



## Creativity within the Church

What, if anything does this painting say to you? And why is it hung up in Astley church?

To answer the second question first, Bob Ward, one of the leaders at Astley Christian Fellowship, was inspired during lockdown to paint a modern interpretation of Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8. The words of this scripture will be known to many, after Pete Seeger set them to music in the song 'Turn, turn, turn'. What Bob has done is to populate the painting with vignettes depicting the various parts of the passage, in a modern context. So, for instance, 'a time to mend' is illustrated by a mechanic with his head under the bonnet of a car! The challenge is to find all the parts – some are more obscure than others and may represent more than one of the statements. However, depending on the size of the reproduction (the original is 3 ft square), you may have to visit Astley to find all the answers.

Creativity is a gift, which can be expressed in many different ways. Painting, sculpture, music, writing – all of these are formats in which we can express our ability to create. Of course, the greatest expression of creativity is God's creation, in its infinite splendour. So many different varieties of vegetation, landscapes, creatures – the



word 'creature' itself comes from the same root as 'creation', and those who argue that life just evolved – by chance – ignore the sheer improbability that such a chance could occur. Sir Fred Hoyle, the astronomer, argued that the probability that the present universe had evolved by chance was about the same as that of a tornado passing through a scrapyard and producing a jumbo jet. When we look at the intricacy of life forms, it is hard not to conclude that they are the product of intelligent design – a creation, no less.

If man is a created being, the *meisterwerk* of the Creator God, it is not surprising that so many people themselves have the desire to create. However, for some, there is an extra influence that transcends natural ability. When Moses was given the instructions for constructing the tabernacle (Exodus 31), God set apart those to whom he had given a special anointing – 'I have

chosen Bezalel son of Uri ... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts ...'. God's Spirit enhanced the natural abilities of Bezalel and his companions, and the result was something special – worthy of the place that God chose for his sanctuary. Three thousand years later, Johann Sebastian Bach would declare that his music was produced 'for the glory of the Most High God alone': his very first published piece, the cantata 'Gott ist mein König' (God is my King) makes that very point and many of his other works were inspired by scripture.

So what of us? Each of us has God-given gifts, some of which are recognised by others and some we may take years to discover ourselves. When we exercise those gifts, like Bach, we give glory to the God who gave them to us. It is a practical demonstration of Luke 10:27 - 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' – and puts our creativity in its right place. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'Whatever you do' – which covers a lot of possibilities – 'do it all for the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10: 31).

**Brian Rowney**



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# Be Wise 2—God's Story



**God's Story** Inspired by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Course,

'Be Wise', thoughts on Whole life Christian Discipleship.

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

In the first of this series of articles, we looked at our personal story of our relationship with God. How it is so important that we are able to tell that story to those who enquire as to why we are Christians. Equally important is our ability to tell God's Story and his ongoing relationship with humankind.

## God's Plan

It begins with 'Creation' with a world and a universe designed for good by God. A world where God lived in harmony with humankind. The relationship then takes a downward turn as evil enters the world as a direct result of man's disobedience and it destroys the goodness that God had created. God's goodness is replaced by corruption, and it is corruption that creates a barrier between God and humankind. The two are lost to each other.

However, there is a least one man who still sought God and a relationship with him. That man was Abraham. A relationship between God and Abraham developed and in turn Abraham was blessed and a Covenant established between Abraham, his descendants and God.

As long as Abraham's descendants followed God's guidance, God would bless them and provide for

them. It was not the perfect solution, it had flaws, as time and time again humankind's corrupted nature has come to the fore. A corruption that is so evident in the world today.

That imperfect solution of the Covenant would at God's appointed time be replaced by God's ultimate solution, Jesus Christ. Jesus was God's forever solution to the relationship breakdown between himself and humanity and not just the descendants of Abraham but the whole of humanity. That is why the events of Easter are so special, for the sacrifice, death and resurrection of Jesus heralds this new relationship. A relationship not based on law or ritual, but one based on love, faith, and forgiveness.

This new relationship between God and the whole of humanity gave birth to the Church, inhabited by the people of faith created by the love of the Saviour and a people who have been given the mission of healing the world and restoring people to God. That's where we are now in God's plan and there is one stage to go.

The final is that of Consummation. The time when God set's everything right when he creates a new world which is free from all the flaws of the present one. God is in the business of setting everything right and making all things new. All creation groans for liberation, to proclaim the story of cosmic homecoming. A time to leave our despair behind and discover life abundant when the world is conformed to God's way as the redeemed live joyfully in his presence.

That is God's story from beginning to end; it is a complete story with a start and a finish. How well do we know that story and how confident are you to able to communicate it to others?

## A Story without Hope

Humanity on the other hand has devised another story and it is one that omits God completely. It is a story with a confused an uncertain beginning, followed by what can only be described as a speculative narrative and concludes with a pointless future. It talks of life as being a mere thing of chance without any reason or purpose.

Recently I caught the end of a programme that described the death of the Earth. In about 7.5 billion years' time the cooling Sun will expand into what is called a 'Giant Red' expanding to absorb Mercury, Venus and possibly the Earth. Even if the Earth is not absorbed by the Red Dwarf Sun, what will remain will be totally unrecognisable from the Earth we know today. What disturbed me more than anything about this projected future for our world was the fact that there would be absolutely nothing left of it. All of humankind's achievements would be lost as if they had never existed; music, art, literature, architecture, technology, the sheer beauty of the planet, all gone without a trace as if it never existed. If that were to be so what would have been the point of life itself? (Suggested further reading, 'The life and death of planet earth' by Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee)

## New Atheism

To return to humanity's alternative story of life, its meaning and purpose without God. A story that is widely accepted as fact because it is the perceived wisdom of the age, that humanity has grown and developed to such an extent that we have answered all the important questions about life and conveniently God is not involved.

Today many accept and believe fundamentalist atheist beliefs that deny a divine and sovereign God. They accept these beliefs without question, examination or understanding of the assumed evidence which has been so

effectively projected as the undeniable truth by the likes of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett, who together are known as the “Four Horseman” of New Atheism.

Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist, ethologist, professorial fellow of New College, Oxford, and an author whose best-known work is the multimillion selling book, ‘The God Delusion’, published in 2006. In this book he states that God, almost certainly does not exist and that those who claim to have a personal faith in God are deluded. His book then focuses on what he believes is evidence and reasons of why God does not exist.

### The Dawkins Delusion

The ideas, evidence and

conclusions contained in the “The God Delusion” have subsequently been challenged by many other scientific and reasoning thinkers, some Christian and some not. Time and space do not allow me to expand on those arguments but one such book I can recommend that takes on Dawkins is entitled ‘The Dawkins Delusion’ written by Alistair McGrath with contributions from his wife Joanna, both are noted academics and theologians. Humanity’s alternative story to God’s story simply does not hold up on close inspection, for not only does it fail to provide us with the answers for the many gaps in our knowledge but more importantly it fails totally on the big three questions. How did everything begin? What are we here for? What is the point of living?

God’s story on the other hand does

explain why we are here, that we are here for a purpose, that we were made in God’s image which explains why we have developed skills and abilities to think, plan, and create in a whole range of areas, far greater than any other creatures on the planet and yet we have only inhabited the earth in our present form for literally a miniscule amount of time. Have you ever asked yourself how has mankind been able to develop to where we are now in a few thousand years? It is worth thinking about, but I have no possible answer other than the obvious one, it was all part of God’s story and God’s plan for us.

Rob Brooks



## CAN Corner

### Christian Aid – Big Pea Challenge

Roman Road Church, Failsworth took up the Christian Aid Big Pea Challenge on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May.

We have a Café Church service once a month on the third Sunday of each month so took the opportunity in May to use the material supplied by Christian Aid.

We learnt about Esther who lives in Malawi and grows pigeon peas. Pigeon peas are a drought-resistant, soil-revitalising, high-protein, low-cost, delicious crop. Esther uses her crop to make flour

which she uses to make bread rolls which she sells to provide an income for herself and her grandson Nespo.

We did a creative prayer activity using people shapes to pray for others and our hopes and visions for the world.

After the service we had a simple lunch of soup and rolls – we served pea soup of course but also offered tomato or mushroom for those who didn’t like pea soup! Donations to Christian Aid raised £265.00.

We finished lunch with left over cake from our open afternoon the day before when it was Failsworth Carnival. As the carnival parade goes past our church, we opened the building while the parade went past and had crowds sitting outside to watch the parade in glorious sunshine. We invited people in after the parade for drinks, cake, and strawberry scones. Donations raised went the Failsworth carnival fund.

Elizabeth Barron—Roman Road

### Cake Decorating with Sally

It was back to ‘Night School’ at Thatto Heath on Tuesday 30 May when over 30 members of the Fellowship and their Friends and members of our community attended a Cake Decorating Demonstration in the Church Centre. Church Member Sallyled a



Demonstration on how to create various icing decorations for cakes. Then it was the turn of the ‘students’ to put into practice what they had learnt. The Evening proved to be a huge success, with lots of fellowship, friendship and fun.

Fay Williams—Thatto Heath



# From the Connexion

## MAY CONNEXIONAL COMMITTEE ROUND-UP

By Alison Tipping, Medlock Valley Circuit Representative

### Connexional Committee 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 Hybrid meeting – Easington Lane and Zoom

The meeting was chaired by Dorothy Kendrick, as President and we were joined by several members of the committee on zoom.

### Matters Arising from the previous meeting.

A letter had been drafted to Bethel Newtown following their letter regarding membership dues, and it was agreed that this should now be sent out. An article on the subject has already appeared in the magazine. Roger Stone has agreed to be nominated as President Elect for the coming year, on the basis that this may change due to the Connexional restructure. In view of this there will have to be some rewording of the constitution which the churches will be asked to vote on in due course.

Guidelines for conduct at meetings – agreed that these be sent out after amendments discussed at the meeting. Brian Rowney presented a paper on the merger of Nelson IM/Baptist Church (Cornerstone Church) as he is looking into any legal matters that may have to be considered.

We discussed nominations for Connexional Officers. Most officers are willing to stand again, however Alan Harrison is stepping down, leaving a vacancy for the Communications Officer. We also have the posts of Safeguarding and Administration Secretary vacant. It was agreed that Alan Harrison could be co-opted onto the Admin Group as Communications and Data Protection Specialist.

### General Secretary's Report

Brian Rowney attended a meeting of the Free Churches Group on March 29. There was some discussion about the need for Free

Church chaplains in several spheres. Following a suggestion from Admin, a donation of £1000 has been sent to the Disasters Emergency Committee in the aftermath of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Geoff and Elizabeth Chapman from our West Camel church will be representing the Connexion at the Congregational Federation's Annual Assembly on May 13, which will be held in Taunton. It was agreed that we invite John Claydon to Annual Meeting 2023 to report on the work of the review group. It was also agreed that Brian attend the Windrush 75 event at Southwark Cathedral on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.

### Communications Officers Report

The web site has been updated as necessary, and magazine has been produced as per the Admin Committee report. It was decided at Administration Group that due to the age of a few laptops, that three new laptops should be purchased – one for the President, Church Support Organiser and Church Support Worker. These have now been purchased and are now in use. The old laptops are still usable and will be advertised in the Connexional mailing. Thanks were given to Andrew Rigby, who stepped in to help with the magazine when Kathy initially went on maternity leave. Laura is now picking up all emails with articles for the magazine as the Interim CSM, and producing the magazine, but is not responsible for providing articles.

### Church Support Group

Croxtan, Bingley, and Blackpool Churches are due to be auctioned at the end of June, due to delays by the solicitor. Lisa is continuing working with the Review Group re the Connexional bible studies and the evaluation process. Due to difficulties in finding a part-time worker, after consultation with the Northeast Circuit, it was decided to seek an extra three days of

funding, so we can advertise for a full-time worker, who could support the Northeast project as well as the circuit. Marilyn had a meeting with the new Associate Pastor of New Life Church in Haydock, as he was new to Independent Methodism, and had a constructive discussion, and attended the NCVS Annual meeting which proved very informative. Several of our churches have been experiencing growth, albeit it sometimes small, and warm spaces have been successful in some churches.

### Northwood Centre

The current income for Northwood is £3515 due to current bookings. The group who are currently using the church every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday are working around any bookings. It was agreed that we put together a steering group to meet the group, as they would like to meet with the Connexion with the potential of becoming a mission church. Meetings are also being arranged for the next 12 months to start to implement a Business Plan for the future use of Northwood.

### Safeguarding Report

The training session which was organised to be held at Bryn Church had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances but is to be rearranged at another date.

### Overseas Missions

Liz Greenhalgh continues her work in Romania and has now secured new housing, partly due to the financial assistance we gave her. She visited the UK at the beginning of the year but is now back in Romania. Daniel and Gail Castro are now home in the UK and have been offered a permanent position with OMF in the UK. To be supported by the Connexion they must be members of an IM church and be involved in mission. They are members at Spennymoor IM Church, but currently are attending Elmwood church in Manchester. They have visited several IM churches and are still available to

be booked for services. It was agreed that we continue to support them and review the situation once we know more about their new role and where they might be based. L & P report that racist violence is on the rise, although at present, they have not been directly affected. L's mental health training course is continuing to grow, and she has just received additional training from their Missionary society. P needs new authorisation for his programme and prays that this will soon be forthcoming so the project can progress. P plans to visit France this month as his dad's health continues to be poor.

#### Administration Group

Booking forms for Annual Meeting 2023 have now been sent out. Churches and individuals need to respond by 12 June to advise whether they are attending in person or by Zoom. As agreed by Connexional Committee, those travelling over 100 miles may claim a subsidy towards the cost of overnight accommodation for either the Friday or the Saturday night. For Annual Meeting 2024, a provisional booking has been made at the Mercure Hotel in Haydock for 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The 'Introducing the Independent Methodists' booklet is being updated, as it was last reprinted in 2016. We do not intend to hold a stock of this booklet, but copies will be printed to order. Because the original is held in electronic format, changes can be made as necessary so anyone requiring the booklet will receive the most up-to-date information.

#### Finance Committee

The financial accounts for 2022 have been submitted for examination and should be completed in the next few weeks. A trustee's report has also been submitted with the accounts. At the most recent meeting it was also

proposed that the church dues remain at £35 per member. Approximately £300k is to be transferred from the bank account into the investment, leaving a working capital figure of around £70/80K. several grant requests are in process. It was agreed to accept the Grant and Financial policies as amended. It was agreed to make a grant to all churches of £4000. Churches must be up to date with their church dues and let the Connexion know what the money will be used for. Alan Britton will be writing to the churches with more information.

#### Ecumenical Officer Report

Bill Hampson attended the Churches Together in England 'Thy Kingdom Come 2023' launch, which again runs from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday. This took place on 18th May Salvation Army Regents Hall, London and was screened in 150 countries. There are free resources available for churches on their website.

#### Ministry Committee

There are three ministers eligible in 2023 for Long Service Recognition Certificates, all of whom wish to receive a certificate. Reminders have been sent out for the updating of ministers' profiles.

#### Education Organisers Report

Student numbers remain the same and one student is coming to the end of their studies. The study weekend took place on 24<sup>th</sup> – 26th February 2023, when Richard Saunders-Hindley looked at Matthew's Gospel under the title of "The call of the Kingdom; Faithful followers, Faithful leaders". The weekend was a great weekend of teaching, fellowship, and encouragement. The next study weekend will be on 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> October 2023, speaker Gerard Charles from OMF. There has still been no meeting with Cliff College however

their principal, Ashley Cooper recently spoke at our Ministers and Leaders Conference in April. This was a successful weekend and there are plans to rename this next year to encourage others to attend. The 2024 conference will be held on 19th & 20th April 2024, speaker Paul Baxendale. There is due to be another meeting of the Wesleyan Evangelicals Academy in a few weeks time.

#### Enabling Group

Recent updates on the group meeting at Northwood have been circulated to Connexional Committee previously. Discussions in the group have been about the Management Group which is specific to Northwood and therefore reports, at present, directly to Connexional Committee. It was agreed that the Management group are given a spending limit for general use so that they don't have to ask Connexional committee each time a purchase needs to be made. A Church Closure Policy has also been discussed. There is a discrepancy between the rules of our Model Deed and Land Registry. It was agreed that the enabling Group seek legal advice to see which document takes precedence. It was also agreed that personal addresses should not be included on correspondence from Connexional Officers, but the Resource Centre letterhead should be used, especially when letters go out to all churches, or outside the Connexion. It has now been agreed to hold two Enabling Group meetings a year in person – one in the Northwest and one in the Northeast. All other meetings will be on zoom. The group generally meet every 4-6 weeks, and all Connexional Officers are members of the Enabling Group.

**Alison Tipping, Medlock Valley Circuit Rep.**

# GOD SAVE

## Our churches celebrating The Coronation of our new King

### Roman Road Celebrates the Coronation

Our Coronation celebrations began with a trail in our church garden inviting all ages to find seven invitations and discover more about this historic royal occasion. This Outdoor Trail celebrated not only the



King's Coronation, but also the beautiful natural world around us. There were fun facts about the Coronation and nature activities to explore.

We had several trails in the church garden – started during Covid when we were not allowed in the building – especially at Christmas or Easter. To protect against the weather, we laminate and pin to wooden sticks to stick in the ground.

This trail was from Sun Hats and Wellie Boots <https://www.sunhatsandwellieboots.com/> which has some great craft ideas and printable.

We gave away 100 copies of the souvenir book God Save the King from 10 of Those. This brief guide to the history of the coronation service particularly highlighted the importance of the religious symbolism involved and introduced King Jesus - the ultimate king who came to create a vastly different kind of kingdom. These were very well received.



Our Pramtime children had a Coronation themed story on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May and doing some Coronation magic painting from Baker Ross. They took home a Union

Jack crown for their own celebrations and enjoyed cupcakes decorated in red, white, and blue sprinkles at snack time. There was also the opportunity to have their photo taken on our royal throne which went down really well!



Plus, we had a visit from King

Charles! On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May we had a Big Coronation Lunch after morning service and enjoyed a lovely spread and some fantastic cakes!



Our Messy Church continued the Coronation theme on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May when amongst other things we made the King out of a toilet roll tube and decorated crown biscuits. Our story was all about King David.

### Silksworth IM's Coronation Garden Party 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Together with North Street Methodist Church in Silksworth, we decided to hold a joint Garden Party in our Church Garden to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. It would be an Afternoon Tea with sandwiches, scones, cakes, and



strawberries and cream. The two Churches agreed to fund the event, so it was free to all who attended. There would be music and a quiz as part of the entertainment.

All we needed was good weather! All eyes were on the weather forecast for the weekend and we were hopeful that all would be well but following the brilliant Coronation Service in the rain on Saturday the decision was made on Sunday, rather than risk being caught outside in the rain, we would move it indoors. So, it was "all hands to the pumps" on Monday morning to



decorate the hall with bunting which was supposed to be hung on the trees outside.

We were just finished in time for the start at 1pm, all we needed was the crowd to arrive. As we had not been able to advertise the fact that it was now indoors, we thought people would not "drop in" thinking it would have been postponed. We need not have worried. We had a steady stream of visitors throughout the afternoon and a great time was had by all.

# THE KING

The food was spectacular, and everyone enjoyed their fill. As part of the "Giving Back" idea from the

The Lunch commenced with the singing of 'God Save Our King' followed by a 3 course Roast Dinner

tion quiz and games thanks to Helen. We finished with songs of praise each choosing a favourite hymn (Some more than one). It was lovely to have Ken Irwin back with us for the service after such a long time.



Royal Family, we decided to donate 50-afternoon teas to the local Academy School we work with in the village. These were duly delivered first thing on the Tuesday morning. The Headteacher was delighted and planned for their distribution to suitable families.

and Cupcakes and concluded with the singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. A lovely time was had by all who attended and those who served.

## Lamberhead Green Coronation Celebration

One Sunday May 7th the congregation took part in a special service to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Norman Prescott led the service which began with the singing of the National Anthem.

We were pleased that the event was very well received and enjoyed by so many people from both the Churches and residents in the Village.

## Cherry Lane Celebrated the Coronation

Our minister for the service was Phill McDermott, He we began by listening to Sir Andrew Lloyd Web-

God blessed us in solving the logistical arrangements to make it a success.



## Thatto Heath Celebrate

Thatto Heath Luncheon Club held a Lunch in celebration of the Coronation on Wednesday 3 May. 40 people attended.



The service followed the theme of Coronation and Kingship through the singing of the appropriate hymns, readings and a talk by Norman. Those present were reminded that Jesus is King of Kings.



ber's 'Make a joyful noise.' and listening to Psalm 98. At the end of the service, we shared communion. This was followed by afternoon tea. Sharing sandwiches, The kings Quiche home-made pavlova in the shape of a crown and kings' cupcakes. We then had a corona-



Following the service a coronation lunch was held in the school-room. Members brought different items of food for the meal. After the meal glasses were raised in a toast to the King.

# Can you really change the life of a family for £30?

Paula, Will and Phil from AIM Church, Appleton believe you can, and they are flying out to The Gambia as part of an 18 strong AMOR Europe PURE team on November 5th.



The team will be taking and fitting water filters for families in rural areas of The Gambia in partnership with the local church. The villages have open wells or no wells at all. Each water filter costs just £30 and provides a family with 2,000 litres of water each day for ten years (that's less than 6p/week!).



Before the Amor team arrive, the local church visits the families and invite participation. The data from the baseline survey is shocking. 95% of the families report sickness attributable to dirty water and poor hygiene. Medical costs are high, children miss school because of illness and working parents buy expensive bottled water to keep working and earning.

The AMOR team, visit each family and through the WaSH (Water,

Sanitation, Hygiene) programme, provide and fit a free water filter, give practical advice on Sanitation (how to construct a long drop toilet) and Hygiene. On this expedition they are launching a new initiative to help meet the needs of 'period poverty' and allow Amor to work with the local churches to help remove shame, restore dignity, and reopen the door to possibilities in the lives of women and girls in The Gambia.

After the filters are distributed, the team offer to pray with each family. The majority of those who receive the filters are of the Muslim faith and yet they welcome the opportunity to pray together, often praying a blessing over our work too!



The local church follows up with each family at 2 weeks, 8 weeks, 6 months, and 12 months. They ask the same questions as the first survey - but at 6 months 95% report NO sickness at all: a 90% reduction in healthcare costs and a 90% reduction in children's school absence due to sickness. **That is life changing!**

The AMOR WaSH program gives the local church an opportunity to engage with the families, meeting their needs and building relationships. The Pastor from the Gambian partner church reports that the program is giving them access to families they previously had no contact with. Local families are committing to follow Jesus and have been baptised - **life changing!**

The question is often asked 'wouldn't it better to save the cost of team travel and just send the

money?.' The answer is an emphatic 'No' from the local church! They are encouraged that Christians from the UK recognise their problems and are prepared to travel and help bring a **life changing** solution.

There is another reason we believe that the expeditions are beneficial - we wouldn't have known there was a problem if the previous teams had not enthusiastically shared their experience! The Amor volunteers pay for their own travel and expedition cost and together raise support to purchase as many £30 filters as they can. The Christians who travelled to The Gambia last year also report they personally found it **life changing** as they served the Lord and loved their neighbour in a practical way. Three team members have also been Baptised in Gambia, by the local Pastor -over the last two expeditions!

Last year two trips changed the lives of over 500 families. This year we hope to change the lives of more families by bringing them pure water - and give the local church further opportunity to build relationships and share about the Living Water that Jesus brings.

If you would like to support the team by giving towards a filter for a family, you can donate through the Stewardship Website - look for Amor Europe's page. Please mark all donations with reference 'GAM23 AIM' so the team from Appleton can be encouraged by your support.

[https://www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/Gambia\\_Nov\\_23](https://www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/Gambia_Nov_23)

If you would like further information on Amor Europe and the expedition to Gambia see <https://www.amoreurope.org/pure> maybe you could join a team and make a life changing difference?

Phil AIM Church







## NEWS FROM OUR MISSIONARIES

**L. and P.** enjoyed a brief visit to France in April when they were able to visit family members, especially P's father who is not well. Please pray that the Lord will draw close to him. L. planned to visit her family in the UK at the end of June. They ask us to pray for several causes for concern in their country: increasing drought, especially in the south and disturbing evidence of racism, mainly towards those from Sub-

Saharan countries. There are increasing signs of hopelessness in society, leading to many younger people leaving the country. Pray that those who have lost hope might cry out to God. Both L. and P. are making good progress with their projects. They praise God that prayers have been answered for a new director for their NGO, but they still need adequate funding for P's work. Pray also for unity among the believers in their city.

**Liz Greenhalgh** praises the Lord for the building up of the after-school work. There are now 11 children involved. These are children with exciting potential, but it is their circumstances that are

against them and hold them back. The sessions begin and end with prayer and there is also a two-minute talk on something spiritual, such as God's love for them. Liz praises God that the number of teenagers in the church is growing, as some are now bringing their friends. She is now able to use her home on occasion for her ministry with these teenagers, either in small groups or sometimes for one-to-one talks. Plans are being made for summer holiday clubs and activities, both for the children and young people from the church and from the wider community. Please pray that all the planning will bear fruit.

As some of you may have heard, we returned from Spain to the UK at the beginning of December of 2022. It was a decision not made light-heartedly but the result of much prayer, thinking and seeking the counsel of different people in several places. We are aware that there are people wanting to know the reasons for our departure, and we totally understand and respect this desire. The Director of OMS UK, our sending missionary organization, has summarized well not only the reasons why we left Spain but also how the future looks like for us, and rather than expressing it ourselves, we would like to add his summary to this article:

*Daniel and Gail Castro have served extremely well overseas through One Mission Society UK, having successfully served, latterly and sacrificially, in Spain for many years.*

*Their latest role and responsibilities in Spain were not, however, totally in line with their calling nor did it fully utilize their evangelical skills. The expectations on them, and their time, was also, sadly, unsustainable, consequently this placement came to a natural end. In agreement with, and with the blessing of, their OMS sending office, they returned to the UK in December 22. This approach was to allow for a period of reflection and refocus, as well as recuperation, to allow them to consider where they might reasonably continue to serve and what that continued ministry might be.*

*Following this time of prayer and searching we are delighted to firstly see Daniel being successful in his appointment with Elmwood Church, Salford in the part-time role of Assistant Pastor. In addition to this salaried role, both Daniel and Gail see additional serving roles through supporting their home denomination by visiting local churches and preaching as appropriate and necessary.*

*Gail, whilst already committed to some 10 hours per week to volunteering in Elmwood church, has also taken on an additional volunteering role, with 'Safe Families'. This role, which reaches out into the community with a Christian ethos, requires Gail to visit, befriend and help, where possible, those who are vulnerable or in need in the community. We see this role as very suited to her calling and pivotal for Gail to continue to serve on the homeland front, through*

*One Mission Society.*

*We view this 'partnering through 'Safe Families' as an opportunity for her to minister, as appropriate, to those needing assistance or support. One Mission Society UK is engaging Gail, internally, to undertake a part-time mentoring/member care role, on behalf of the Society, to support our UK missionaries and missionary families. This role would be of both assistance to, and in keeping with, her voluntary commitment to Safe Families*

*We (OMS UK) are excited about what now lies ahead for Daniel and Gail, which will not only build on and be enhanced by their experiences in ministry to date, but also present new challenges for them. We view their individual, complementary and diverse responsibilities, going forward, as an answer to much prayer and to the Lord's provision. Their responsibilities will open opportunities to support not only their denomination, but several churches/church fellowships, members of the community and fellow missionaries.*

*Our prayers for them, and we would ask you to join us in this, is two-fold:*

*Firstly, that what God has now revealed will open new doors for them and present a uniform, collective witness for His Kingdom's work and for His people.*

*Secondly, that Daniel and Gail will continue to receive sufficient prayer and financial support for this new chapter in their lives.*

*Yours Sincerely,  
Walter McCorkell  
OMS UK Executive Director*

*We deeply appreciate your understanding and support for what lies ahead for us. We would also be open to talk in more detail to those that deem it good and necessary. Our deep gratitude goes to you and to the Connexion for your faithful support to us over 30+ years of ministry overseas.*

*Daniel and Gail Castro*

# MINISTERS AND LEADERS CONFERENCE 2023 REPORT

A Friday evening in April and about 50 of us are meeting for the Ministers' and Leaders' conference at Garstang Country Hotel and Golf club. Our speaker for the next 24 hours was Ashley Cooper, Principal of Cliff College since 2017. He joined Cliff from the role of Superintendent of Burnley Methodist circuit and Senior Minister of Swan Bank church in Stoke on Trent. In this role he had been instrumental in leading an exceptionally large church through a time of transition and change and he shared some of his experiences with us.

The title advertised was 'I will build my church' and Ashley explained that the question this topic brought to him was 'What kind of church does God require of us?' and he asked us to consider what we hoped to get from this time? Under the four headings of 'The challenge to build, a kingdom community, a global community, and a community of saints' Ashley brought out key scriptures and contemporary situations that caused us to question what we are doing in our churches right now and why we are doing them. Looking at the growth of the church in Acts he reminded us that we cannot resume church exactly as we were pre-pandemic, nor can we blame a virus for what has happened to our church congregations. Between Acts 7 and 8 the church experienced a change as they were forced from Jerusalem just as we were forced to look at church differently by not

being able to open our church buildings. Our challenge he said was to realise that the mission remains the same – spread the gospel, God has already determined how, we just need to listen to his instructions.

In the second session he asked us what our biggest challenges had been in the last 20 years and what did people around our church buildings say about us? Focusing on Luke's account of Jesus reading the prophesy of Isaiah 61 in the synagogue he demonstrated how the declaration of Jesus fulfilling the prophesy was show to be fulfilled by the lives of people restored, changed and renewed by meeting Jesus which remains our mission – for people to meet Jesus, to intentionally offer Jesus as Saviour.

Ashley's next challenge to us was what evidence of the kingdom is present in your church? He reminded us of Acts 12 when Peter freed from prison by an angel is knocking at the door of the house where the believers are praying for his release, and they don't believe it's Peter knocking. Prayer is powerful, it still is seen powerfully moving around the globe, one Korean pastor told him 'No earnest prayer, no church growth' but do we believe prayer is answered? As part of the global community, we need to play our part, praying together, earnestly, fervently, consistently and believing God will answer prayer powerfully.

In the final session Ashley Leesa Crockatt

reminded us of the Wesleyan foundations that built methodism from open air preaching, with no PA systems or amplification but raising a crowd that would draw people's attention to society meeting where the gospel was presented and people were invited to meet with Jesus and invited to attend a Class meeting where the discipleship took place, dealing with your issues in a small group who held each other accountable and encouraged, shaped and nurtured each other as they grew in their faith together. Ashley shared how in Stoke on Trent the church had gone out to where people were, in café, leisure centres and local venues then invited people to come and hear more at evangelical outreach every Sunday and how the cell or house groups were the class meeting of today for discipleship, where we learn to read scripture and grow in our faith before we go out and offer the invitation to others.

Throughout the time we shared our experiences during pandemic and following pandemic. We heard stories of hope, new growth, and faithful servants called home. We shared fellowship and heartfelt, spirit lead prayers. It's only 24 hours away from our ordinary lives but it was a blessing that should be experienced. Challenging, thought provoking, and striking at our hearts we were left with the same question as at start - What kind of church does God require of us?

As a Connexion, the Resource Centre hosted our first Dementia UK event on May 12th in the church hall of Lamberhead Green **"Time for a Cuppa"**

We had a lovely day for it, although not quite good enough to sit outside. We were over run with cakes, plenty to go around.

Plenty of people came and showed their support for a great cause and we raised a whopping **£310!**

Thank you to Lamberhead Green for giving me the use of the church hall and a big thank you to everyone who came and showed their support and donated. See you again next time!

Laura Pendlebury



# Dorothy's Jottings

A President's Road Map for 2022- 2024

The holiday season is upon us. Caravans are on the roads once more; summer clothes are being aired and sunscreen is to hand. Are you planning a journey this summer? Maybe somewhere you have been before and know well so offers comfort and security or perhaps somewhere new with lots to explore that gives a thrill of discovery?

We are certainly on a journey as a Connexion of churches and are approaching the end of what has been a sometimes-difficult road but there are new, fresh horizons ahead of us if we are willing to step out in faith.

As I continue to journey around our churches, I have become increasingly aware of a desire to see the Connexion functioning and representing its member churches - working for them, seeking to support and encourage whilst empowering them to function as the churches believe God has called them to. In consequence we have begun to experience an increased movement of God's Spirit amongst us. We are seeing signs of hope and new growth across our Connexion of churches.

As we move forward in the post pandemic years – a time when there will be a lot of questions asked and information will come to light about the consequences of all that happened during those times of restrictions - we have much to learn. Interestingly, churches are responding in

different ways – some holding coffee times with opportunity for people to talk, others offering luncheon clubs with fellowship times. Some offering prayer spaces where people can gather and share what God is doing or ask for prayer or simply be quiet and wait on God. Several of our churches are helping the Ukraine people and others have found the Lord has brought Eastern Europeans to their church and they are seeking to minister to their needs. Across the board, churches are reporting there is an increasing openness to talking about spiritual things and people are open to being prayed for and to share in fellowship and contact with others.

Those churches who have undertaken the Connexional Bible Studies, sent out to all our churches to enable us as a Connexion of churches to renew our calling and to look again at our Call to Discipleship, to the Priesthood of all Believers, to Demonstrating God's Love through Evangelism of the word and Social Action, to Discern the Will of God together and finally the Call to Connexion, have reported how God has spoken into their individual church situations and revealed areas that he wants to change or develop. Some churches have reinstated their weekly prayer meetings, others have decided to hold regular Bible Studies, Others have looked at their missional actions in the community and yet others

have been challenged on their focus in church meetings.

The recent Ministers and Leaders Conference held in May at Garstang is reported elsewhere in this Magazine but one phrase I took away with me was this. 'No earnest prayer. No church growth'. My belief is that we need to become a praying community once again. I know many of our churches are faithful in prayer meetings and individuals maintain regular prayer life – but how earnest are we? How much do we really trust God to answer our prayers and how much is routine? This is an area we are still moving to and one where we still need to allow God to transform us as a body of believers.

God is on the move, and He is looking for a people who will move in line with His will and purposes. I have always believed that God has a plan and purpose for the Connexion of churches. The real question is – are His people willing to step up to the mark and work with Him that others may know Jesus and follow Him?

*'And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*  
Acts 2:21

Dorothy Kendrick

**Connexion**  
The magazine of the family of Independent Methodist Churches



The last day for articles to be submitted for the September / October issue of the Connexion magazine is 4th August. The theme for this issue will be 'Obedience and Perseverance'.

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

Just a quick reminder that 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!*

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All articles for the magazine  
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 magazine@imchurches.org.uk

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## DOREEN HOWE

Doreen is remembered for her bubbly character, and joy in knowing and serving the Lord.

Doreen attended our Sunday school with her brothers from an early age going on to teach in Sunday school for many years.

Doreen grew up in South Hylton knowing most people there and giving a good Christian witness. She was cook at the Primary School and endeared herself to staff and pupils alike.

Doreen enjoyed, attending Bible studies, and the W.A. of which she was president for a number of years. She was greatly missed in our fellowship during her years of illness.

Our prayers are for her husband Fred as we thank God for her life. The funeral service was conducted by Shaun Newton.

Anne Chisholm

## JUNE LAWSON

We celebrated June's life on June 2nd, as services were led by Len Ogilvie and Anne Chisholm.

June was the dear wife of the late Ralph, and mother of the late Carole and Susan. She attended our church for many years when the family came to live at South Hylton and encouraged the girls to come to Sunday school. She was a church Trustee for many years.

She loved to read her Bible and even when her MS and Parkinson's caused much pain and many problems, and she could not hold a book she read the scriptures from her Kindle.

June was Secretary of Sunderland MS society and used her counselling skills to help newly diagnosed patients to great advantage.

Our sincere condolences go to Sue and Paul, Jasmine and all the family as they mourn their loss, and we continue to pray for them all.

Anne Chisholm

## New Members

It was a privilege for our President, Jean Merton, to offer the hand of friendship and present a Bible to Ian Grey on becoming a member of our Church at Easington Lane on Easter Sunday.

Ian has been part of our Church for many years, being a regular attendee of our Sunday services for over 20 years. We know he will be an asset to our Church and the mission we must reach our community with the gospel message.

We pray for God's guidance upon Ian's life as he pledges to live in accordance with His will.

Kay White



Roman Road I.M. Church  
 Failsworth

Roman Road Independent Methodist  
 Church

21 Roman Road, Failsworth, M35 9JR

# Prayer Space

1st Saturday of every month

10.30am - 12pm

from Saturday 1st July

For further details please  
 contact us on 0161 624 7503