

Issue 1 • Winter 2015

The **Methodist** Church 

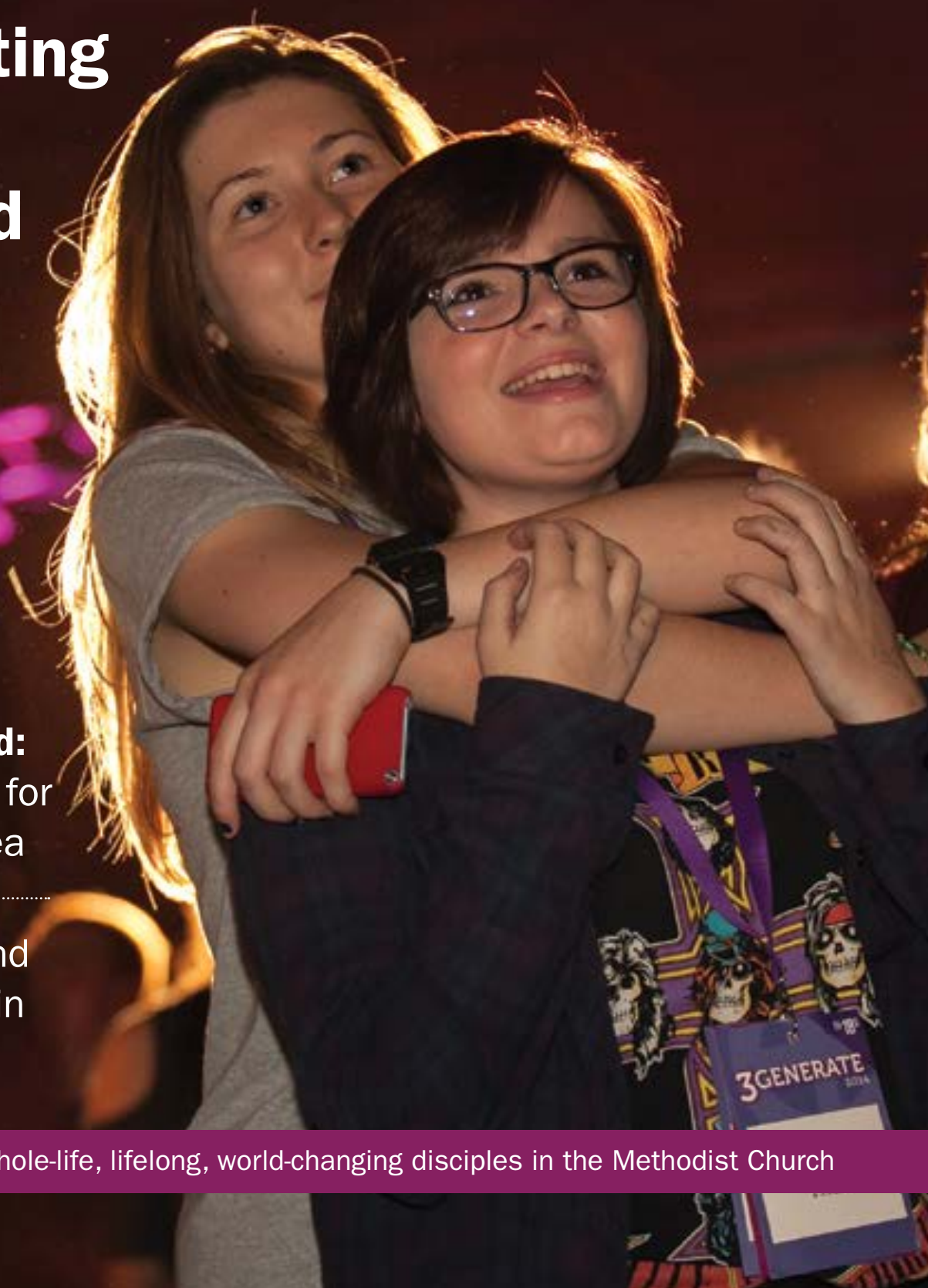
the connexion

**Elevating
the
e-word**

Daily bread:
a blessing for
North Korea

Building and
belonging in
Edinburgh

News for whole-life, lifelong, world-changing disciples in the Methodist Church





Making connections

Welcome to the first issue of *the connexion*, a new magazine designed to keep you, the Methodist people, in touch with what's happening in your Church.

Each edition will be full of stories that show the many ways we are sharing Jesus with our communities. You'll soon find out that Methodism is alive and well with a rich variety of good-news stories to tell.

Why did we call this new magazine *the connexion*? Well, it's a word that has been associated with us since John Wesley's day and sums up the idea that we are all linked together in God's call to worship, mission and evangelism. Someone once described Connexionalism as the X factor of Methodism.

Together we make up the Connexion – each Methodist has a part to play in it, just as St Paul told the Corinthians that the hands, eyes and feet which made up human bodies were a good picture of the Church. We all have different roles, but where we connect is where God can make a difference.

The stories we tell in each issue aim to show that, all over the globe, God's kingdom is growing because Methodists are great at making connections.

Our main theme for this first issue is evangelism, following the call from the General Secretary, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, for us to "elevate the e-word". We look at ways in which Methodists are finding apt and creative ways to share the Good News with their neighbours.

Please, when you have read your copy of *the connexion*, pass it on to someone else so they can discover more about how we are all connected too.

Stay connected!

Gareth Hill
Editor

the connexion

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Young people at 3Generate, the Children and Youth Assembly 2014

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Contents



6 Elevating the e-word

One of the big challenges for Methodism at the moment is thinking creatively about opportunities for evangelism, according to General Secretary Martyn Atkins



8 Breaking through the glass ceiling

A movement of young adults choosing to serve some of South Wales' most deprived areas is sparking new opportunities for evangelism



12 Be an example for other believers

Don't let your age silence you – that's Megan Thomas' advice to the young people in Methodism... and it comes from her own experience



14 Daily bread: a blessing for North Korea

A bakery and a noodle factory are among the ways Christians are most effective in North Korea



18 Building and belonging in Edinburgh

Revitalisation and a new direction for all to see in Scotland's capital city



22 Reflection

In each issue of *the connexion* we want to give you the opportunity to reflect, often through the gifts of Methodism's creative people

Mission-shaped Heritage

Wrestling with the puzzle of how to be missional with historic religious buildings, museums and archive collections is the focus of a conference at Cliff College in July.

Methodist Heritage is drawing together a programme of keynote speakers, academic papers, site visits and workshops to consider innovative ways of preserving and extending the use of our Church's heritage for mission.

The Methodist Heritage Conference, called Mission-shaped Heritage, will be at Cliff College from 16-18 July. The all-inclusive residential rate is £175 per person in single en suite rooms and there are day rates available.

For more information, contact Diane Foster, Heritage Administrator, at fosterd@methodistheritage.org.uk or call 020 7467 5117.

Resourcing Mission 2015

It's not too early to plan for the 2015 Resourcing Mission Forum which takes place in Northampton in April.

The main focus of this annual event is to equip those responsible for helping the Church to make best use of its resources in furthering mission and developing discipleship.

The aim is to enthuse district chairs, district and circuit property secretaries, grants officers and treasurers and give the opportunity for networking across the Connexion.

The forum is organised by the Mission Resources Team within the Connexional Team, with valuable input from Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) staff.

This year's event will be held at King's Park Conference Centre from 14-16 April.

For more information, contact the Mission Resources Team Administrator, Verena Thim, on thimv@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Churches to challenge the benefit sanctions system

The system of benefit sanctions is a "major injustice" facing some of the most vulnerable people in the UK, a new report from the Methodist Church and partners will say.

A sanction is a punishment that removes benefits from a claimant for up to three years. It is designed to be given only to claimants who are not doing enough to get work but in practice it appears many people doing their very best get caught up in the system. Those who are too sick and disabled to work immediately face sanction if they do not "prepare" for work.

The Churches' report will argue that the system is not working and that people are being penalised for matters beyond their control. In many cases sanctions are being applied to people for problems that are a direct result of their illness or disability.

To highlight this issue the Churches have joined forces to call for a full and far-reaching review of the system. In addition, they are demanding an immediate suspension of sanctions against people with mental health problems, who they say are often unjustly punished.

The campaign is being spearheaded by the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), which brings together the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church to promote equality and justice in the area of public issues.

Policy Advisor, Paul Morrison, who is leading on this work said, "This is a major injustice. Congregations involved in running foodbanks have repeatedly told us that many families are going hungry because they have had their benefits stopped as a result of these sanctions."

"The benefit sanctions system affects millions of the country's most vulnerable people. The number of sanctions given to people unable to work due to sickness or disability is now at an all-time high. As a result, many families are being plunged into debt and hunger, for no good reason."

Other major Churches are expected to join the campaign by the time it is launched in Spring. So keep your eyes peeled for more information.



Gareth Powell to become the **Secretary of the Conference**



One of the senior posts in Methodism is set to change hands later this year with the nomination of the Revd Gareth Powell to serve as the Secretary of the Conference.

Gareth, presently the Assistant Secretary, has been nominated to the Conference by the Methodist Council. With the approval of the Conference he will serve from 1 September 2015.

Gareth will come into office at the point that the combined role of Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary ends. The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, who will have served in that post for seven years by this August, is stepping down.

"I congratulate Gareth in this nomination to be the next Secretary of the Conference," said Martyn. "He is a person of great gifts and I look forward to the next nine months when we shall work together in a time of transition seeking the health, unity and benefit of the whole Methodist Church."

Gareth has been the Assistant Secretary of the Conference since 2011. He is Head of Governance Support and part of the six-person Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team.

Gareth said, "Martyn has helped to create in the Church a fresh enthusiasm for God's calling on Methodists to engage joyfully and seriously with mission and evangelism. My commitment to this vision means that I want the Church to pay careful and considered attention to its patterns of oversight and pastoral care.

"In doing so, I hope we will be better enabled to respond to the challenges of the gospel and of contemporary society."

Gareth read theology at Westminster College, Oxford. He then undertook ministerial training at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, obtaining an MA in Pastoral Theology, before spending time at the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies at the University of Geneva.

Confident disciples to meet in Hoddesdon

Taking time out with colleagues is a valuable way to reflect on working for the Church. Our Connecting Disciples conferences help Methodist lay employees and children and youth workers all over Britain do just that.

This year's conference – hosted by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network – is at High Leigh Christian Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, on 2-5 March. It takes the theme, 'Confident Discipleship: Living Faith in a Changing World'.

Its programme includes worship, Bible studies, class meetings, workshops and seminars, as well as evening entertainment.

Those attending will explore what a 'living faith' means today. They will also consider how lay staff might be equipped to serve the Church as it seeks to be a 'discipleship movement shaped for mission'.

Subjects covered will include: **prayer, wellbeing, inter faith, mental health, chaplaincy and working with people with dementia.**

Reflections around the theme will be led by this year's President of the Conference, the Revd Ken Howcroft and Vice-President, Gill Dascombe.

Transforming lives with the Easter Offering

This year's Easter Offering dedication service draws inspiration from prophetic visions in the Bible showing the Tree of Life producing leaves for healing.

Stories from Partner Churches engaged in healing and healthcare, as well as from countries where the Church is involved in reconciliation, form part of the service.

One example is of Kanja, a 30-year-old woman living in Kenya with HIV, who receives Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART).

She lives in one room with her HIV-positive husband, a peasant farmer. They have two daughters, a four-year-old, also HIV-positive and on ART, and a ten-month-old, who is HIV-negative.

Routine testing revealed that Kanja had cervical cancer and needed a total hysterectomy. Most of her costs were covered, but they were £110 short – a sum Kanja and her husband could only dream of. Thankfully, money donated in Britain to the Methodist Church World Mission Fund met the shortfall.

One important source of finance for the World Mission Fund is the

money raised through the annual Easter Offering service. This goes towards mission and ministry work around the world, transforming the lives of people like Kanja and her family in many different ways.

To learn more and be prepared for the service, order your 2015 resources today from:

www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

To make a donation, please go to:
www.methodist.org.uk/donate

Alternatively, you can send a cheque to: Fundraising, The Methodist Church, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR. Email: fundraising@methodistchurch.org.uk

Elevating the e-word



Martyn Atkins

One of the big challenges for Methodism at the moment is thinking creatively about opportunities for evangelism, according to General Secretary Martyn Atkins

In a call for the church to “elevate the e-word”, Martyn urged Methodists to make what we believe “sound like good Good News”. It’s what the General Secretary’s report to the 2014 Conference described as reclaiming the “main thing”.

“The acid test is thinking creatively about what could be. If there’s not an overt and deliberate strand that we can call evangelistic, then that’s a missed opportunity,” he said.

He challenged the Church to open up opportunities. “Foodbanks, drop-in centres, toddler groups, church cafés, can all be catalysts for evangelism – where conversations that change lives might take place,” he said.

“The tweak between an anonymous piece of mission and a fertile piece of evangelism is just a few degrees. It’s about intent and creatively thinking how we might be a bit more deliberate about the offer of God in Jesus Christ,” he said.

It was, after all, evangelism that gave birth to Methodism.

“Methodism came into being by some pretty effective evangelists,” he said. “And Methodists who distance themselves from any notion of evangelism are cutting the ground from under their feet... How did you get here?”

“We look now upon the problems of a mature, large Church. We talk about having more plant than we need. But it’s a problem brought about because for 100 years we were so darn good at being attractive, invitational Christians.”

“The tweak between an anonymous piece of mission and a fertile piece of evangelism is just a few degrees.”



Thinking creatively about what could be



Hull Open Door Project – an opportunity to move from good mission to excellent evangelism



Got questions about 'doing evangelism'?

Watch Martyn Atkins in conversation with Connexional Secretary, Doug Swanney:
www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism

Where we come unstuck now is that we sometimes appear to offer a reduced version of discipleship and evangelism, said Martyn.

"We've got the mindset that to become a disciple is to come and join us. The stats for mission tell us the hard lesson that in most instances, in spite of deep loyalty and huge spirituality, very few people who are not already in it find what we are doing attractive."

"Methodism came into being by some pretty effective evangelists."

Martyn knows that not everyone will be excited by giving evangelism such prominence.

He said, "There are many good, honest Methodists who believe evangelism is not for them. They associate it with manipulation or emotionalism or door knocking. They say they want nothing to do with it because it is intrusive, demeaning or whatever."

"I don't think I was confirming that the worst models ought to be what we should do. I was suggesting we ought to elevate the e-word back into the public discourse of church and that it's too important to ignore."

Martyn paid tribute to many people – district chairs, evangelism enablers, staff in the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network, Fresh Expressions pioneers and others – who are involved in "rich and varied" ministries around the Connexion.

He wrote in the General Secretary's report that when he and the Connexional Secretary, Doug Swanney, visited churches and circuits, there was a growing desire to reclaim evangelism as a crucial part of God's mission.

Superintendent ministers and others had told him that, faced with a continued decline in membership and attendance at worship, and looking at the way things were in circuits, something had to happen.

"They said, 'we've got to somehow recapture the attractiveness of a Christianity that causes others to say I want to follow Jesus Christ too'. And when they said that I replied, 'you mean evangelism, don't you?'."

For Martyn, in his last year as General Secretary and Secretary of the Conference, this call for Methodists to re-engage with evangelism fits naturally with the push on discipleship, which gave rise to the phrase 'a discipleship movement shaped for mission'.

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"If John Wesley re-materialised in a TARDIS today and had a look round, he'd say to us you've got plenty of places to go and people to speak to. Go to them."

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"The phrase captures two images that strike deep into the heart of the Methodist psyche," he said. "We want to be good disciples of Jesus, and we want to do it in a way that embraces the world and its need."

"Similarly with evangelism, a disciple of Christ is somebody who – because of their deepening love of God in Jesus Christ – experiences that as good Good News. Then, to use old-fashioned language, it leaks out: it matters to them, it grows in them, they are excited by it and when they are in the pub, having coffee, over a meal, with friends, it leaks out."

So evangelism is an element of the "palette of colours that makes up a rounded view of the mission of God", he said.

"The challenge is they feel least equipped to share the good news of Jesus and call people to discipleship."

"It's difficult for me to imagine a rich mission theology that hasn't got a strand which can be loosely described as activities that make up evangelism."

"Yet it's true that whenever we ask the Methodist people what they feel most and least equipped to do, they feel very equipped to offer premises, to be a presence, to be invitational, to effect change in their community for good."

"The challenge is they feel least equipped to share the good news of Jesus and call people to discipleship. But for the Church this appears to be becoming the main thing – not the only thing or the only important thing. For a short window should we bring it forward in the needs of the Church and give it greater prominence?"

There's certainly a job of evangelism to be done, he says.

"If John Wesley re-materialised in a TARDIS today and had a look round, he'd say to us you've got plenty of places to go and people to speak to. Go to them."



The Lab, a 10-year-old Fresh Expression that began on the Alway estate in Newport, is beginning to see local people in leadership. Team leader, James Henley, likens it to early settlements of monks.

"I love that idea of God's Spirit moving afresh in Wales," he says, "similar to the way that in Church history those little bands of monks – possibly St David was among them – chose to settle in a place and make it home; being God's presence there before sending others on or moving on."

"It's exciting that perhaps the part we can play is to somehow recreate that through small communities of ordinary Christian young adults."

"We wanted to have a place – a rounded, rooted community – in which we could say our calling is to be God's people here."

The Lab, which now serves both Alway and Duffryn estates, has a music ministry in half a dozen primary schools around the city. It started back in 2005 from conversations between a Church in Wales vicar, the Revd Justin Groves, and Methodist minister, the Revd Del Liddell.

They shared a vision to work with young adults and began a Sunday evening gathering that included James. Now an Anglican Pioneer ordinand, James is due to be made a deacon in June.

"One thing we realised at The Lab was that, other than the university population, we didn't have a local community that we could call our community," he said. "We wanted to have a place – a rounded, rooted community – in which we could say our calling is to be God's people here, to be the hands and feet of Jesus."

Breaking through the glass ceiling

A movement of young adults choosing to serve some of South Wales' most deprived areas is sparking new opportunities for evangelism

The vicarage in Alway was offered as the base. There's an Anglican church next door and Bishpool Methodist Church nearby. James and the team moved in six years ago and got stuck in. They helped develop the Methodist youth work and began to see growth.

"Alway and Duffryn are classic post-industrial communities where people tend to stay all their lives and this can breed a sense of hopelessness," said James. "Lots of young people are struggling to work their lives out: it seems there's a glass ceiling on them in terms of what they can aspire to and who they can be."

So is The Lab about supporting people or evangelism?

"You can't have one without the other. We're here first to love people and serve them out of that love and a sense of God's love for Newport and Alway, which is being poured into us."

Support from the Methodist Church has been constant since The Lab was first developed, with Bishpool church closely involved in the work. Oversight is shared between the originator, the Revd Justin Groves for the Church in Wales, and

Methodist minister, the Revd Anne Ellis.

Also, this year, two of the team are Alway born and bred. Troy Cousins is in his second year as an apprentice and Laura Bliss is a One Programme Participant.

James said: "What's been remarkable is that once there are one or two people in the local community somehow that unlocks all these new relationships. We now have a group who stay on after youth club at Bishpool and explore spirituality and discipleship together. Troy and Laura lead that as part of their journey, which is really exciting."



Above: Musical Toddler Group banner outside of St Martin's Church in Newport



Left: An after-school music club in Alway Primary School

From good mission to excellent evangelism

Stephen Skuce,
Director of
Scholarship,
Research &
Innovation in
the Connexional
Team, discusses
how important it
is for Methodists
to become better
evangelists

Methodists are good at mission. We make lots of contacts with those outside the Christian faith, but we are poor at evangelism, which is a broad range of actions and activities that enable us to communicate the Christian message and welcome people into God's family.

At times we have not fully recognised the distinction between mission and evangelism, and consequently not developed our missional opportunities into evangelistic encounters. And therein lies a key problem, perhaps the key problem, for us today.

Some of the confusion of the past has gone. Today we recognise that the God of mission has a Church that joins in wherever God is at work. We used to think that Christians brought the good news to those who knew nothing of God, despite generations of mission partners reminding us that they often met God in those they thought they were evangelising.

Vincent Donovan's book *Christianity Rediscovered* is one of the best examples of this, as he describes his attempts to share the good news with the Masai people in east Africa. But now we recognise that we are part, but not the total, of how God is at work in the world.

Over the past 30 years Methodist theologians have thought long and hard about evangelism and come to a broad consensus. Irish Methodism's Billy Abraham defined evangelism as "that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time".

Other Methodists such as Scott Jones have wrestled with this understanding, but still endorsed it. Elaine Heath writes about evangelism from a more radical perspective but holds on to the heart of Abraham's understanding.

Her definition of evangelism is "the holistic process of initiation of persons into the reign of God revealed in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and anchored in the church for the transformation of the world".

If evangelism is an area where British Methodism needs to learn from world Methodism, we also need to learn from the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 2012 the WCC agreed that "evangelism is a confident but humble sharing of our faith and conviction with other people. Such sharing is a gift to others which announces the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ. It is the inevitable fruit of genuine faith."

I'm struck by the final sentence. Evangelism is not an optional extra but rather an essential outworking of our faith. Theologically, there isn't really a question as to whether we evangelise. The question is how we evangelise.

"We have the theological framework that both enables and compels us to share Christ with all so that we might make more followers of Jesus Christ."

Given our pluralist world, there are many complex issues when evangelism towards people of other faiths is considered.

Helpfully the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Vatican's Pontifical Council on Inter-religious Dialogue agreed with this in their 2011 report *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*. World Christianity recognises the challenges of evangelism today, and has mapped a way through this complexity so the good news might be shared with all.

World Christianity agrees on the need to evangelise. World Methodism has thought this through from a Wesleyan perspective. Understanding our historical practice and our contemporary theological resources, British Methodism needs to move from good mission to excellent evangelism.

Yes, we need confidence to do this but we have the theological framework that both enables and compels us to share Christ with all so that we might make more followers of Jesus Christ.

It's why we exist and what we are called to do.



Sharing the joy of Christ

The Revd Ruth Gee, President of the Methodist Conference 2013/2014, offers some examples of evangelism in action



He sat on the wall reading his Bible. I stopped to talk and he told me how important his faith was, how it had changed his life when his son introduced him to Jesus. This was evangelism in action in Warlingham.

They gave me coffee and cake and told me how they had removed pews, installed toilet and kitchen and so opened the church to the community in North Roe, Shetland. At the centre of their community, they welcome people and talk about the love of Jesus. Evangelism in action.

One evening they told me about their chaplaincy in school, pub, workplaces and villages in the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District. They were lay, ordained, volunteers and employed – all called to share the joy of Christ, all evangelists.

Last year I talked and wrote about glimpsing the glory of God and encouraged us all to expect glimpses of glory wherever

we are. I talked about our calling to share those glimpses with others; to help them to glimpse God present with them, sometimes in surprising ways.

Surely this is what evangelism is? It is about sharing the love of God through all we do and say and are. It is inextricably linked with mission and underpinned by prayer, worship and Christian fellowship.

Wherever I travelled in the Connexion I found evangelists, though they might not have described themselves that way. But I also met those who had lost hope, who were tired, who needed to know again or for the first time the transforming power of God's love in Christ.

My prayer is that we will restore hope where it has been lost and enable people to grow ever closer to God so that they will wait expectantly for those glimpses of glory and celebrate and share them.

This is evangelism.

Grasping the vision and growing

When we asked Ruth Gee to suggest some places she recalled from her year travelling as President of the Conference, she identified Whitley Methodist Church as “a really good example of a church that knows why it is there”.

Whitley is a small village in Wiltshire about ten miles east of Bath. The Methodist church, which is almost 150 years old, was down to only six members seven years ago but rejected the idea of closure, said Geraldine Mann, one of the members. Numbers unexpectedly trebled two years later when two nearby Methodist chapels closed. This gave the impetus for a fresh vision for the future.

In December 2013 the church completed a £105,000 project to build an extension with a larger and lighter entrance area, a meeting room and new toilet facilities. The kitchen was completely renovated and extended and a café area created.

The sanctuary was also refurbished, giving a worship space that can be adapted to different styles of service but is always warm and welcoming. Grants came from the Wiltshire United Area, Bristol District and the Connexion as well as community and charity sources.

The monthly Saturday morning Book Swap with coffee and cake now attracts up to 100 people from the village and surrounding area.

A weekly Tuesday café is becoming increasingly popular and monthly Games, Craft and Chat afternoons are also well attended.

Geraldine Mann said: “We have seen a gradual growth in our congregation, but also, through our activities, we are beginning to be able to reach out to people in need in the village and in a small way support them by showing concern and offering friendship.

“We are very aware that we have a long way to go to build our church and achieve our goals in the community, but with God's help, we pray that we will.”



At the centre of their community, they welcome people

Be an example for other believers



"I came from a tiny chapel that didn't have running water. I was one of three young people," said Megan. "It felt really tough at times, in a rural setting, almost on my own. I think it's really important to feel part of something bigger."

Don't let your age silence you – that's Megan Thomas' advice to the young people in Methodism... and it comes from her own experience

This year's Youth President, Megan Thomas, is excited by the potential the Church has to encourage children and young people.

"I came from a tiny chapel that didn't have running water. I was one of three young people," said Megan. "It felt really tough at times, in a rural setting, almost on my own. I think it's really important to feel part of something bigger.

"The Connexion helps you feel part of something. Numbers are decreasing but there are children and young people out there."

Megan, who grew up in Newtown, mid Wales, was elected as Youth President at 3Generate in November 2013 after she finished her degree in English and Drama at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Her role for this year is to travel the Connexion, engaging with children and young people and encouraging them to take

part in the life of the whole Church.

"The variety is brilliant," she said, as we sat in a café near the imposing remains of Caerphilly Castle. "I work in London two days a week and the rest of my time is working from home in Caerphilly or travelling, meeting young people and hearing their voices or going to groups and committees and collecting info on what children and young people are saying."

Mental health is a key issue that Megan is focusing on, developing the work of her predecessor Tamara Wray and trying to understand what good mental health is. "I want to use her resource, developed with the charity, YoungMinds, take it to youth groups, social groups in and outside church to discuss it."

For Megan and the 3Generate reps who work with the Youth President, the key word is participation. An example of how this makes a difference is that, because of



"The Connexion helps you feel part of something. Numbers are decreasing but there are children and young people out there."

urging by 3Generate participants, the British Youth Council will now have in its manifesto that all youth workers should have training in youth mental health.

She agrees that teenagers and young adults find it difficult to recognise their uniqueness to God. "I struggle with it and a lot of people do, adults as well: accepting they are fearfully and wonderfully made and God doesn't make mistakes," she said. "It's hard to get your head round, but it's such a blessing to know you're unconditionally loved."

While there are challenges, and statistics that show the numbers of children and young people declining rapidly, Megan believes it's inspiring that Methodism

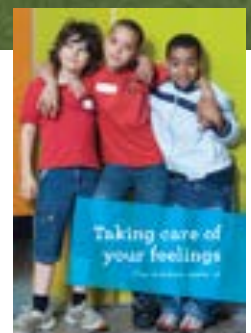
encourages real participation. Not all young people speak with the same voice, she says, and they all need to be heard.

"I like to encourage children and young people out there that their age doesn't silence them. During my campaign for Youth President I used 1 Timothy 4:12 'Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for other believers in your speech, behaviour, love, faithfulness, and purity.' (International Standard Version)

"It's important that regardless of age, gender or ethnicity we can all be examples and stand up and say 'this is what I believe, this is who I am. God loves me and I am made in the image of God'."

Gareth Hill

Pocket-sized cards offering advice for young people on mental health have been developed in conjunction with the charity, YoungMinds. There are four cards, designed for: under 12s, 12 to 18 year olds, 18 to 30 year olds and youth workers. The cards are supplied in packs of 10, each costing £2.50 (plus postage). For more details go to: www.methodistpublishing.org.uk and type 'health' in the search box, top right.



The mental health resources, developed with the charity, YoungMinds



Listening to children

A fascinating project aims to capture the authentic voice of children



How and where do children encounter God? What do children really think about Church?

The answers we hear to these questions are often filtered by adult voices, but if we are prepared to listen directly to these young voices, what we hear can be refreshing and challenging.

Children do not live with a sacred-secular divide; their life is one whole. Because of this, they potentially have a lot to teach us about whole-life discipleship and spirituality in everyday life.

The Mirror Project in the North West and Mann Region of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network aims to hear the voices of children across the region, unfiltered, and to then share their words with the wider Church.

It will work with several venues: two schools, one Messy Church, one typical Sunday School and one other expression of church for children.

Children will be filmed talking about their encounters with God, their experience of Church and their everyday lives.

These films will then be shown to Synods, Circuit Meetings and other relevant groups with supporting questions and pointers for discussion.

The results will be taken back to the children involved so that they will hear the impact of their voices and know they can make a real difference. Finally, to complete the circle, all this will be fed back to the wider Methodist Church.

The Mirror Project hopes this will provide a real opportunity for the prophetic voice of children to be heard.

Alison Hulse

Daily bread: a blessing for North Korea

Many of us would be surprised that there are any Christians at all in North Korea but about 500 congregations are active through the region, meeting in people's homes.

According to our Partner Church, the Korean Christian Federation, there are 13,000 Christians, although there are only two church buildings, both in the capital, Pyongyang. Very few buildings survived the Korean War.

Christians are fully integrated into the well-organised North Korean society, joining members of other voluntary organisations in standing for election to the district, provincial and national councils.

Steve Pearce, Partnership Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific in the World Church Relationships Team, worshipped in the Bongsoo Church when he visited in October.

"The church also runs a bakery, a noodle factory and an agricultural enterprise, each of which has been supported over recent years by grants from the World Mission Fund," said Steve.

"It was good to see these things for real and to see bread being produced and given away to vulnerable groups in a society where malnutrition is really troubling."

The bakery is in one of the suburbs of Pyongyang, a city of about 2 million people. It was developed by the Korean Christian Federation when external crises – including floods and sanctions imposed by trading partners – made it impossible for the state infrastructure to provide for all social needs.

"The bread baked is distributed to orphanages and homes for the elderly," said Steve. "While the Korean Christian Fellowship pays the workers and provides

A bakery and a noodle factory are among the ways Christians are most effective in North Korea



premises, the flour is given by members of the Ecumenical Forum on Korea of which the Methodist Church in Britain is a member.”

This is done through China with the help of the Amity Foundation, another of our partners. South Korea forbids contact by non-governmental organisations directly across the border, even though it is little more than 100 miles by road to Pyongyang.

Mrs Park Young Sill, the manager, said the bakery is an efficient enterprise, using ovens provided by Methodist and Presbyterian partners in South Korea. However, it runs at only ten per cent capacity because of the inadequate and erratic supply of flour.

Steve’s hope is that his recent visit has developed relationships that will help find a way to overcome the problems.

The capital, Pyongyang



“The church also runs a bakery, a noodle factory and an agricultural enterprise, each of which has been supported over recent years by grants from the World Mission Fund.”

The bakery is in one of the suburbs of Pyongyang



Building a bridge of care

From hesitant conversations about football and bicycles to helping fill a Muslim family's house with furniture, the past decade has been rich for Irfan John and Cardiff's Trinity Project

Above: Synod Enabler for Culturally Diverse Congregations in Wales, Irfan John

Irfan has been at the heart of a move to "build a bridge of care" for asylum seekers and culturally-diverse people from within the former Methodist Church on Newport Road, Cardiff.

Now some of those are themselves volunteering and the Welsh Assembly Government has backed Trinity with a grant to employ a project coordinator and expand the life-changing support they give to families around them.

"Coming to this country you're coming to a new life," said Irfan, "to a new culture, with new language and a new atmosphere. Trinity is providing different activities so we help the people how to learn."

Those activities include everything from basic English to supplying clothes and equipment for the home; from support when benefits dry up to a safe space when they are at their wits' end.

When Irfan and his family arrived from Pakistan in 2005, Trinity Methodist Church, then still a worshipping congregation, welcomed them. The minister, the Revd Stephen Hill, and a Roman Catholic Sister, Ruth O'Neill, started a Friends And Neighbours (FAN) group for asylum seekers and others.

"People would sit in a circle and talk about one topic: football, bicycles," said Irfan. "It gave tongue to the people, how to speak, how to understand culture, how to build a bridge of care, become friendly with each other."

Work with refugees, asylum seekers and others has been based at Trinity for several years, notably the Space4U project. This provides a range of services in collaboration with the Welsh Refugee Council and other agencies.

Methodist worship no longer takes place there, but the Cardiff and Caerphilly Circuit

agreed to sponsor the conversion of the premises to provide the community base, with the project open to people of all faiths and none.

Superintendent minister, the Revd Peter Holwell, says the aim is to create a safe, welcoming and enriching community. "It's a particular calling to work with people because we want to add to their lives," he said. "I want everyone to become a Christian, but we're doing this because we've been given a lot through grace. We want to share it with the world and this community has this need."

Irfan, an ordained Presbyterian minister, transferred into the Methodist Church in 2007 and was appointed as the Synod Enabler for Culturally Diverse Congregations in Wales, part funded by a connexional grant. As well as the Trinity Project, he relates to three culturally-diverse congregations who worship in Trinity's building. He also preaches in the Cardiff and Caerphilly Circuit and, once a month, travels across Wales to preach.



Clifton Street, Cardiff

“There are quite serious and startling needs facing asylum seekers and refugees.”

Dignity for the destitute

Things are becoming even more exciting for the Trinity Project with Welsh government backing for their pioneering work and the arrival of project coordinator Chloe Marong.

A grant of £150,000 from the Welsh government underlines the standing of this work in the eyes of civic society.

According to Superintendent minister, the Revd Peter Holwell, “They recognise its importance and see the Church as a positive influence.”

Chloe’s background is with the British Red Cross refugee services in London and the Cardiff Civil Justice Centre. She is passionate about how even the most simple things, like toiletries and treating a person with dignity, can make a huge difference.

Her role is to sharpen what has always been a pilot scheme into a wide-ranging programme.

“There are quite serious and startling needs facing asylum seekers and refugees,” said Chloe. “They have no right to work and no access to benefits. Some are completely destitute and many are cut off from support, wrongly. You can have people who have refugee status but are destitute and homeless because they fall between systems.

“There is a whole range of needs, including trauma from their experiences at home to facing issues about equality and discrimination.”

The plan is to consult with service users and open the building more. Certainly, Chloe wants to create a safe space for women to socialise and be less isolated. She’s looking to start badminton and a singing group for them.

She said, “The Trinity Project was very much an umbrella working with different user groups and was a great source of strength. It brought a range of organisations together, avoiding the silo working, which can often happen.

“We have built a community of these organisations, which is more than the sum of its parts.”

The government money gives time and space to build on that.

“So, for example, we are developing CASA – Spanish for ‘home’ – which stands for Cardiff Asylum Support Advocacy. This is very much responding to a need. It is for those situations where asylum seekers have their application refused or support terminated. It is for when they get refugee status or there may be mistakes, but there is nowhere to turn to get help to challenge the decision.

“They have a right to go to the tribunal, but it’s difficult if they are not that competent in English but need someone to help submit the appeal. We are developing the initiative, working with Cardiff University Law School through a vocational course for solicitors and barristers.”

“Building a bridge of care” is a phrase he uses a lot. It matters to him.

One Sunday he encountered a Syrian Muslim praying outside Trinity, asking Jesus to provide for his household, because he had nothing. After emailing around, Irfan was asked to go and collect an entire houseful of goods for the family: furniture; kitchen equipment; everything necessary. It was received as a gift from Jesus.

“As a Church minister, as a follower of Christ,” said Irfan, “it’s a good way of evangelism, to win people for Christ by your good deeds; not every time to give a Bible and say: ‘come to church and I’ll pray for you’.”

The Revd Philip Buckland, a presbyter in Cardiff, says Irfan can’t park his car in the garage because it’s full of furniture. “He’s there serving 24 hours a day. He calls it soft evangelism, but it’s actually hard core.

“Many have come through incredible trials to get here. Our task is to love them, hold them and let them laugh or cry.”

Gareth Hill





Building and belonging in Edinburgh

Main picture:
Newly refurbished
sanctuary,
Edinburgh Open
Doors Day 2014

**Revitalisation and a new direction for all
to see in Scotland's capital city**

***"We'd been
maintaining
buildings for
four gathered
congregations –
by releasing
resources we
wanted to
release
potential."***

Right: CEMC as
an Edinburgh
Fringe venue

Deacon Belinda Letby walked out of church one Sunday morning in August and went over to one of the many performers using the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church (CEMC) as an Edinburgh Fringe venue this year.

The performer asked: "How did it go? Did you get many?"

"We were full," replied Belinda.

Impressed look from the performer: fringe shows are rarely full. Then a dawning realisation... "Oh! You belong here!"

It was a quirky moment that says much about the place (and space) in which Edinburgh Methodists now find themselves, following more than six years of challenging transition for a new era of ministry in the city.

At Pentecost 2008, four Methodist congregations began worshipping together in Edinburgh's Central Hall. It signalled an agreement to move forward together and set the context for the often vexed question of where the 'new' congregation would finally settle.

Six years on, after painstaking work and, at a cost of £2.45 million, this is one of the biggest building projects

within the Connexion in recent years. It means CEMC can now pursue its ministry from refurbished premises in Nicolson Square: the 1816 Methodist Heritage site redesigned for a new era.

"We'd been maintaining buildings for four gathered congregations – by releasing resources we wanted to release potential," said Alison Butler, a CEMC steward. The move wasn't about finance and 'cutbacks',





Left: Making connections – church building and Epworth Halls joined



Bottom left: Sanctuary from the gallery



Right: The new church café, The Well

she added. The vision was about being present within the community effectively, building upon past achievements of the separate congregations.

To step inside the church building via the adjacent Epworth Halls – now housing a smart café and impressive range of meeting spaces – is to sense revitalisation and a new direction for mission.

It's there in the main sanctuary where there are no pews and worship is often "in the round" with striking installations in the middle of the floor. It's there even more so in the mix of activities, groups and events filling the spaces every day of the week.

The summer buzz created by the Fringe – around 14,000 through the doors over 21 days – offered only a hint of CEMC's new way of being. Discover here a partnership with the Capital Credit Union; groups as diverse as Narcotics Anonymous and Aikido classes; and an aromatherapy business, 'Hope's Garden' – the pilot for a business incubator plan to nurture more young people in making their business dreams a reality.

What's different, according to Belinda, is that the church is, "not just a landlord. We want to be in relationship with people who use the building."

Connections are already being made between the groups themselves, creating

interconnected communities, with the church at their heart.

"We don't want to put all our focus on what goes on in our buildings," said Belinda. "We have to be disciples in daily life."

Alison added that the project was still "very fragile" but acknowledged that perhaps that was what they were called to be.

As Methodists united in Edinburgh get to know each other better, they are also relating better to those around them, with the message that they all "belong here".

Laurence Wareing

A heritage exhibition celebrates the uniting congregations



My prayers were answered

It's just over 10 years since the Indian Ocean tsunami struck. Many countries were affected, including Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka, with more than 250,000 lives lost and more than 1,500,000 people left homeless

Top right: Ruwani Perera (middle), with church accountant Sisirani Mendis (left) and UEM's executive secretary for Asia, the Revd Sonia Parera Hummel (right)

Bottom right: Ruwani's new home

"Living with a two-year-old in a welfare camp was very complicated."

This article also appeared in **Mission Matters**, the magazine offering inspiring stories about how the Methodist Church uses your donations to support its work in Britain and around the world. To receive a regular copy of Mission Matters, please send your name and address to: missionfunding@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Ruwani Perera was 24 years old at the time of the disaster, married to an Air Force officer and with a two-year-old child. She and her family lived in a temporary wooden house in De La Salle beach in Modera, Mattakkuliya, Sri Lanka. Times were hard; the only income the young family had was the husband's monthly salary – not enough to meet their day-to-day expenses and feed their baby well.

The tsunami showed the Perera family no mercy. It destroyed their temporary house and all the furniture and utensils they had. Fortunately, they were able to escape from the beach to a safe location but they could not save any of their belongings. The family became desperate after the tsunami as even temporary shelter became unavailable.

"Living with a two-year-old in a welfare camp was very complicated," says Ruwani. "At times I would think that it would have been better if I had died when the tsunami struck. I am a Christian and I believe in God. Every morning and evening I would pray and ask God to give us proper shelter so that my husband, my child and I could re-establish ourselves as a family.

"Then one fine day my prayers were answered. Some members of the Methodist Church came to the camp where we were temporarily residing and collected some information. We were told that the Methodist Church was making arrangements through a donor organisation in Germany to provide us permanent housing. When I heard this news, I immediately thanked

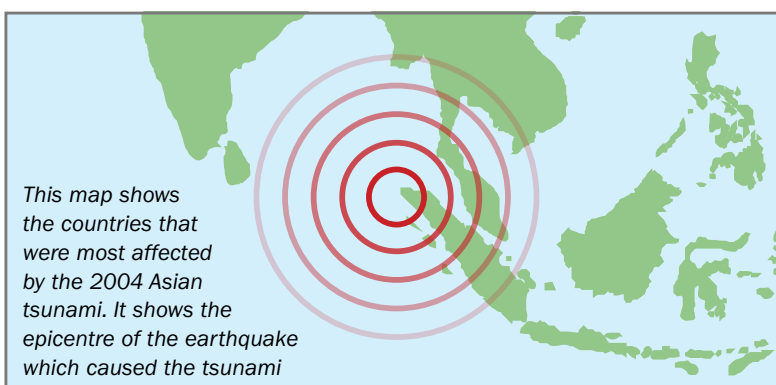


God for answering my prayers and was very happy. Within a short period the Church had built some two-storeyed houses in a safe location. My family and I were offered one of them. We now have a nice permanent house with all basic facilities."

Nikini, the Pereras' eldest daughter, is now 11. In the years following the tsunami, Ruwani and her husband have had two more children: a daughter, Isuru now seven, and a son, Thimira, aged four. The two girls are doing well in school.

"My husband is still working and now we are in a position to live a good healthy life," says Ruwani. "We are proud to say that we have a permanent house of our own. I believe that this is a blessing from God, and we thank him very much for the assistance given by all donors."

Methodists in Britain contributed via All We Can and the World Mission Fund. Donors also included the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka and United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in Germany.



This map shows the countries that were most affected by the 2004 Asian tsunami. It shows the epicentre of the earthquake which caused the tsunami

Annog – mewn dwy iaith

Cymru yw'r unig ran o'r Cyfundeb ble mae dwy dalaith yn cyd-ffinio ac yn gweithio mewn dwy iaith wahanol. Mae Delyth Wyn Davies, Swyddog Dysgu a Datblygu yng Nghymru, yn canfod cyfleoedd i'r ddwy dalaith weithio gyda'i gilydd

Fel y Swyddog Dysgu a Datblygu Cymraeg dynodedig, caf y fraint unigryw o weithio gyda dau grŵp o Fethodistiaid yng Nghymru: Synod Cymru yn Gymraeg a Wales Synod yn Saesneg. Er bod iddynt strwythurau ar wahân, ceir rhai cyfleoedd ar gyfer cydweithio trwy gyngor unedig a thrwy gyfrwng prosiectau penodol.

Un o'r prosiectau cyntaf yw ymweliad y Casgliad Methodistaidd o Gelfyddyd Gyfoes ag Eglwys Fethodistaidd Regent Street, Wrexham ac Oriel Sycharth, Prifysgol Glyndŵr, Wrexham.

Cynhelir yr arddangosfa o 19 Ionawr tan 26 Mawrth. Mae'n cynnwys adnodd dwyieithog newydd yn olrhain y cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru a'r casgliad, wedi ei lunio ar ran yr ymddriedolwyr mewn partneriaeth â'r ddau synod. Bydd yr adnodd hwn ar gael ar gyfer ymweliadau'r casgliad â Chymru yn y dyfodol.

Ymhlith y digwyddiadau Cymraeg i gyd-daro ag ymweliad y casgliad y mae taith dywys, sesiwn farddoniaeth dan arweiniad un o'n Prifeirdd ac astudiaeth y Grawys dan arweiniad Cadeirydd Synod Cymru, y Parch Jennifer Hurd.

Byddwn hefyd yn cynnal Llan Llanast dwyieithog, dan arweiniad staff y Rhwydwaith Dysgu Disgyblion a Gweinidogaethau, er mwyn dod â phobl at ei gilydd mewn digwyddiad ar y cyd ac rydym wedi hyfforddi stiwardiaid o'r ddau synod.

Wrth i'r prosiect ddatblygu, bu'n galonogol gweld y cyd-weithio'n cynyddu, ar lefel lleol a thalaith. Mae hynny'n siŵr o argoeli'n gyffrous ar gyfer mentrau i'r dyfodol.



Delyth Wyn Davies

Enghreifftiau o'r arddangosfa sydd ar ddod / Examples from the forthcoming exhibition



Y pum mil / The five thousand, Eularia Clarke



Crist yn ysgrifennu yn y Llŵch - y Wraig wedi ei dal mewn Godineb / Christ writes in the Dust - the Woman taken in Adultery, Clive Hicks-Jenkins

Y ddau gelfyddydwaith o'r Casgliad Methodistaidd o Gelfyddyd Gyfoes, © TMCP, defnyddiwyd gyda chaniatâd / Both works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission

Encouraging – in two languages

Wales is the only part of the Connexion where two districts cover the same territory and work in two different languages. Delyth Wyn Davies, Learning and Development Officer for Wales, is finding opportunities for both districts to work together

As the designated Welsh-speaking Learning and Development Officer, I have the unique privilege of working with two groups of Methodists in Wales: the Welsh-speaking Synod Cymru and the English-speaking Wales Synod. Although they have separate structures, there are some opportunities for working together through a joint council and specific projects.

One of the first is the visit of the Methodist Modern Art Collection to Regent Street Methodist Church, Wrexham and Sycharth Gallery, Glyndŵr University, Wrexham.

The exhibition runs from 19 January to 26 March. It features a new bilingual resource charting the links between Wales and the art collection, put together for the trustees in partnership with the two synods. This resource will be available for future visits of the collection to Wales.

Welsh language events to coincide with the collection's visit include a guided tour, a poetry session led by a National Eisteddfod chaired bard and a Lent study led by Synod Cymru Chair, the Revd Jennifer Hurd.

We're also having a bilingual Messy Church, led by staff of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, to get people together for a joint event and we've trained stewards from both synods.

As the project has developed, it's been encouraging to see cooperation increasing, both at local and district levels. That's surely an exciting prospect for future initiatives.



Reflection

In each issue of *the connexion* we want to give you the opportunity to reflect, often through the gifts of Methodism's creative people – using images and words we aim to inspire you to thought and prayer

The Weaver, The Word and Wisdom

*In the beginning, the Weaver, The Word and Wisdom
moving in relationship together,
caught a vision of potential,
a glimpse of possibility, and,
with tentative steps, creation's dance began.*

*Creation was shot through with the generosity of the Weaver's grace.
The rhythm of life's passion played loudly
as a constant beat at the heart of myriad universes.*

*Against this universal backdrop The Word moved
and became free, small and intimate.
In the cry of a child, the song of a woman
and the shout of a dying man
The Word's voice added melody to the Weaver's song.*

*In the midst of confusion, absence and loss,
Wisdom found her way.
She had danced with the Weaver's threads, throughout all time,
weaving a maypole dance of energetic passion.
She added harmony to the beat and the melody
and composed a symphony of colour.*

*If creation for a single moment fails to hear the Weaver's rhythm,
or misses The Word's intimate melody,
then Wisdom will dance through the silence
until all that is joins in love's rejoicing.*



his image and reflection were both created by the **Revd Michaela Youngson**, Chair of the London District of the Methodist Church. Micky is an artist working with kiln-formed glass and an author of books on reflection and worship material. She is passionate about matters of justice and poverty.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you want to stay in touch with what is happening across Methodism, there are several ways you can do this.

The Methodist Church website

www.methodist.org.uk

contains all you need, from daily prayer and Bible study to specific forms and policies.

You can sign up to receive any of our free newsletters at

www.methodist.org.uk/signup



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Helpdesk: 020 7486 5502

Email: helpdesk@methodistchurch.org.uk

These include:

E-news – general news from across the Connexion and the wider Methodist family. E-news also comes ready to cut and paste into church or circuit newsletters.

The Buzz – good news stories from local churches

The Well – news for Methodist children and youth workers

The Week Ahead – weekly news and information digest

Heritage News – news about Methodist heritage across the Connexion

World Church Bulletin – news from Partner Churches, mission partners and more

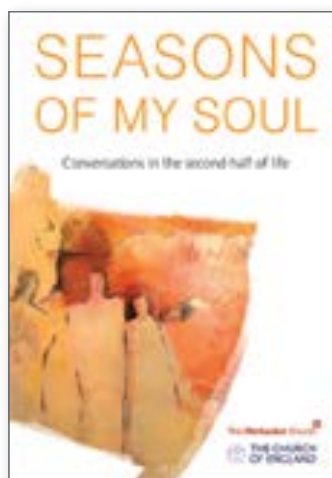
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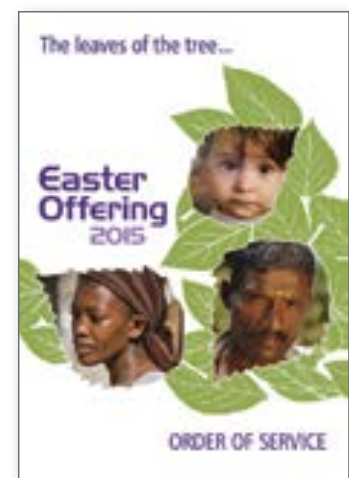
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