

# the connexion

Transformational leadership



Inspiring stories from the life of your **Methodist Church**

# Transformational leadership

**S**ome statistics hold our attention and really make us think. For example, the eight richest people in the world have the same wealth as the poorest 50% of the global population – that is 3.75 billion people. Membership of the Methodist Church has declined by 35% over the last decade. In each of these examples we might be led to ask the same series of crucial questions: why is this so? Does it have to be like this? If not, how is this trend reversible? What action will we now take to bring about the transformation we seek?

This issue of *the connexion* examines the most fundamental factor of all when it comes to addressing questions such as these, because it is transformational leadership that crucially makes the difference between progress remaining elusive or entering into fresh trajectories of change for the better.

Within our Church such leadership is born in and fuelled by the creativity of God. Transformational leadership makes God real in ways that unleash all the hidden potential and untapped ability that resides amongst us and within us. With God front and centre, familiar texts from Scripture become our truth and our purpose. So as we ponder the statistics of Methodism's decline, God frames a very different truth for us:

*“But forget all that — it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?”*

Isaiah 43:18-19

This combination of sight and insight, this mix of hopefulness and expectation, this irrepressible commitment to a reinvigorated future, is at the heart of transformational leadership – because it is in the heart of God. It is the divine retort to the doom and gloom statistic that has, since this year's Methodist Conference in Birmingham, held our attention and is really making us think. This edition considers those crucial questions too: why is this so? Does it have to be like this? If not, how is this trend reversible? What action will we now take to bring about the transformation we seek?

*Love and peace,  
David*



David Perry  
Editor

## the connexion

Issue 9 • Autumn 2017

Published by the Methodist Church in Britain  
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes  
(TMCP) 2017. Registered charity no 1132208.

Editor: The Revd Dr David Perry. Designed and produced by the Publishing and Communications Team of the Methodist Church. Design: Stephen Lambert. Editorial: Anne Montefiore and Helen Angove. Digital: David Webster. Director of Publishing and Communications: Andy Jackson.

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## The 'Methodies' in Poldark

**T**he Poldark books by Winston Graham and the recent BBC adaptation demonstrate that you cannot tell the story of mining in Cornwall in the 18th and early 19th centuries without the story of Methodism in the county. But how much of the popular TV series or the books reflect the truth of the movement in the 1790s?

Read the real story at [www.methodist.org.uk/poldark](http://www.methodist.org.uk/poldark)

## Methodist Council gains living wage accreditation

**T**he Methodist Council has been accredited as a living wage employer by the Living Wage Foundation. The Council has committed to paying all of its 220 staff, whether they are permanent employees or third-party contractors, at least the voluntary living wage rate. Nick Moore, Head of Support Services at the Methodist Church, said: "Social justice is part of the Methodist tradition. We believe in 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work'. Working hard full-time should earn a person enough to live free from poverty."

Find out more at [www.methodist.org.uk/living-wage](http://www.methodist.org.uk/living-wage)

## Byte Night

Action for Children is holding its biggest annual fundraiser, Byte Night, on 6 October. This is a national sponsored sleep-out to raise funds to prevent youth homelessness. Action for Children was founded by Methodist minister the Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson, who set up the first ever children's home in 1869.

If your church or youth group would like to find out more or to take part, please visit [www.bytenight.org.uk/register](http://www.bytenight.org.uk/register). To donate, please visit [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

## Movement Day

At the Conference in June, Methodists were encouraged to participate in Movement Day, 6-7 October, at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London. This gathering of church leaders and practitioners will consider the transformation of towns and cities. Ministers were asked who from their church could attend, given the benefits that participation could offer.

To find out more visit [www.movementday.uk](http://www.movementday.uk)



*Leaders are called to the work of transformation, because that is the work of God*

# TRANSFORMATION is the work of God

**The Revd Alison Wilkinson, Minister at Jesmond, Longbenton and The Holy Biscuit, in Newcastle Central and East Circuit, sees how Methodism past can inspire our future**

**B**eamish Museum is a popular local visitor's attraction in the North East. It is called a living museum, because you can experience life as it was in another age. Beamish (right) has been carefully created by moving buildings from the locality, sometimes brick by brick, to create a fascinating heritage place. You can visit a mine, see how people lived in the tiny cottages and in the big houses. You can talk to cooks, ride on the old bus, and even buy traditionally made sweets in the sweet shop. In the village, you will find a Methodist chapel, and you can go inside and listen to the people singing hymns. The first time I went to Beamish I was struck with

how much change we have experienced. Wherever I went, I could see how different things are today, and how the way we live has transformed. Everywhere that is, apart



from the Methodist chapel, where the living museum was very familiar. Some people may find this a comfort and indeed celebrate this. For me, it was deeply disturbing.

### **Our calling**

Hebrews boldly states that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. This is not an instruction for us to follow – that maintaining things just as they were is somehow a mark of the Christian faith, and our calling. Instead, I believe our calling is the opposite.

### **Transformation**

The early Methodists were defined by transformation. They were transformed as individuals by encountering the living God, and week by week the structure and practice of their faith made them seek transformation, in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. Communities were transformed and ultimately they transformed a nation.

This social revolution was built firmly on the theological understanding of prevenient grace. That is, God is at work in the world, preserving and sustaining. But more than that, by primarily transforming this world, taking us from creation to new creation. The early Methodists knew God was working in the lives of people. They didn't think they took God to people, they instead understood they were co-workers with God, who was already at work in the lives of those they went to. Their job was to look and see and go to where God was at work.

### **Connexional transformations**

I have the privilege to be the minister serving at The Holy Biscuit, a Methodist church transformed into an art gallery, where a talented team work within the art community, encountering again and again that God is already at work in those for whom traditional church is an alien experience. The vision and leadership of many, not least the Revd Rob Hawkins, nurtured this project to the exciting and vibrant place it now is. It took courage, faith, prayer and sacrifice to let go of what was, and to follow where God was at work.

Perhaps this is one of the most dramatic church transformations in the Connexion.

But I have also served in more traditional settings, where I have seen communities choose to sacrifice what they might personally prefer in terms of service style or building. They recognised that they did not want to be a living museum to the past, but a community that is transforming, difficult and painful though that may be, and acknowledging and accepting that transformation is the work of God.

### **Our challenge**

The challenge of this age is great, and the task for the Methodist Church might seem impossible. We cannot and should not resist change. Sometimes I wonder if we Methodists have forgotten our history. Sometimes I fear transformational leadership is seen as the preserve of a particular fringe group, and too much energy and effort is being put into leadership which is sustaining and preserving, as though that is our primary calling. Our leaders, lay and ordained, are called to the work of transformation because that is the work of God. And because it is so, therefore to be a leader in a Christian community one must engage with transformation. We do not bring transformation, we merely cooperate, or fail to, with the prevailing wind of the Spirit which is already blowing that way.



*Look, see and go where God is at work*



*Early Methodists were defined by transformation*

# What sort of leaders does the Church need?



**President of the Conference the Revd Loraine Mellor considers leadership qualities that will transform – challenging every one of us to lead by taking risks for the gospel**



**W**hen I think of the great leaders I have grown up with in the Church, numerous names of both lay and ordained leaders come to mind. All of them, in different ways, have impacted my faith and my ministry. Two things single them out: they have all been people of prayer and they have been passionate about faith. The Church upholds scriptural qualifications for ministerial leaders, such as those found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, to seek those who are living above reproach; exercising self-control; having the gift of teaching; living so as to be well thought of by outsiders; being a lover of goodness; living a life that is just, upright, spiritual, faithful, and dignified; being a lover of hospitality. Look no further than Nehemiah and Jesus. They demonstrated by sheer personality a sense of vision, of purpose, of intentionality and a care for those around them that enabled them to achieve so much and make such a difference to the task given to them by God. I believe that leadership today needs to be about servant leadership, as Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

As Methodists we can't think of great leaders without referring to John Wesley who had a vision for the Church, its growth

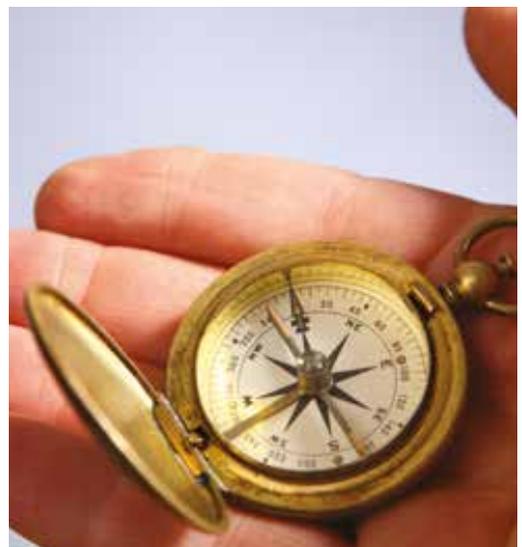
and development. Yet it is a very different landscape now than it was in Wesley's time. We need leaders today, both lay and ordained, who can grow other leaders, not just followers. We need people of integrity, but most importantly we need leaders who have the three 'Ss' in place: supervision, support and spiritual direction.

## **Supervision**

A place where we can reflect on practice; a safe place where we can seek to develop and review our practice as leaders.

## **Support**

A group of two or three wise friends and colleagues we can meet on a regular basis



**Great leaders have been people of prayer and passionate about faith**

and who offer prayer support and wise counsel.

### **Spiritual direction**

A place where we can deepen our relationship with God and grow as disciples.

When those things are in place, then we have confidence to be the people who God would have us be, which in turn enables us to take risks for the gospel. And take risks we must.

The Church is at a tipping point when risks in mission must be taken by each one of us, lay and ordained alike, in order that we continue to be church leaders and play our full part in our communities. The Church needs leaders who are prepared to take risks, who take others with them and watch the ripples of awareness when people around them see what can be achieved by trying new ways of being church and sharing the gospel in our community. That is what leaders are called to be and do.

The Methodist Church has dipped to a membership below 200,000. That is

a worry. When we are not making new members, new disciples, this statistic is enough of a challenge for me to repeat what I constantly say: if we fail to make new disciples, we are a club, not a church. Then we are not in any way fulfilling part of the great commission from Matthew's Gospel to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20). Yet, the restrictions some circuits and churches place upon our ordained leaders make this biblical imperative almost impossible to fulfil. If we continue to ask our presbyteral leaders to take on more churches, all we will do as the Church is set them up to fail. We need to ask ourselves are we spreading our leaders too thinly?

Are we asking them to be chaplains to clubs, or missionaries in our local communities? Have we so many meetings within the life of our churches that our people have no time to spend learning what it means to talk of God? Our leaders are there to nurture, to equip, to educate and mentor, and all this takes investment. But it all pays off when we coach, and take risks on new adventures, new initiatives and new enterprises.

***Leadership today needs to be about servant leadership***



***The Church needs leaders who are prepared to take risks***

# Transformational leadership – it's not management

*Inspiring leaders  
reach more people,  
dive deeper and won't  
rest until the world is  
changed*

As the founder of two national charities and currently setting up his third whilst also training to be a doctor, James Adams knows that inspiring, visionary leadership goes far beyond policies and systems

**L**eadership is one of the most misunderstood terms in the Church today. Often in the Church when we talk about leadership, what we're actually referring to is management; making sure everything is happening just the way it should, that the rota is made and the session or service is delivered to plan.

Of course, there are many different levels and types of leadership, but within the Church, the majority of these roles are 'management' positions. This creates a culture where we perceive good leaders to be the ones who 'manage' things well. I'm an obsessive organiser, but even the obsessive-compulsive manager within me has to admit, whilst good organisational and management skills are a part of effective leadership, they are certainly not paramount.

### **Leaders bring vision to life**

The most important aspect of good leadership is the ability to drive a vision forward. Good leaders shouldn't just manage, they should inspire. Leaders aren't there to maintain, they should be the torch carriers, the road carvers and the transformation bringers. The ones constantly looking to move forward, to run harder and to climb higher. The ones wanting to reach more people, dive deeper and not rest until the world has been changed – these are the sort of leaders who inspire.

Writing a nicely laid out vision document isn't good leadership, it's good management. Good leadership is taking that vision document and bringing it to life, bringing people on board, firing them up, developing them and sending them out to carry that vision and drive it forward.

In the Church of today we are in desperate need of these trailblazing leaders. We need more individuals who can stand up and inspire others with a vision, those who can take on the difficult challenges and tackle some of our biggest issues such as poverty or Church decline. We need this now or we face the prospect of becoming a dying body, with an increasingly smaller and smaller ability to make an impact on the lives of those we're called to serve.

### **Investing in leadership**

There is a clear need within churches for more transformational leaders. What is less

clear is how we go about tackling this problem. Put simply, I believe the Church needs to invest in leadership development.

I use the word development, not training, because you can't teach leadership in a classroom. It's an art, best learnt by making mistakes and being thrown into the fire.

Potentially transformational leaders don't need a classroom, they need to be put into situations where they can refine their skills, alongside a mentor who can help them analyse how they could have used their soft skills better in X situation, how they could have better approached trying to bring that person on board in Y situation, or whether they had considered this aspect of the project they are trying to run in Z situation.

We need to identify all leaders with potential, those who naturally inspire others and drive forward, then fast-track them into situations where they can develop and refine their gifts – and get it wrong a few times too. We don't need more training, or workshops or books; we need to provide opportunities and practical support, such as a good quality mentor, to make sure the developmental learning process from those experiences is maximised.

Looking back on my own, short, journey, it's clear the times I developed most was when I was thrust into situations that pushed me. I would often (and still do) get it wrong and with the arrogance that only a teenager can have, found a thousand reasons why it wasn't my fault. A coffee with my mentor, who would be patient and listen, then challenge my thinking, teach me humility and highlight where I could have improved, always taught and developed me more than any leadership seminar I ever attended.

A culture of apathy is the biggest killer of today's churches, and to break that culture we don't need managing leaders, we need leaders who drive and inspire. I finish with a challenge to the Church. If we are serious about making an impact in our world, reaching the broken and the lost, then we need to invest in our leaders, the types that will galvanise our churches and community projects, and we need to invest not just with a kind word, but with our time and our resources. And we need to do it before it's too late, or the Church we're trying to galvanise may no longer be there.

*Leaders are torch carriers, road carvers, transformation bringers*



*Leadership is the ability to drive a vision forward*

Currently based at Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester, James works to support churches and other third sector groups to identify needs within their area and then to develop effective projects to meet those needs. You can contact him at [www.james-adams.org.uk](http://www.james-adams.org.uk)

# A training ground for leadership



**Lauren Brabbs is a secondary school science teacher who spends her weekends serving at Swan Bank Church in Burslem, Stoke on Trent. She recently joined the ECG Executive to oversee the work of the annual ECG conference at Scarborough with people aged 18-25**

**“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”**

*1 Timothy 4:12 (NRSV)*

## **The journey's beginning**

The journey to launching the ECG 18-25 stream began back in 2010, when I was invited to join the ECG Youth Team, along with a number of young people in leadership roles. ECG and our team leaders invested in us over the next six years, even as we continued to invest in the lives of those young people who chose to spend their time with us. We spent five days each year worshipping, studying, laughing, praying and – typically, on the last night – crying alongside these young people.

For many of the team, ECG Youth was our training ground – our first experience of leadership in a context bigger than our home youth groups. Challenged to step outside our comfort zones, we learnt invaluable lessons about leadership and ourselves.

## **The growing challenge**

In 2016 however, stepping out went beyond

the call to be an evening speaker or a small group leader. Standing at the back of a packed youth venue at the Spa Centre, Scarborough, it became apparent we faced a problem.

ECG Youth has a remit to serve those aged 11-18 – but at least 15 of our delegates no longer fitted that age bracket, yet here they were! They were not ready to engage with the wider conference, but wanting a depth of discussion that the youth venue couldn't cater for.

Discussions began and it became clear that, whilst ECG Youth was no longer the place for these young adults, as a team we were still heavily invested in them. We were passionate about seeing these young people fall even more deeply in love with Jesus and passionate about equipping and encouraging them to step into positions of leadership in their home and university churches.

Some of us who had joined the Youth Team in 2010 – Adam, Beth, Chris and I – spent that week meeting with the ECG Executive, our young people and church leaders. We agreed that for ECG Youth to

**ECG Youth was our training ground of leadership in a context bigger than our home youth groups**

continue to thrive, and for ECG itself to have a future, something needed to change – and so the 18-25 stream was born.

### **Providing a space**

What our young adults really valued from ECG was the space to worship freely and to discuss what they heard about Jesus, to open up the big questions and to work out together what they believe the Church's response should be. As a team, providing that space within the main ECG conference became our mission.

Meeting for breakfast each morning, we were guided through Colossians by the Revd Andrew Stobart, and we studied how things would look if we took seriously the challenge to live a life infused by Jesus. Then, after afternoon seminars looking at big topics such as Brexit, we met in the Grand Hall for the main evening celebration. This was followed with discussing the messages of the day over tea and coffee. The response to us simply providing this space was incredible; we saw people baptized, people reconnect and people stand up and believe in the call God has given them.

### **Beyond Scarborough**

The challenge for any conference, but especially for ECG focusing on equipping the Church, is how time together impacts lives after their week in Scarborough. Over the years of helping to run ECG



Youth, and now ECG 18-25, my greatest privilege is watching young people step out in leadership in their home contexts. Young people are starting city-wide youth meetings, starting local preaching courses, serving on the committee for their Christian Union, starting campus-based Christian communities and bringing their friends to meet Jesus.

Our aim as an 18-25s venue is to continue to invest in these leaders, not because they are the leaders of the future, but because they are the leaders of today. The Church needs to get better at recognising this, hearing young leaders' voices and allowing them the space to lead.

*One of the greatest privileges has been watching young people step out in leadership*



# From a cycle of decline to signs of real growth

**Our editor, the Revd Dr David Perry, describes how the Hull (Centre and West) Circuit transitioned from a failing model of circuit to one offering fresh hope, passion and energy for the future**

*Unchurched people are discovering the joy of becoming disciples of Jesus*

**W**hat a difference a decade makes. Significant reductions in membership and numbers attending worship, some churches closed and staff numbers halved – with those remaining being spread ever more thinly. A cycle of decline seemingly without end. Sound familiar?

## **A different trajectory**

Well, in 2013 our Circuit Leadership Team decided to take a very different trajectory. Spirit-led, with a heart for Jesus and a passion for mission, we planted a new church in partnership with Pioneer Connexion and began a process of structured conversation with each of the other churches in turn. The crucial question was this one:

*“Thinking realistically, over the next five years and beyond, is your future primarily as a centre of fellowship (offering love and care for a steadily declining number of people) or as a centre of mission (engaging with and meeting the needs of the wider community and making new disciples)?”*

Accordingly, in 2015 we designated five

churches as centres of fellowship and eleven churches as centres of mission. My five presbyteral colleagues lead the centres of mission and I have responsibility for the centres of fellowship. Our centres of mission frame their life and witness around the circuit’s mission policy and benefit from financial support for mission.

The circuit plan has been recast, with presbyters concentrating upon leading worship in their respective centres of mission, with the aim of maximising week-by-week consistency. Mission and evangelism are given top priority, especially in terms of fresh ways of engaging with the unchurched.

## **New initiatives**

Today new initiatives abound. New workers are engaging with families and children and Alpha courses are connecting with new people. New members are being made and unchurched people are discovering the joy of becoming disciples of Jesus. Together we are discovering a burgeoning sense of confidence and expectation. What a difference transformational leadership can make!

[www.hullcentreadwest.org.uk](http://www.hullcentreadwest.org.uk)

Hull (Centre and West) Circuit Leadership Team  
LEFT: Circuit stewards  
RIGHT: Lay and ordained staff



# Transformational leadership at the heart of the West London Mission



**T**he West London Mission (WLM) is 130 years old this year. Our charismatic founder, Hugh Price Hughes (above left), and his wife Katherine, wanted to establish a mission that would not be constrained by traditional, denominational structures, but would respond to the unique needs of the West End of London.

Alongside the overtly evangelistic work, from 1887 it set up a clothing bank, a food depot and a registry for unemployed servants. It established the UK's first ever crèche for working mothers, hostels and shelters for homeless people.

## Privilege

It is my privilege to have just been appointed as the first ever Chief Executive at WLM. Alongside our Superintendent Minister, the Revd Sue Keegan von Allmen (above centre), I oversee our work with people affected by homelessness, poverty, addictions and offending. This now takes place on 9 different sites, employing around 70 people and directly touches the lives of more than 3,000 people every year.

## Transforming lives

Our aim is to help transform lives. In just

one of our service projects, our centre in Seymour Place, Marylebone, we helped 366 homeless people to come off the streets last year.

We have made a lot of progress in the last seven years in re-establishing a stronger and more confident link between our social care and our Christian ethos. We have developed a chaplaincy service which ensures that spiritual care and prayer is offered alongside the professional social care. We have also established a night shelter for rough sleepers in Westminster in partnership with 13 churches and the local synagogue.

## Vision and commitment

Both these projects have required transformational leadership – a clear vision and a commitment to ensure that faith is worked out in action. In doing so, we believe we are working towards fulfilling the vision established by transformative leaders Hugh and Katherine Price Hughes.

To find out more about WLM and what we do, visit [www.wlm.org.uk](http://www.wlm.org.uk) or phone us on **020 7569 5915**.

**Jon Kuhrt is the Chief Executive of the West London Mission, inheriting a crucial vision and work inspired by the Forward Movement of Methodism of the 1880s**

# Young people arise and shine

**Rise and Shine weekends support young people with leadership potential from across the Methodist Church. Meg Prowting, who specialises in youth ministry with the Church and Community Development Team, explains**

**I**ntentional support and development of young leaders is crucial if the Church – and our world – is to have a positive future. This is the thinking that spurred Rise and Shine into existence.

Rise and Shine is a weekend event to which churches across the Connexion send young people aged 16-23 who are showing leadership potential. The 2017 event, held at Cliff College, gathered 30 young leaders and was led primarily by a team aged under 26. Through a programme of worship, prayer, activities, teaching on leadership and times of fellowship, the young people learnt from each other and received encouragement and support.

## **Growing confidence**

Louise Davies, one participant of Rise and Shine, tells us about her experience.

“I discovered more about myself in one weekend than in the previous 18 years!

“I initially joined Rise and Shine thinking ‘why not?’ I might make a friend or two and free food is always a bonus. When I first met everyone, I was slightly afraid. I felt as if I was among people who believed more in my faith than I did.

“As we shared and learnt from each other, I began to gain the confidence to open up. I realised not only were the fears, doubts and frustrations in me shared by others, but these were shockingly normal. The combination of worship and time spent just being ourselves – including singing very badly to Disney songs on top of the roof – gave me an assurance in who I was. We shared so much joy and fun that I cried with laughter.

“Rise and Shine unlocked a potential in me I had buried under everything else in my

life. For the first time, I discovered the joy of being a person of faith.

“I arrived expecting to go home unchanged. I left, full of renewed energy and purpose.”

## **Young leaders are outward looking**

Falling just outside the Rise and Shine age category, attending as a member of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and as a Rise and Shine staff member, JPIT intern, Lucy Zwolinska relished having the opportunity to speak with other young people. Together they engaged as young leaders about the role of the Church in peace, justice and politics, and how they might get involved: “We spoke about issues that matter to the young leaders attending Rise and Shine, including racial discrimination and under-funding in the



*'Rise and Shine unlocked a potential in me'*



*Young leaders engaged about the role of the Church*



public sector. The insight into how we might challenge injustice was incredibly thoughtful and I was encouraged by how outward-looking our young leaders are.”

Lucy also observed that Rise and Shiners appreciated time to worship with one another and to experience different types of prayer and reflection. She noted that “the time spent together in prayer triplets was particularly powerful, providing space for us to get to know each other’s needs, dreams and giftings, and pray into these”.

#### **Young leaders’ development**

One of only two staff members is Nigel Pimlott, who helped instigate the first two Rise and Shine events. Nigel, who is a Regional Learning and Development Officer for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN), has worked with young people for over 30 years. His own leadership journey began when he, too, was a teenager. At that time, Nigel notes: “there were few opportunities for young leaders to access training and support, and to receive input from other young people. I would have found that so helpful.”

Indeed, the feedback from this year’s event highlights just how much young people value Rise and Shine. It is not only the training sessions they appreciate, but also the chance to pray with peers, meet other young leaders in similar situations and make new friends – all important for supporting young leadership development.

Enabling and training young leaders to grow into leadership grounded in their discipleship journey – together with opportunities to try, make mistakes and try again – is vital if this generation is to shape church and society. Rise and Shine is pleased to play its part in investing in young people, making a significant impact in their lives.

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# Building The Bridge



**Eight years ago Sam Beazley started working for the Methodist Church in Cornwall, with an initial brief to continue its work with young people – but God had much bigger plans! Sam is married to Mande and they have three children, Isabel, Joshua and Lilee**

*God gave me the vision to do more than just engage the local teenagers*

**W**ithin the first few years of my work with the Methodist Church, God gave me the vision to do more than just engage the local teenagers.

I realised we were called to provide a space in which we could reach them on a regular basis – an area that was safe and inviting. After sharing this vision with those I worked with, and listening to the needs and wishes of the local community in Launceston, we came up with the idea of a skate park.

## **Dreaming big**

I was never one to do things by halves. We dreamt big and canvassed the local area with the help of the Revd Steve Wild, Chair of the Cornwall Methodist District, taking photos of warehouses and creating layout designs. Just a few months later, the Church's Launceston Area Circuit agreed to us renting an industrial warehouse and erecting a large indoor skate park. Open seven days a week, this became a great place for young people to meet, particularly in the evenings. We also started running Christian Skaters on a Tuesday night and saw roughly 60-70 young people attending. We would bring in guest speakers and were privileged to have Archbishop Justin Welby lead one of our sessions.

## **The tip of the iceberg**

As time went on, I felt God saying this was just the tip of the iceberg – and that we were called to reach people of all ages. When I shared this vision of providing a



place that reached people from 0 to 99 years old, the Circuit understood and agreed that it was a vision given by God. As we accepted this vision, we realised we would need bigger premises to provide this type of facility and so on the search we went again.

We are now in a building that was not perhaps our original plan – but was clearly God’s. We called this new facility the Bridge Community Centre and we set out to be exactly that – a bridge from the church to the community. A vibrant centre and meeting point for our local area, we are here as a practical resource to support and serve the community in any way we can.

### **A wealth of activities for all ages**

For families at the Bridge there is a wealth of activities – from craft mornings and sensory play to our indoor skate park and Youth Zone, complete with pool table, table football and weekly youth club. Our Fun Factory houses an exhilarating three-storey soft play area complete with ball pool and crazy slides for three- to eleven-year-olds, as well as a separate zero-to-threes zone for the little ones to explore.

We offer support by providing meeting space for community groups, and this year are also launching a counselling service primarily aimed at supporting those attending Launceston College.

The modern cafe is open daily, is good value and is an ideal place for friends and families to meet up. High teas are offered on a monthly basis, as well as a cream tea each Monday afternoon.

The Bridge is here to serve all ages; we have disabled access to most areas and there is even a minibus to pick people up so that they can join in our activities. Our board games afternoons are a popular way to meet others and enjoy friendship.

Alongside the centre we have Bridge Church – an exciting new plant from the Circuit in Launceston. Six months after we opened the Community Centre, Bridge Church followed, with a setup to reach people in the community by providing a different style of church and worship.

We have a thriving children’s and youth work ministry as well as cell groups, modern worship services, prayer meetings, socials and specific ministries that are tailored to people’s lives. We continue to strive to equip and empower the Church and also seek new and fresh ways to reach the community that God has placed us in.

*As time went on, I felt God saying this was just the tip of the iceberg – and that we were called to reach people of all ages*

[www.bridgecommunitycentre.org](http://www.bridgecommunitycentre.org)

[www.bridgechurchuk.org](http://www.bridgechurchuk.org)

[www.facebook.com/bridgecommunitycentrelaunceston](https://www.facebook.com/bridgecommunitycentrelaunceston)

[www.facebook.com/BridgeChurchUK](https://www.facebook.com/BridgeChurchUK)

Develop  
self-awareness  
through  
feedback

## Leadership defined

**Janet Arthur knows about leadership: in her professional life she is Head of HR for a large London housing association, she's been a consultant in HR, change management and organisational development, and is also a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Church**

*"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain."*

Attributed to soul singer Vivian Greene

**F**or me this quote captures the essence of leadership. As Head of HR, I exercise a dual role – enabling others to exercise their leadership in a motivational, inspiring way whilst modelling what I try to instil in those I seek to lead.

### Leaders need self-awareness

I subscribe to the principle that a leader has to take the time to get to know him/herself better. A leader may have that perfect balance of technical and people skills. But this is to no avail if you do not develop self-awareness through feedback. Self-awareness helps leaders to understand how their leadership behaviour could drive change and sustain performance during stormy times. Taking time to think about how we react and behave as leaders during challenging times allows us to consider how we enrich and enhance the motivation of those we work with.

### Leadership that transforms

I believe leadership that transforms translates into four basic principles:

- being responsible and accountable (the buck stops with you as a leader in all circumstances)
- being positive and optimistic (if you do not set the right tone it is difficult, if not impossible, to take people with you)
- feedback drives performance and behaviour (it is important to give and receive feedback in order to respond to change)
- people are the difference (believing that your leadership can make a difference to people and can transform not just people's perspectives but their lives).

I've found the above principles useful when hoping to provide or nurture leadership that is energising and positive. Not long ago, I had to explore a Chief Executive's leadership style with her during significant organisational change.

Whilst it was necessary to have vision, passion, make firm and decisive decisions and ensure service does not suffer, I helped her understand it is equally important for a leader to demonstrate nurture and care for their people so they remain motivated and

For the Methodist Church, Janet is also a local preacher, a member of her Church Council and Circuit Leadership Team (having been a circuit steward for eight years); she chairs the Methodist London District HR Group and sits on the Connexional Allowances Committee.





Quotation

willingly come along with her.

In another challenging situation, I had to provide leadership to my team when they had to support managers through considerable operational change whilst they themselves were going through a similar experience. Working closely and communicating clearly with the team helped build motivation and create a common understanding about our responsibilities and what we had to do to weather our particular storm. The time we spent “learning to dance in the rain” created a positive return for the team. I have always asked of myself, and encourage others to ask: “How do I see myself as a leader; and how do others see me as a leader?”

### Consensus and transformation

Methodism often seeks to make decisions by consensus: laudable, perhaps, but not always conducive to enabling leadership. The process of decision-making at the Strategy and Resources Committee mirrors

my experience of the Conference and of Synod. Whilst the idealistic concept that ‘we are all leaders and make decisions together’ is noble, it is important to remember different people and situations respond best to different leadership approaches.

Sometimes people need clearer and masterful direction that can be provided not through consensus decision-making but through the trust and confidence they have in the authority of one leader. That is particularly the case in a storm: and all leaders experience those. Transformational leadership may require a ‘hero’ leader with vision and passion to inspire his/her people.

Different leadership approaches may be suited to different people and issues. But, whatever the context, leadership has to have a purpose; and a key part of the leader’s role is to work out which approach will best enable them to drive positive change. That’s transformation.

*A leader demonstrates nurture and care*



# Extraordinary change in unlikely places: doing all we can in Uganda

**Graeme Hodge, of the relief and development agency All We Can, discovers servant leadership in Uganda that helps alleviate poverty**

**I**t is often in the places of fragility, vulnerability and challenge that we find the most promising opportunities for transformational change. Jesus came to serve the poor, the destitute and the despised, to be a leader to those who are weak and to bring comfort to those who live in desperate places. In July, I had the privilege of hosting the Revd Loraine Mellor on a trip to Uganda where we witnessed the way God uses the most unlikely people, places and situations to create change.

We travelled to Uganda to find out more about the Church's approach to tackling poverty and injustice, but also spent time sharing our experiences of leadership in the UK. The Methodist Church in Uganda is currently led by Bishop Revd William Muriuki. He spoke to us with emotion about his desire to see a Church committed to a holistic transformation of society, and a Church that has service at the heart of all it does. He believes that to lead the Church effectively so that the most marginalised are included, "you first need to serve, and then God will help you lead".

This servant-hearted leadership was modelled when we visited a project the Revd Loraine had personally supported along with other Methodist All We Can supporters. We saw the practical way in

which vulnerable women living in rural communities in eastern Uganda were being given hope through the gift of pigs to breed so they could support their families. We had the privilege of praying with and listening to the stories of women like Edith (above), who just wanted to be able to provide a home for her young children. We listened with joy to the testimony of young church leaders like Rebecca, who is excited to see how God can use her as she serves in her local community. We spent time with dedicated, humble trainers who are teaching communities techniques to cope with climate change and are promoting different ways of growing the staple crops that help families fend off hunger. I returned from Uganda with renewed excitement about the role the Methodist Church has to play in enabling transformational and holistic change to take place.



*Communities in eastern Uganda gain hope, thanks to gifts of pigs*

*RIGHT: Bishop Revd William Muriuki, Methodist Church in Uganda  
FAR RIGHT: Graeme Hodge, Deputy Chief Executive, All We Can  
[www.allwecan.org.uk](http://www.allwecan.org.uk)*



# Transformation through collaboration

**Anne Browse has been involved in transformational leadership in education, in her local church and in the charity Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB), and currently as President of MWiB she leads women in that fundamental transformation “to know Christ and make Christ known”**



*“Transformational leadership is not about telling people what to do, but about working collaboratively with those whom we are invited to lead.”*



**W**hen Anne applied for the role of President of MWiB, she was asked to present her vision for the movement.

“I refused to do that,” she says. “Vision must be shared. Instead, I made a threefold promise: if appointed I would listen, I would learn and I would lead. I would call time when discussion should cease and decisions be taken, but transformational leadership depends on listening to and learning from each other.”

MWiB connects women with an interest in spiritual creativity and a passion for global social justice. Local groups organise their own programmes, while connexional events such as the annual weekend at Swanwick are open to all women, whether or not they choose or are able to engage locally.

The organisation is also a resource for

the Church to equip, encourage and enable women to serve others. Over recent years, we have partnered with other organisations to campaign for the Dalit people, to produce resources for dementia-friendly churches, to address the needs of those with visual impairment, to raise awareness of the plight of refugees, to encourage creative writing and spiritual conversations and to support the World Mission Fund (supporting projects and people around the globe).

The charity is co-led by an executive team of five women, who, along with trustees representing every district, make up the MWiB Connexional Forum. Other responsibilities are undertaken by smaller task groups, often with co-opted members, bringing even more voices to the table.

So how do you ‘lead’ a movement like this? Collaboratively!

*Leadership depends on listening to and learning from each other*

An opportunity to offer to serve as President of MWiB from 2019-21 will be advertised in September 2017. The commitment begins in July 2018 by taking the role of Vice-President, allowing a period of listening and learning. Further details at: [www.mwib.org.uk](http://www.mwib.org.uk)



*in our villages, towns & cities*



**Roy Crowne is executive director of HOPE – an organisation that brings churches together to transform communities**



***Jesus is the ultimate role model for leaders***

# Leading the church with HOPE

**A**rriving early for a committee meeting occasionally has benefits. Recently, as I sat waiting, I was joined by a young guy who told me his story. At 14 he'd been part of a mission week I was leading. He then joined a training week in Watford, where he gained the confidence to step out in evangelism himself. These events had such a significant impact that he looks back and says: "It changed my life." He moved from hearing to doing. He shifted from knowing he was a Christian to changing the way he lived, and then to telling others about Jesus.

Jesus is the ultimate role model for leaders. He moved the first disciples from watching what he did to doing what he did, so the Church could grow. In today's Church, we need to be leaders who model intentional mission if we want to see our churches transformed and growing.

### **Dream of a growing Church**

HOPE is working with churches of all denominations across the UK. The dream is that the UK Church will grow by 10% as we work together, making Jesus known through our words and actions in every village, town and city during 2018.

If the dream is to become a reality, we need to be intentional. Intentional in pointing people to Jesus in our

conversations. Intentional in inviting people to find out more through short courses and seeker services. Intentional in giving people the opportunity to respond to Jesus when they do come to our church services. And intentional in supporting new Christians to follow Jesus.

HOPE is committed to providing churches with the inspiration and resources to pray, to have something to say, to have something to give and to have an invitation to offer.

### **A rhythm of mission**

A continuous mission agenda can leave churches with mission burnout, so HOPE encourages churches to use a rhythm of mission through the church calendar. HOPE has developed top-quality, low-cost resources for churches to use every season.

Summer fun days and Harvest suppers are great ways of building relationships with local people. In 2018, as the nation and Commonwealth mark the centenary of the end of World War I, HOPE will be working with ministry partners to develop resources. The Christmas HOPE magazine will be a great giveaway in 2017 and 2018. Also, HOPE, Bible Society, Sports Chaplaincy UK and Integrity Music are working together to provide churches with souvenir carol



booklets to use at community events. Easter is another calendar highlight, when HOPE's latest book *Who Do You Say I Am?* makes an ideal giveaway.

### A united Church

Working together with other churches also increases the impact of our mission plans and shares out the workload. Jesus prayed that his followers would be united so the world would know that he was sent by God, who loves us. Often local church members work together through food banks, Street Pastors and other Christian initiatives.

As leaders, we need to invest time in building relationships with other local church leaders. Even if we are part of a large church that doesn't need the support of smaller churches, the unity we demonstrate speaks volumes to the watching world.

When churches in Croydon decided to work together under the HOPE banner, they divided the borough into areas with groups of churches working together. Each church took responsibility for a different season in the rhythm of mission. Those outside these churches could see a united Church working together, with HOPE events running through Easter, summer, harvest and Christmas. That unity required church leaders to start the process.

### Words and action

As leaders we also need to equip our church members to put their faith into words and

action, giving opportunities for the people they reach to respond to the gospel. In 2018 HOPE will be providing a video-based training course for churches to use for learning to talk naturally about Jesus. Also, the HOPE Revolution Mission Academy Live programme provides a 10-session peer-to-peer evangelism film series for young people aged 11-18, which focuses on young people reaching six of their friends for Jesus.

Then, as church members learn to talk to friends, family and colleagues about Jesus, we encourage churches to hold regular guest services and seeker-friendly events, always keeping Jesus as the focus, and giving guests an opportunity to respond to the gospel.

**The dream is that the UK Church will grow by 10% as we work together**

### Make the dream real by being intentional:

- Point people to Jesus in your conversations.
- Invite people to find out more about Jesus at courses and seeker services.
- Give people the opportunity at your church services to talk about their own faith journeys to respond to Jesus at your church services.
- Support new Christians as they start to follow Jesus.
- Build missional relationships with other church leaders across denominations.
- Develop a rhythm of mission for your church, circuit or district calendar.



*What would you do if a hurricane struck your local community and your local church was destroyed?*

*Frederick Almede (left), steward of Les Cayes Church*



## A remarkable dedication to service

**Sandra Lopez, Methodist Church Partnership Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, challenges us by describing the commitment of stewards to leadership training in the Methodist Church in Haiti**

### **What would you do?**

Consider this for a moment: What would you do if a hurricane struck your local community and your local church in the UK had been destroyed? Your children's school cannot open its doors because of the destruction and the roof of your home blown away. You have next to no access to medical care, clean water or food. To top it all, it is the rainy season and everyone in your family is getting wet as the roof has gone, while the threat of malaria as well as water-borne diseases runs high.

How would you feel? Would you still have hope? What if this hurricane was not a

freak, a one-off disaster, but one that could potentially happen every year?

What if, after the hurricane struck, your church decided nonetheless to continue with the leadership training programme that it had been planning for months. Would you even consider attending?

Most of us in the UK would not! We would be too concerned, and with good reason, about the well-being and survival of our families. We would be trying to deal with the consequences of this disaster.

### **Hurricane Matthew**

Maxam Libet, Pierre-Luit, Valère Mari-André, Honoré Jean-Lettuce and Delisquar Marie are five congregational économes (stewards) from the Leon Circuit in Jeremie, western Haiti, a region which was badly affected by hurricane Matthew when it struck the west coast of Haiti in October last year.

The storm killed more than 1,000 people and left the area completely decimated. These five local leaders told me that

everything had been destroyed in Leon: their homes, their churches, their schools. When the Haiti District of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas had been able to send them relief and aid, they began to have hope.

Another steward, Frederick Almede, told me that he, too, had lost literally everything during the hurricane. He and his family had no shelter and were getting wet as the rains continued. I asked him why he was still attending the training, when he obviously had serious challenges to face. He simply said: "I have come to learn."

### Facing unimaginable challenges

I can't get over the fact that these stewards, who have given their time, energy and money (for travel to get to the venue), are facing difficulties most of us can only ever imagine. I seriously question whether I would have still gone to a church training session had my home been destroyed and my children left without shelter. It is a testament to the strength of Haitians and to the love of church members for their spiritual home, the Methodist Church in Haiti. It is also a challenge to us in Britain as to how seriously we take God and how faithfully we serve God's Church.

When I met these church stewards towards the end of last year, they were among 60 people participating in the course sponsored by the Methodist Church in Britain's Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT) programme.



The training covered the vision and mission of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean, the Americas and the Haiti District (MCCA). It also included the responsibilities and authority of congregational stewards according to the MCCA's Code of Practice and Discipline, the history of the Church from John Wesley's time through to Methodism in the Caribbean and in Haiti, and a practical exercise on the order of service and the various elements that need to be included.

Since the training, Deaconess Yachelle Watson, Coordinator for Christian Education for the Methodist Church in Haiti, reports: "The main feedback from stewards has been that they received new information. They left the seminars feeling more aware of their role and equipped to fulfil it. They noted that they were better able to support the Church structure by ensuring that proper procedures are observed. They were also keen to have material on Methodist history to share in their congregations."

*The Methodist Church had been able to send them relief and aid, and this had given hope*

**Please continue to pray** for all church leaders in the Methodist Church in Haiti, and for ongoing recovery efforts in western Haiti.





**Graham Horsley, Methodist Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner, looks at the challenges that the Church now has to face**

## When the going gets tough

**T**his year, the Methodist Conference Statistics for Mission report showed that for the first time in almost 200 years, the membership of the Methodist Church dropped below 200,000. We desperately need to do something different if we are to have a future.

For many years, Methodists have talked about mission in such a broad way that everyone owns the word. We've been much more nervous of talking about evangelism. Is it time to make our number one priority creating the sort of Christian communities in which men, women and children become disciples of Jesus Christ?

An increasing number of circuits are writing profiles that seek evangelistic and/or pioneering ministers when stationing comes around. Others are writing into every staff member's job description that they are expected to spend time outside church activities engaging with wider society, in the hope that evangelistic engagement will take place.

The role of superintendents, district chairs and local church leaders, both lay and ordained, is vitally important in changing culture.

In *Refounding the Church – dissent for leadership*, Gerald Arbuckle paints a powerful picture of the leaders the Church needs. He calls them authority dissenters, whose characteristics include the need for a vision, being able to empower people, having personal authenticity and appropriate knowledge and skills, being community-oriented innovators, able to apply the





**Church planting is back on the map!**

axiom ‘the new belongs elsewhere’, being reflective, accepting ‘not knowing’ and the need for rituals of mourning.

In her presidential address to this year’s Methodist Conference, the Revd Loraine Mellor implored Methodists to take radical steps to change the shape of the Church, through a renewed focus on God-centred worship, generous hospitality and being unafraid of failure in evangelism.

“I know I am part, *at present*, of a declining Church, but I am not part of a declining gospel.

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is here to stay, but has the time not come of us to be radical to take some risks in order that we can grow?...

“Because, you see ... I don’t believe that God is done with us just yet.”

Loraine challenged all circuits and churches to have a vision for growth, in the absence of which the alternative was a “palliative pastoral terminal care plan”. I would broaden these two categories of churches to four. Do you recognise your own church in one of these?

- **Churches which are strong enough and healthy enough to reproduce new churches**
- **Churches that are already healthy and need to continue to grow**
- **Churches that are currently in decline but can be renewed into growth**
- **Churches that are beyond the point of growth but still meet a vital spiritual need for those who attend; they need a pastoral palliative leadership**

I would also add two additional *fresh expressions* categories:

- **fresh expressions that are capable of growing into self-sustaining Methodist societies in a defined period**

Church planting is back on the map! Sending planting teams to plant into communities that have little effective church presence, or to revitalise churches that have excellent buildings but not the people power for effective mission, is becoming more common. And there are many parts of the country where huge new housing developments are being built or are planned.

- **fresh expressions of church that will never be fully independent, but have a symbiotic relationship with the founding church/circuit and leads to a healthy growth in new disciples**

Methodism is naturally more inclined to the small relational, incarnational approach. The *fresh expressions* movement has helped us to make the connection between serving people and forming disciples in new Christian communities.

This dynamic encourages circuit meetings to see that their mission strategy is bigger than the sum of the mission strategies of their churches.

A number of circuits have begun proactively to set aside budgets and paid personnel to work with lay volunteers to do mission outside the existing church buildings and activities. Some people suggest that the tipping point is reached when 20% of budget, paid personnel time and volunteer energy is allocated for this. How well is your circuit doing?

Read the the full Presidential Address at: [www.methodist.org.uk/inaugural-address](http://www.methodist.org.uk/inaugural-address)

**Lay and ordained leaders are vitally important in changing culture**

# Reflection

**Adam Sanders, Learning and Development Officer in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network and founding member of Jazz Community Church, Birmingham, reflects on the transformational leadership of jazz legend Dave Brubeck**

*He comes  
alive, his  
fingers as  
agile as ever*

**I**t is May 2, 2003, at Plymouth Pavilions and I am one of more than 2,000 people in the audience. The 82-year-old jazz great Dave Brubeck makes his way to the grand piano one step at a time – slowly, deliberately. His hands glide over the keyboard and he comes alive, his fingers as agile as ever. As he plays the opening riff the other band members are poised with their instruments, ready to join in.

#### **Inspirational leadership**

Dave Brubeck was an inspirational leader

who managed to transform the genre of jazz through experimenting with unusual time signatures – whilst simultaneously making it more accessible to the masses by incorporating elements of classical music. He has not always been popular with the jazz purists, but has always broken new ground in his gentle and unassuming, yet powerful, way.

Back to the Pavilions. The concert progresses and the music is captivating. The band is vibrant, interactive and clearly having a fantastic time. As one of the tunes



comes to an end, there is a short pause as Brubeck considers where to go next. His hands reach for the keys once more and out come the familiar opening chords of one of his most famous recordings, *Take Five*. Track three on the album *Time Out*, this was one of the first jazz records to sell over a million copies. The audience erupts in applause as the other band members join in – the bass bringing depth to the sound supporting the left hand of the piano and the drums filling in the gaps as the saxophone floats in with the iconic melody. Each instrumentalist fulfils their own unique and vital role.

#### Enabling others to thrive

Brubeck was never a virtuosic player. An early spinal injury led him to explore less glamorous block chordal playing, which became his signature sound. His style was tight, complex, almost mathematical harmony, supported by his ability to transpose anything into any key instantly. Whilst not particularly impressive in isolation, it provided the contextual landscape within which other instrumentalists were able to thrive,



transformed by the foundations Brubeck established.

After the saxophonist has set out the melody, it is over to the drummer to take a solo. The sax and bass drop out – listening, waiting. Brubeck continues to repeat the familiar riff quietly in the background as the drummer pulls the rhythms around, experimenting with all the timbres available. As the solo becomes established Brubeck also drops out, joining the bass player and the drummer on the sidelines. He isn't playing the piano, but he *is* involved. I sense trust, interest and excitement about where things are heading. The drummer cuts back to just the bass drum and snare, the sound resonating around the auditorium, exciting our anticipation. As the tension builds, he adds in extra phrases, drawing in the toms and eventually the cymbals as well. As the solo reaches crescendo the rest of the band bursts back in with the melody to rapturous applause from the audience.

*Take Five* is one of the few famous tracks in the time signature. Used as the go-to example in schools around the world, the Dave Brubeck Quartet made an unusual, sometimes jarring time signature sound normal, easy – the most natural thing in the world. I can't help thinking that it was that repetitive block chord riff that did the trick.

#### A humble man

Brubeck was a quiet and humble man who was almost embarrassed by his success and recognition. When he was the second jazz musician ever to make the cover of *Time* magazine, Brubeck was convinced that the honour should have gone to the black bandleader Duke Ellington instead – citing institutional racism as the reason he (Brubeck) was chosen. As the news was delivered to his hotel room door by none other than Duke Ellington himself, Brubeck responded with a phrase which epitomised the spirit of his transformational leadership: "It should have been you."

*An inspirational leader who managed to transform the genre of jazz*

the  
**connexion**  
The Methodist Conference 2017



The choir of the Fijian Methodist Fellowship contributed to the Reception into Full Connexion and Conference Worship



President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Loraine N Mellor, delivers her address



Jill Baker, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference



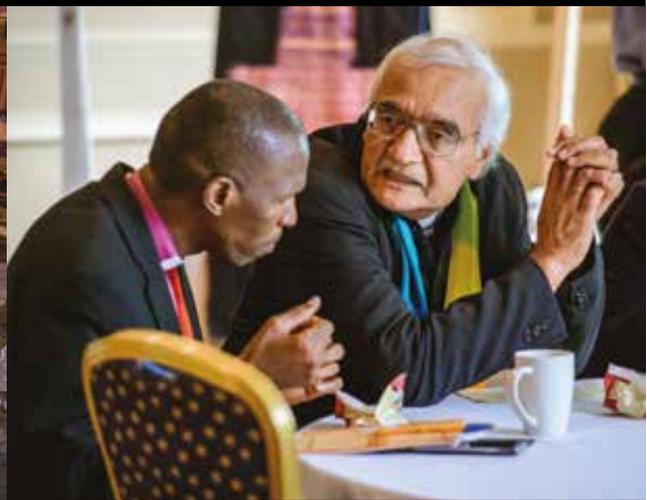
One of the tribunes for the speakers, and the Conference candle, which was lit for each session



One of the many volunteers who helped Members of the Conference to register



The Conference in session



In deep discussion



The chalices ready for the Conference Communion Service



Methodists were born in song



The President and Vice-President at the All We Can stand with the chicken that featured in many selfies during the Conference



The Conference opened each day with an act of worship



Outcome stand at the Conference exhibition



One of the Conference volunteers handing out the Daily Papers



The Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Canon Gareth J Powell



The bell that sounds at the opening of each session of the Conference, and the lights by the tribune telling speakers how much time they have left



The Presbyters and Deacons who were received into Full Connexion, before they went to their Ordination Services



Each of the Ordination Services was sent a candle from the Conference



The Conference Help Desk - an essential source of information



The Revd Ian Worsfold, pictured, and the Revd Paul Wood, led the Conference in hymns and songs



At one of the Conference fringe events, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK, delivered the Beckly Lecture on religious freedom



One of the many votes



The Conference at work



A total of 89 hymns were sung throughout the Conference, as well as many songs



Discussions carried on during the coffee breaks



The all-important ballot box



Each Member received a Conference goody bag



Some of the resources available to order at the Conference exhibition



Preparing for the work of the day



Another break, another discussion



The spiritual five a day cubes, based on the 'Day by Day' theme of the President and Vice-President, inspired by Acts 2:46-47



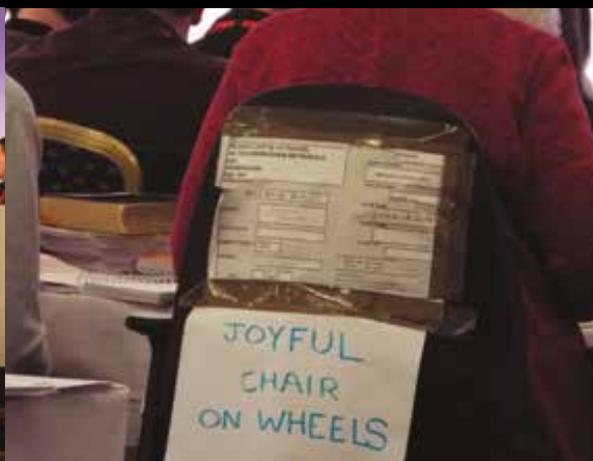
A number of Districts brought mascots for their tables, including this familiar character



Some of the items available from the Conference memorabilia stand



The Revd Dr Andrew D Wood, Chair of the Southampton District, addresses the Conference



The Revd Anne Brown hard at work



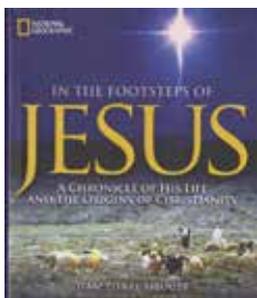
The Record of the Conference is attested



The Revd Michaela Youngson and Bala Gnanapragasam were elected as President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate of the Conference



## New from Methodist Publishing



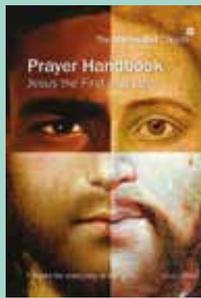
### NEW! 2018 Methodist Diaries



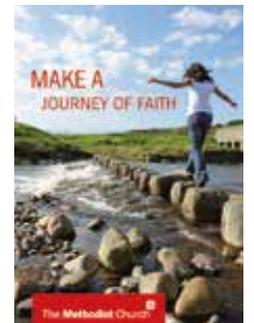
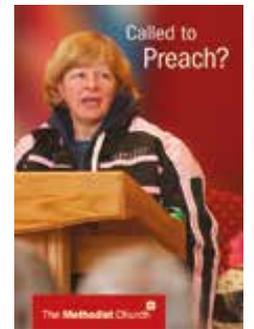
**NEW! All This For You**



**NEW! Annual Membership Ticket 2017/2018**



**NEW! Prayer Handbook**



Available to order at [www.mph.org.uk](http://www.mph.org.uk),  
by calling 0845 017 8220, or by using the order form  
in the catalogue.

# Connexional New Year Resources

To order visit [www.mph.org.uk](http://www.mph.org.uk) or call **0845 017 8220**

## Methodist Prayer Handbook 2017/2018

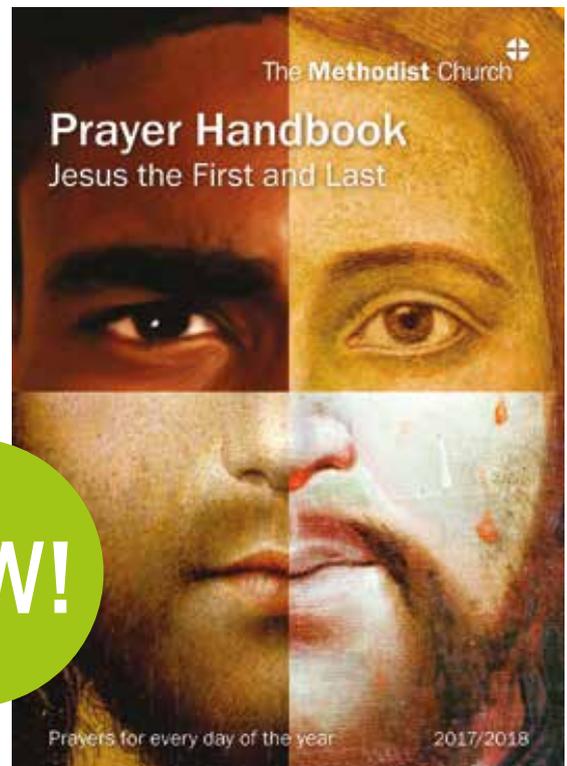
*Jesus the First and Last*  
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# Glimpses of **God's presence** in the midst of this godless mess

**Four days after the deadly fire at Grenfell Tower, North Kensington, the Revd Michaela Youngson, one of the Chairs of the London District and the President-Designate of the Methodist Conference, delivered this address at Notting Hill Methodist Church**

**I** find myself lost for words today. How do we respond to the unholy horror of it all?

The prophets of the Old Testament lived among a people from whom everything had been taken and they responded to horror and injustice by joining in the lament of the people.

Many people have been doing just that in these last few days. The space outside our church, the public boards and gathering points, covered in candles, flowers, messages, drawings from children – all this is how we join in the lament of the bruised, the broken, the lost and the dismayed.

## **Anger**

We are called to share in the prophetic task of speaking truth to those in power, to hold a mirror up to our society that reflects back just how things are.

Anger is not to be dismissed or condemned. There is much to be angry about. People will feel angry at God. Angry at those who had the power to act, but didn't. At a society which values less those who are the poorest or most disadvantaged.

We need to find a way to channel our anger that will give us the energy, passion and commitment we need for the long road towards healing. The anger of Jesus is focused not on retaliation but on the righting of injustice.



I see God in the actions of the firefighters and the police, in the skills and devotion of the medical teams on the scene and in our hospitals.

I see God in the mountains of clothes, toys, toiletries and rivers of bottled water that arrived in this building and other centres, and in the many thousands of pounds people are donating.

I see God in the faces of the volunteers working endless hours.

It is not for us as a faith community to offer platitudes about God's love in this time, those words will seem empty. It is our job to demonstrate God's love in action. We have done that already, side by

side, with this community – our community.

We know what is required of us – we need the courage to take up the task. What does the Lord require of us, but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God?

Now is a time to cling to those words, realise that they demand of us repentance for our past actions and present privileges, and to commit ourselves to love without measure, act for justice whatever the cost, and do so whilst walking humbly with a God of love and justice.

Amen.

**The full address can be read on the Wesley's Horse blog, [www.wesleyshorse.org.uk](http://www.wesleyshorse.org.uk)**