, we can continue his legacy.'

'It is food that makes a meal for the whole day.'

And not just for the day, but for the future. With the money she's mak-

ing, Esther has been able to feed her family and support her two daughters, Ziwone and Rashida. She's been able to:

- buy tools for Ziwone's carpentry business
- pay for Rashida's school costs, the lodgings near her school, and a part-time tutor
- acquire a herd of 13 goats, who provide manure for her crops, saving on expensive fertiliser
- store her pigeon peas in a warehouse, safe from floods and storms
- buy a sewing machine

Through the cooperative and its equipment, Esther can bake pigeon pea flour bread and boost her income - and also make fish food, using a special machine provided by us.

If you want to watch Esther's video, the link is:-

<https://youtu.be/Fsca4FFoBsA>

For more information about Christian Aid Week, the link is:-

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Otherwise, if you want more information about Christian Aid and are struggling to navigate the website, please don't hesitate to contact me:-

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The last day for articles to be submitted for the July/August issue of the Connexion magazine is Monday the 5th of June. The theme for this issue will be 'Creativity'.



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

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!

Easter Celebrations

Easter Experience at Silksworth IM's



Easter started early at our Church this year as we planned some special events with our local Academy School, which is just up the road from us. On 13th - 15th March we were going to run three different "Easter Experience" events for the school.

On Monday we had 120 children in four sessions coming to see our displays, taking them through the last week of Jesus on earth: Palm Sunday, Last Supper, Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' Trial, Crucifixion and Resurrection. The children were divided into six groups, and each went to one of the displays. There was a strict 10 minute time limit concluded by the ringing of a bell. The Easter story was portrayed and the children took part in a craft activity which they could all take away in a bag provided. They then moved on to the next display, so they covered all six in the session. They then all came back together for juice and a biscuit followed by a round up of the event by our friend from Wearside Youth for Christ, Andy Osenton.



Two of the displays

There was also a special surprise for the kids as Andy was part of an initiative to host visitors from a Church in the USA visiting Sunderland during their spring break. Their Home Church "The First Baptist Church" in Tuscaloosa Alabama, and the team consisted of 26 members, families, and

single people of varying ages. They were working in two groups one in Silksworth, with Andy and his connections through Wearside Youth for Christ and the other group at Shiney Row.



American Visitors & Helpers

Our group had a mother and father with their two daughters and a son, a mother and daughter and three singles. They were all a joy to work with and threw themselves into helping tell the stories and interacting with the kids, their southern drawl accent being fascinating to the junior school children. They also visited our local Community Centre and shared in the Lunch Club activities as well as the Mother and Toddlers group and Youth Club at Calvary Christian Fellowship.

It was so good to spend time sharing with them about our respective fellowships, theirs being very large, 1,500 members, founded in 1818. The love for our Lord and doing His work was the thing that connected us and we had a great time. It was not all hard work as twenty-two of them attended Sunderland's mid-week football match at the Stadium of Light, many going away with Sunderland's Uniform (Strips) as souvenirs. (Unfortunately, we lost to Sheffield United 2-1).

The next day we had over 40 children in two groups, to take part in our "Last Supper" meal. We had it laid out on the floor of the Hall and they were taken through the Passover Meal, then on to the Last Supper and our present Sacrament Service. It was great to see them taste the things which had been prepared, lamb,

lettuce, parsley, egg, fruits, and horseradish sauce (for something bitter). They were very enthusiastic and with the teacher's encouragement, tried everything, even the horseradish! The American visitors explained how they took Sacrament and there were many interesting questions from the children and teachers.



Last Supper & Passover Food

Our third day was with forty reception age children. Joy Elkins, one of our Leaders had sourced a brilliant activity called "Resurrection Eggs" which are like Kinder eggs but they have small items inside relating to the Easter



Story. The eggs were hidden in various places in the Church, and it was great watching 40 kids charging around to find them all. They then had to hold onto them until asked to look inside and shout out what was found. Once again many questions were asked and



Spear Making



answered. The final activity was for all the kids to make spears (made out of cardboard) to take back to school.

It was a rich time of blessing for all our members who helped out with the story telling and activities and we prayed that the Easter message would be talked about by the children as they went home. We know the teachers were so pleased to be involved in these events and it definitely cemented our relationship with the school. We look forward to three days of the Bible Come Alive in June with three schools signed up.

Holy week was another busy time for us as we have a Churches Together Group in the Village comprising of St. Matthew's C of E Church, North Street Methodist Church and ourselves. We arranged Services in each of the Churches every day during the week with Ministers and Members taking part in one another's others services, which was very interesting - trying to follow each



other's ways of conducting things. The week culminated on Good Friday Morning with a March of Witness around the Village stopping various points to sing and pray. At the end of the March, we

all went into St. Matthew's Church for their Service and Communion. Gabriel from our Church, preached the word and it was a culture shock for him to only have ten minutes! He was brilliant and it was so good to share with our brothers and sisters in Christ, embracing our different traditions but following Psalm 133 "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

The week ended with our Sunrise Service at 6:00 am in the garden followed by a full English Breakfast, then morning Service at 10:30 am. A wonderful way to end our 'Easter Experience' Singing Keith Getty and Stuart Townend song "See What a Morning" "And we are raised with Him. Death is dead love has won. Christ has conquered. And we shall reign with Him. For He lives Christ is risen from the dead" "He is Risen Indeed," Alleluia!

Phil Oliver



A FUN BUT ESSENTIAL NIGHT OF TRAINING

Parkinson, his daughter Milly and Hannah Aspey.

The defibrillator, which we purchased from British Heart Foundation, is fully-automatic so audibly talks you through how to operate it and also has clear visual instructions on a screen. It also came with a free training resource pack including easy to understand videos.

We do thank the Lord for people willing to give of their time and skills in training, and also for such enthusiastic volunteers, ready to be at hand in case such a situation arises.

Pauline Smith – Bethel, Newtown

On a cold, wet Monday evening in March, a group of us from Bethel, Newtown, met in the church building to learn the valuable life-saving skill of CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and how to use a defibrillator. The training was provided by our Health and Safety Officer David



The trainers made it interesting and fun, especially when we were introduced to the training assistant 'Little Ann', the inflatable dummy!

To get your church a defibrillator, go to The British Heart Foundation website or alternatively follow this link:



We never know when an emergency situation might occur in our building or when we may be called upon to help try and save a life so we would encourage all our churches to get a defibrillator and do the training which is easy and doesn't take very long.

[Buy Defibrillators and Accessories - British Heart Foundation \(bhf.org.uk\)](https://www.bhf.org.uk)

Be Wise—Your Story



Your Story Inspired by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Course, 'Be Wise' thoughts on Whole life Christian Discipleship. The first of a

series of articles of what it means to be a disciple of Christ in the 21st Century, 24/7.

The Importance of Stories

Stories have captured the human imagination since the dawn of time long before any kind of writing existed. Even when it did exist most of the population were illiterate and so stories remained important. Stories were used to pass down knowledge, information from one generation to the next. We all love a good story, we like to hear them, and they remain long in the memory.

At the start of the year, I heard a remarkable story about a couple who fell in love, but this was no ordinary couple, for one was a nun and the other was a monk. It was a romantic story about two people, their relationship with each other and their relationship with God.

Lisa and Robert's Story

In 2015, twenty-four years after becoming a nun, it was a brief touch of the sleeve of a monk in the parlour of the convent in Preston, Lancashire, which changed everything for Sister Mary Elizabeth. The monk who she touched was Robert who had been a Carmelite friar for thirteen years. He was a thinker, academic and theologian who came to monastic life in a search for meaning during what he describes as a crisis of faith and identity. Their full story is too long to re-tell here but it is a

heart-warming of Christian faith and love. It was first released on BBC Sounds and entitled 'The Nun and monk who fell in love and married.' An internet search will easily find it.

Eventually they did get married, and now share a home in the village of Hutton Rudby in North Yorkshire - where Robert has been made a vicar of the local church and Lisa (Sister Mary Elizabeth's birth name) works at a hospice.

Lisa says they both agree there are three of them in their marriage. "Christ is at the centre and comes before everything. If we were to take him out of the equation, I think it wouldn't have lasted really."

Lisa and Robert's story, long before they met each other is one that centres on their Christian faith in their relationship with Christ. Could you tell your story of your Christian journey and your relationship with Christ?

Your Story

How often do you hear somebody in the pulpit urging you to go out to the world and tell people about the Christian Good News. I wonder how you react. Do you just ignore such a challenge? Or does it make you feel embarrassed and uncomfortable? How do you feel when somebody asks you why you come to church, why you are a Christian? The truth is that very few of us feel comfortable about talking about our faith to non-believers.

So how do we share our faith in an interesting and non-confrontational way? The easiest way is to share your personal story of what led you to the Christian faith, talking about the time you knew that you were a Christian and how God has walked with you through your ups and downs in life. When I participated on the LICC online course 'Be Wise' one of the sessions concerned preparing your story so that you are equipped to tell anybody should the opportunity

arise and that being able to tell your story is all part of being a whole life disciple.

Dr Dave Benson, the course leader and LICC Director of Culture and Discipleship, asked everyone to draw a story board of their individual story of faith. It was interesting to draw my own story and see other people's stories. To successfully tell other people about our faith we need to know clearly in our mind, our story, our walk of faith in such a way that we can talk about it comfortably. One such story that I have remembered for many years is Val Grieve's story.

Val's Story

Val Grieve was a Manchester Christian lawyer who gave his time and talents to several Christian organisations. These included the national committee of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, Manchester City Mission, and Operation Mobilisation. He was also a writer and in one of his books 'Your Verdict on the Empty Tomb' he provides the following insight into his faith and how he first met the Resurrected Christ. He refers to one particular Easter Sunday.

"I awoke in the morning of that day with no thoughts of Christ at all in my mind. I was as full of this world as the next person. Then suddenly the thought came to me that on Easter Sunday Jesus rose from the dead. He was alive and I could come in contact with him. Something inexplicable happened to me. I suddenly knelt and talked to Christ. Yes, to Christ. I suddenly knew he was living, that he was near me and that he wanted to enter my life. I talked to him. I said, as far as I can remember, "Come into my life, Lord Jesus." As I said this, he came, yes, he himself. I knew he was mine. A marvellous joy filled my life."

"I can look back now on what happened and can say from personal experience Jesus is real and it lasts. Over the years, I have been asked many times how the change from being an atheist to

being a Christian took place. I always reply by saying that there are two reasons for me being a Christian. Firstly, I found that Christianity is true. Secondly, I have found that it works in my life." Like Val Grieve, and Lisa and Robert, we all have a story to tell

about our relationship with God. We may not have the amazing story that Paul was able to tell Festus and King Agrippa at Caesarea (Acts 26), but we all have a story and being able to tell it to anyone at any time is very much a part of whole life discipleship. Do

you know your story, and can you tell it?

Next Time – God’s Story

Rob Brooks

Thy Kingdom Come

For the last few years ‘Churches together in England’ have encouraged congregations, to join together with Christians throughout the world, to pray together for the spread of the Gospel during the 11-day period between Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday.

As Christians Prayer is central to our lives and praying for others to come to faith is one of the most important things we can do. 1 Thessalonians 5 verses 16 – 18 tells us to Rejoice always; pray continually; and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

In the ‘Lords’ Prayer’ (Matthew 6:9-13) Jesus tells us we are to pray to OUR Father and immediately we are connected to a greater family, called to live as a part of this wider family as our

daily lives are not just about us. Jesus tells us to pray ‘Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.’

Last year’s programme included a most inspirational song ‘We seek your Kingdom.’ It is set to the tune of ‘Abide with me’ and if you haven’t heard it, it’s still on YouTube. Just type in the title and listen to it, you will be encouraged. CTE President, Archbishop Justin Welby says: ‘We are praying that God would open hearts and minds to His love and that, by His Spirit, He would equip and enable us to be his faithful witnesses.’

‘Thy Kingdom Come 2023’ is launched with an ecumenical prayer and worship service on Thursday 18th May 7-8:30pm at the Salvation Army Regents Hall, London with worship led by the

Salvation Army choir and band and The Spirituals Choir. For those of us who don’t live in London we can join it on-line.

Information is on the website and the address is: www.thykingdomcome.global/new-2023

Also on the site is information about free resources for churches including Novena and Prayer Journal and a page called ‘23 ideas for 23’ which includes prayer meetings, prayer chains, walks of witness and twenty other good ideas for churches to get involved in as we pray ‘Thy Kingdom Come’.

Bill Hampson

When the ‘WORLD’ comes to your church

It was Remembrance Sunday 2022 at Grappenhall I M Church. The congregation was larger than normal due to the presence of the members of the Brownie Pack who use our premises and some of their parents. Remembrance Service at Grappenhall is always held in a traditional and respectful manner. Timing of the two minutes silence is always complex for a service that starts at 10.30 and requires the person leading the service to be flexible with the option of using several items during the first part of the service to get the timings right.

At about 10.45, the leader of the service was sharing with the congregation memories of those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice when the church door burst open and in marched a collection of fifteen or so people who were clearly not locals. They were in fact residents of the Fir Grove Hotel; a stone’s throw away from the church and which four days earlier had been transformed overnight

into a centre to accommodate Asylum Seekers.

Our visitors on that first morning were two Albanian families and a couple from Iran. It is difficult to imagine what they understood about the service, but they later joined the rest of the congregation in a packed hall for tea, coffee, and biscuits. This was an opportunity for members of the congregation to engage in conversation with our guests. Of the two Albanian families, mothers with children of various ages, no fathers, only one fifteen-year-old boy could speak English and acted as spokesman for the group. We learned that they had travelled across the channel in an infamous large inflatable boat and during the crossing one person had died.

The couple from Iran were a young married couple who could speak very little English at the time, but this has

greatly improved over recent months. They had converted to Christianity, and as a result had to flee. Whilst Christianity is tolerated in Iran, those converting to it are not!

News of the change of use of the hotel circulated quickly in the local community along with totally unfounded rumours about those staying there. Amongst these were suggestions that property and children would not be safe whilst these ‘foreigners’ were staying at the hotel.

As a church local councillors approached us to use our building for a meeting where such misinformation could be addressed, and local residents reassured. The meeting took place on Friday 25th November, the church was packed with two police officers at the door as ‘right wing’ extremists were expected. The local MP, Warrington Borough Council Officers and various supportive charities were in attendance. Just as

the meeting was about to start six individuals marched in who were clearly not local and appeared to be set for trouble; they refused to be seated but stood at the back.

The first half an hour of the meeting was quite hostile as the disrupters at the rear and one or two others attempted to stir up people's feelings. Thankfully, the majority stayed calm and level-headed. Seeing that they had failed to achieve their objectives the disrupters left early. The rest of the meeting was largely supportive of the needs of the asylum seekers with people seeking to offer help in any way that they could.

Over the following weeks we welcomed into our fellowship people from Iran, Somalia, Botswana, and Namibia. Our Christmas Service congregations were considerably increased by their presence and a small gift was given to each child. The Albanians attended for only a couple of weeks but then disappeared and we are not sure whether they connected with Warrington's only mosque as the majority of Albanians are Muslim or whether they were simply moved on to another centre. Security at the centre makes it impossible to find out what is going on inside and we must rely on the information provided by those residents who attend worship or bible study. There appears to be a constant churn of people and only limited

contact between different national groups in residence.

Four months on we are still in contact with a few of those who engaged with our church through worship or bible study and as a church we are financially assisting a couple who have been granted the right to stay in the UK. It has been both an interesting and challenging period for our church and we have learned many things about asylum seekers, some good and some bad. However, our door will always remain open and welcoming to those who turn to us in their need as we share our love for Jesus with them.

Grappenhall IMC



Gail and Daniel Castro have now spent three months in the UK prayerfully considering their next step in ministry. During this time they also attended an OMS cross-training event in Belfast and also returned to Spain for a short visit to say farewell and to sort out some practical details. Although

Daniel continues to be a legal representative for OMS Spain it was nevertheless a time of closure for them there. During the last few months they have been able to see much more of Melissa and Ruth who has begun an apprenticeship as a chef which she is enjoying very much. Gail and Daniel continue to pray for the Lord's leading for the way ahead.

L. and P. are greatly concerned about the police crack-down on migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, many of whom have been living and working in the country for some time and are part of churches there. They have also attended a conference in the capital city, run by their NGO in countering human trafficking and helping survivors. P.'s project work has experienced ups and downs: the women in the weaving programme are very committed, but there has been a hold-up in the poultry production as one of the main instructors needs to renew his licence to train the women involved. Prayer is needed for further funding for these projects. They also ask for prayer for a greater unity amongst the existing believers in their country.

Liz Greenhalgh has a lot of positive things to praise God for. The after-school club is progressing well and now has a good number of reliable helpers. One boy who has just



started to come recently has missed a lot of school so the opportunity of catching up is proving invaluable for him. Liz is working together with a married couple in the church youth ministry, so they have now been able to divide the young people into two groups: one group is more mature in their faith, while most of the other group need more basic teaching. One young boy from the

church recently had a wonderful encounter with the Lord at a Christian conference and his life is totally changed. Those who come to the food kitchen are invited once a month to a social evening where a Gospel message is shared and many are ready to receive prayer. The lady Liz writes to in



prison seems to be growing in faith. She may well be released soon. There is less need now for material help for the Ukrainians still in the town, but the need for friendship, prayer and encouragement remains. A small group were able to enjoy a swimming trip in Bucharest on International Women's Day. Liz continues to have a strong relationship with two particular Ukrainian families.



High Legh Christian Fellowship

Given that our meetings at Northwood have received the Lord's blessing, both there and in regular prayer/business meetings, I thought it good to update people since my article, 'So far with God's help at Northwood' (included in March 6th weekly mailing). Firstly, the providential grace of God has meant that our needs are met by encouraging words and the serious commitment of the folks involved.

So far four young people have come to Christ since our plant began at NWCC, and we will soon be planning a service of baptism for these new believers. We have access to a portable baptistery through the faith of our folks and we pray that the event will benefit from good weather to augment the occasion. It is our hope that by the time this happens there will be more candidates for baptism.

Each of our meetings has a different speaker and another to lead into worship with the aim to encourage as much body ministry as we can. Testimony is encouraged and is frequently followed by further blessing. All our folks are encouraged to bring their friends to expose them to the Gospel and to the fellowship of God's people. Colleagues of a few people have also turned up a couple of times following an invitation. The door is open, and everyone is welcome.

Outreach is of major importance to the group, and we already have poster

designs ready to go to print. As we have Northwood on the 2nd and 4th Sunday evenings of each month it is hoped that new folks will be led to respond. Not least of all because we plan to take leaflets throughout the area having considered a possible radius of approximately 3 miles all around High Legh.

At the time of writing the question was put to me as to why there are some concerns about the use of the premises at Northwood. I have explained that the Independent Methodists are very cautious notwithstanding, that there are some who think it should close. I mention this because I was surprised at their response. The folks then put the question to me "Well, can't we become Independent Methodists?"

The group currently have no denominational status, just in case readers were wondering. Their only concern is that we do not subscribe to same sex marriages or, participate in the current culture of sexual dysfunctionality. I assured them that we do not. I also replied to the effect that there are already a number of I.M. churches dotted around not far from Northwood. Their next reply also encouraged me as they said that they would be happy to conduct mission in any of those churches and try to strengthen them.

The High Legh Fellowship has therefore become clearer to us as a group. As we are feeling our way forward, it seems that the centre at High Legh could be a kind of hub. Useful for prayer and ministry and for discipling, mutual encouragement etc. Whilst other churches could benefit from the faith of folks who are willing and young

enough to carry this vision forward. We have no interest in building a kingdom for ourselves but a kingdom for God. With this in mind, it is no surprise that we have settled into a more clearly defined group, as some of our earlier people have tasted and left, leaving a good mixture of spiritually gifted folks who are growing to love each other more deeply than before.

We are aware of the devil's schemes and my only concern is of any possible impact through unbelief. Any cold response can often be the thing that's so hard to take. We appreciate the prayers of those who have given us their verbal support so far.

Having said all that, it is our pleasure and privilege to have met and be involved with a great bunch of Christians. Whilst Susan and I have had such rich fellowship with these folks we have encouraged them with love, support, prayer, and a solid living presentation of the Scriptures. Meanwhile, they have refreshed us immeasurably with their faith and fellowship, both at Northwood and our meetings in Wigan.

If any readers did not see my earlier article in the 6th March weekly mail and would still like to read it, send us your email and Susan will send it out direct. Thanks for reading and God bless you.

Roger Stone
lilyofthefield29@gmail.com

Just for Fun

Each question contains the initials of words which make the statement correct, for example, 16 = O in a P (Answer: 16 Ounces in a Pound)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 26 = L of the A | 9. 76 = T in the B P |
| 2. 26 = B in the N T | 10. 3 = B M (S H T R) |
| 3. 12 = D of J | 11. 3 = W on a T |
| 4. 12 = S of the Z | 12. 57 = H V |
| 5. 18 = H on a G C | 13. 3 = S of N (S H and J) |
| 6. 11 = P in a F T | 14. 10 = C |
| 7. 90 = D in a R A | 15. 12 = M in a Y |
| 8. 24 = H in a D | |

Answers on page 10

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	6						8	9	
2				8			7	1	5
	8	4			9	7			
7	1							5	9
				1	3		4	8	
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	5	8						6	
4	3				8			7	

In the Joy of the Lord

Kevin Diggins – Cornerstone Church, Nelson

19 February 1951 to 5 February 2023

As a church family we were all saddened to hear of Kevin's passing and he will be greatly missed within the fellowship. Although he had not been well for some time, it was still sudden and a shock to all who knew him.

Throughout his childhood and until the early 2000s, his family attended Bethel Independent Methodist Church in Colne. He, his wife Janet and sister Judith later moved to Nelson I.M. Church, now Cornerstone Church. Kevin held numerous roles within both churches and the circuit. He was circuit representative to Connexional Committee for several years, supporting Janet in her role as Connexional Christian Responsibility Secretary, particularly when she was leading the Romania Project in the 1990s.

Following a family cremation service, a celebration and thanksgiving service was held at Cornerstone Church. The number of people attending and the tributes made paid testimony to Kevin's faith and strong personal relationship with Jesus as his Lord and Saviour – and to the regard in which he was held by many. His faith was tested at times, especially during the last few years, but it remained strong to the end. His is a legacy that will live on in the way he showed both his own family and others what it meant to serve Jesus, the church family and others.

Rita Coop – Hindley Church

It was with great sadness we learned of the death of Rita. She had only been ill for a few weeks and was due to come home from hospital in time for Christmas. So it was a shock to everyone when she quietly slipped away during the night.

Alan and Rita started to attend Hindley Church not long before COVID and resumed again after lockdown and made a welcome addition to our congregation. Both were very pleasant people and fitted in right away. Rita was always smiling and happy and spoke to all the other members with friendship.

They had previously attended Dicconson Lane Church before its closure and they then moved to Westwood Church. This too closed down and they started coming to Argyle Street.

She was obviously a very popular person as the huge numbers at her funeral portrayed. She had been a successful hairdresser all her working life and also she was a very keen golf player. She had been Lady Captain and really enjoyed her sport. Our love goes out to Alan, her partner of 40 years, and all Rita's family.

Just a Thought

A young man had been out with his friends, on returning home late at night he went to bed and immediately fell asleep. Waking next morning he went to the bathroom, looking in the mirror he was astonished, he didn't recognise the image he saw, neither could he remember his name. Dressing quickly, he went to local shop where he asked the shopkeeper, "Who am I?". The shopkeeper thinking, he was playing a prank, told him to go away. He tried various people asking each time, "Who am I?". The response was the same, "Go away, stop wasting time". Confused, he eventually found himself at the local police station, approaching the Desk Sergeant, he asked him the same question "Who am I?". In no uncertain terms he was told to go away. As the man was leaving, the Sergeant saw photographs on the notice board, showing pictures of

people wanted for various crimes. What did he see? Only a photo of the young man who was wanted for a number of petty offences. The Sergeant was able to tell him who he was and to arrest him. (This is supposedly based on a true story).

Have you ever felt like the younger man questioning who you are? One individual amongst so many living on this earth at this time. Insignificant, not important. Maybe in the world eyes, but not with God. He made each one, uniquely individual. Read Psalm 139 v 13-16.

He loves us, concerned for each one. He died to save me (and you), precious in His sight, one of His family. Abba, my father.

Jesus asked the same question of His disciples at Caesarea Philippi. "Who am I?" Matthew 16 v 13-16, Peter replied that He was the Son of the living God.

Asking you the same question, how do you reply?

Norman Prescott



Book Review

Keys to Revival Prayer
Author: David and Patricia Knowles

This short book (56 pages) recounts five Past Revivals. Revival begins with fervent prayer often with individuals or small groups eager to see a revival of God's Spirit. This book does not go into great detail of Past Revivals but concentrates on Who prayed, what and how they prayed and the results of these prayers.

Does the church in this country need a revival, want a revival? Then pray.

A book which encourages the reader to do just that.

Holiness the Key to Revival

Author: Patricia Knowles

This book is about exposure, hope and challenge.

Exposure: an unearthing of an almost lost truth...holiness.

Hope: the aim of the book is to bring hope and encouragement to Christians hungering for more of God.

Challenge: a challenge for honesty and reality in God's people.

The book could be used as a study book for individuals or small groups praying for revival.

More details of prices, availability etc from 01252 328278 or email—p.knowles523@gmail.com

Norman Prescott

Renewing our Calling

Renewing our calling – where to next?

On 18 March, representatives from nine churches in three circuits met together to discuss the 'Renewing our Calling' Bible studies and feedback their views to members of the team that had put the studies together. Other churches had responded to the questionnaire individually.

After completing the studies, churches were asked the following questions:

- How can we as a Connexion and as local churches develop in the areas of: discipleship; ministry; every member ministry in mission as social action and care; every member ministry in mission as evangelism?
- What does God say to us about our Connexional life?
- Are there ways God is revealing need for change as: individuals; local churches; circuits; a Connexion of churches?
- What are you discerning that the Lord is wanting us as a Connexion to: do; stop; develop?
- Anything else you wish to share?

Several churches shared about initiatives that they had started in recent months, and encouragements that they had received. One church admitted that some people found it daunting to consider themselves as priests, and another reported that 'outsiders' coming to their men's group were surprised that everyone had authority to pray and speak, not just a designated minister. One comment on ministry within the church was that those ministering need the opportunity to receive as well as to give, and another church pointed out that ministry isn't just for inside the church.

It does seem that the studies have challenged individuals about their work within the local church. However, there was rather less feedback regarding our Connexional life, with some churches reporting that some (possibly the majority) of their people have little idea about what the Connexion is about. A lot of churches seem to identify with their locality (e.g., through Churches Together) rather than the Connexion. The Statements of Faith and Practice were news to several! Communications are often seen to be poor and need to improve. While there are now bi-weekly electronic mailings to church secretaries, as well as the traditional monthly postal copies, these sometimes get no further than the church secretary. One suggestion was that

e-mails be sent, not only to the secretary but to the minister (if the church has one) and to other leaders within the church, in the hope that at least one of these routes will prove effective.

A radical suggestion from Bethel (Newtown) was that, instead of the present structure of a President and Connexional Committee, we should consider having a Connexional leadership team. This idea would need to be developed – presumably the team would be based around those presently serving as officers (and anyone else?) – and would need a change to the Constitution before it could be implemented. Would there be a place for circuit representation, assuming that the circuits (and individual churches) wanted to be represented? Comments and alternative suggestions would be welcome.

Another comment was about the need for easy access to funding, particularly in an emergency – some people find form-filling too difficult. On another tack altogether, there was a suggestion that the Connexion could produce a lectionary (a list of Bible readings for particular days of the year, for those who don't know). Would this be useful and, if so, who would generate it?

We are grateful to those churches that have taken the time, not just to participate in the studies but to let us have their responses to the questions that were posed. We would appreciate any further comments, to help us discern the way ahead and to identify any resources that may be needed (some churches have asked for more studies along the lines of those already provided, for instance). We would particularly be grateful for your prayers for those charged with taking this initiative forward.

The feedback so far shows that, as far as the Connexion is concerned, we need to take people from where they are rather than where we would like them to be. This means that we need to improve our engagement with churches and individuals in the churches, instead of expecting them to be fully up to speed with what the Connexion is about. However, let Lynda Hunter (Tyldesley) have the last word, as indeed she did at the end of our meeting in Atherton: "The Connexion is there when we need it". May we take this as our starting point, and move on from there..

Brian Rowney

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 8

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. 26 Letter of the Alphabet | 10. 3 Blind Mice (See How They Run) |
| 2. 26 Books in the New Testament | 11. 3 Wheels on a Tricycle |
| 3. 12 Disciples of Jesus | 12. 57 Heinz Varieties |
| 4. 12 Signs of the Zodiac | 13. 3 Sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth) |
| 5. 18 Holes on a Golf Course | 14. 10 Commandments |
| 6. 11 Players in a Football Team | 15. 12 Months of the Year |
| 7. 90 Degrees in a Right Angle | |
| 8. 24 Hours in a Day | |
| 9. 76 Trombones in the Big Parade | |

Answer

8	7	5	9	2	1	3	4	6
3	6	1	7	5	4	8	9	2
2	4	9	8	6	3	7	1	5
5	8	4	6	9	7	1	2	3
7	1	3	2	4	8	6	5	9
9	2	6	1	3	5	4	8	7
6	9	7	4	1	2	5	3	8
1	5	8	3	7	9	2	6	4
4	3	2	5	8	6	9	7	1

A RARE PRIVILEGE



On the 9th March King Charles III received loyal addresses from the 27 Privileged Bodies who have the right to directly address the Throne. When travel and communication were more difficult it was important that the monarch should hear directly from the people and so an eclectic group of Churches, universities, royal boroughs, and “others” were granted the privilege of direct access. Although travel and



communication have improved and the occasion has become more formal the original purpose remains, although it is rarely granted, only five times in the seventy-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

It was my privilege to be part of the small delegation from the Free Churches Group who were invited to the occasion. We gathered in Free Church House where, after a time of prayer and a photograph, we were taken to Buckingham Palace in a minibus. The driver seemed as excited as his passengers and, when we stopped, showed pictures of his parents meeting the late Queen when his father was High Commissioner for Grenada.

We entered the Palace walking on the plush red carpet between members of the Household Cavalry resplendent in gleaming breastplates and plumed helmets. We were directed



past more guards looking magnificent in their ceremonial uniforms to collect our name badges and booklets which contained details of the order of proceedings, the history of the groups and the names of all those attending. We were then guided to our seats in the Ballroom, the scene of state banquets and investitures. We were seated in the front and second rows where we had unrivalled views of the proceedings.

As we waited for the King, we listened to the orchestra beautifully playing a wide range of music before we rose to our feet as the King entered, preceded by Beefeaters and Gurkhas. After the national anthem was played, King Charles invited us to take our seats before the Lord Chamberlain explained the purpose of the gathering. The representatives of the Privileged Bodies then came forward to address the King, offering condolences on the passing of the late Queen, expressing loyalty, explaining something of their work and either assuring him of their prayers or their good wishes.

The King rose to speak to every representative and receive a written address. In the case of the Free Churches, he thanked the Moderator, Rev Helen Cameron, for the generosity and grace of her address and the assurance of our prayers. It is a recognition of the place the Free Churches hold in our national life that King Charles is the fourteenth monarch to whom they have offered a loyal address and our address was the fifth after the Churches of England and Scotland and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

King Charles responded to the addresses by expressing his admiration for the work that the Bodies undertake and the high esteem with which they are held around the world. He also asked that those present tell their members of his admiration and appreciation for all that they do. The King left after the national anthem was played and his guests were ushered into the Picture Gallery where, surrounded by old masters, they were able to mingle.

As I left the Ballroom Sadiq Khan joined me to have a brief discussion on what he described as the law of unintended consequences. In the Picture Gallery I was able to chat to Gentleman Ushers, Military knights of Windsor, university Vice Chancellors and church leaders whilst enjoying canapes and apple juice from the royal orchards. The King mingled with his guests in the Picture Gallery, delighting many to whom he spoke.

As I left the Palace, I was conscious of the rare privilege that had been afforded to the Free Churches and especially to me to represent them. I also reflected on that day when I shall meet the King of kings in our heavenly home which is far grander than any earthly palace, thanks be to God for his indescribable gift to all who enter His Kingdom.

Eric Southwick



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

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On Sunday 22nd January we welcomed the family and friends of Robert and Christine Shaw to Cherry Lane, where they were married 60 years earlier.

Christine's family have been associated with the church back to 1870, when William Mercer and his wife were in attendance at Cherry Lane along with their 11 children.

Most of them were active members of the church filling many offices including church president and preachers of the Gospel.

They filled the position of organist for many years.

Apparently at one stage the church was referred to as 'The Mercer's Chapel'. Christine's mum Ivy was very Supportive of Ken Oatridge who was leader of the Sunday school and church. Ken was very fittingly the minister for the service.

In the history of our church there are quotes from Ivy about her favorite preachers William Mort for harvest as he filled the church to overflowing and chairs had to be put in the aisles.

Also John Finney who made an impression on her preaching on J.O.Y Jesus first, others second and yourself last.

Ivy also spoke of her good friend Lucy Clayton who was the caretaker. During the war years communion wine wasn't available. As we do now they used Ribena but they had forgotten to get any so they used a weak solution of Jelly. As it was winter time when they came to drink it, it was set.

Christine herself started the Christian Endeavor meetings at Cherry Lane.

Christine chose the bible reading 1 Corinthians ch13 for the service and we sang her favorite hymn 'And can it be'.

Sue Stanworth – Cherry Lane IM



Diamond Wedding Anniversary - Les and Jennifer Ford

Congratulations and best wishes from Members and Friends to Les and Jen who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on 23 June 2023.

Les and Jen met in 1958 as teenagers at work. They married at Prescott Gospel Hall and have been blessed with two daughters, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Time with their family is precious and they have enjoyed many years caravanning with them. They worshipped at Prescott Gospel Hall until it closed in 2018 where they were involved in Ministry and Gospel Leadership, Local Outreach, Church Finances, Youth work and Summer Camps. They joined Thatto Heath in July

2018 where they say they have been made very welcome and have gained lots of lovely friends. Les organises the weekly Bible Study and they both are part of the Luncheon Club Team. We here, at Thatto Heath would like to thank Les and Jen for their dedication to our Church Fellowship since they have joined us, and we pray that God will continue to pour His richest blessings upon them both.

Fay Williams- Thatto Heath