

**St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch
December 2020/January 2021
Newsletter**

Message from the Manse



I write this on the day following the most recent announcement from the Prime Minister, telling us what we can expect for Christmas and beyond. It has to be said that although there is good news on the horizon in the form of working vaccines, like I suspect many of you the prospect of having to wait until Spring for us to finally have something like "normal life" is one that I find wearying. Will we really have had a full year of some sort of restriction? A full year when we will not have been able to sing in church? It feels like such a long time.

But then I think back to our history, and indeed to the Scriptures, and realise that in the grand scheme of things, maybe it's not so much after all. 2020 has marked 75 years since the end of World War 2 - a conflict that lasted six years; Remembrance reminds us that "The Great War" lasted for more than four years. Jeremiah told the exiles from Jerusalem that they would not see their homes - a seventy year exile was ahead of them. Maybe a year isn't so bad after all. And, just as Jeremiah reminded the exiles, God has not forsaken us. Maybe we haven't met, haven't worshipped as we would have wanted; Easter and Christmas have been or will be very different; but God has not changed. We remain God's faithful people - and God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, remains faithful to us. We still have Good News to share.

God Bless

Rob

PS. Some sad news: Edna Parry has phoned me to let me know that her sister, Blanche Bird, passed away on Monday 22nd . I know some people at St. Johns will have known her.

(Blanche was well known particularly when we were the smaller circuit and much loved. Ed.)

Steward's Letter



Dear All,

Although now grown up with houses of their own both my daughters make full use of my outbuildings and sheds whenever there's a need for extra storage. One has just moved house and consequently taken over one shed with lots of everyday belongings from vacuum cleaners to breakfast bar stools.

Both her partner and herself are keen cyclists and sure enough there were two very slick looking road bikes tucked away in the midst of everything else. Over a period of time I became curious over what it must actually be like to ride one of those modern creations. It was too good an opportunity to miss so in spite of the weird handlebars and strange gear levers one weekend I decided to try one out.

After adjusting the seat and a few runs up and down the drive I felt quite positive so took it out on the open road. Wow! What a difference from my 20 year old mountain bike! After an hour or so I had completed my chosen circuit, and whilst I wouldn't have described my journey as effortless it was truly remarkable how easy it was.

I suppose it's my way of saying that we shouldn't be afraid of trying new things, new ideas and new ways in which to go about our lives, and my word haven't we all had to do lots of that over this past year? Many people have said and I include myself how uneasy they feel about so many of the things we are supposed to do to keep safe today. The passage of time will however, I feel sure, make what is tedious now become second nature very soon, and like so many times in the past what is unthinkable now will become everyday life for us all. So let us all stay true to our faith, hold fast to what we know to be right, and surely trust our God to remain by our side always.

Andrew

Financial Statement



St John's has stood High & Proud as a beacon of Methodism in Whitchurch for over 140 years.

Over the past few years we have had to spend a lot on the infrastructure of the church due to problems with the boilers, water leaks, electrics, new sky light plus decoration. This has hit our finances very hard & we have had to spend most of our reserves.

We are now in debt to the circuit to the sum of £13,000 for last year's assessment, plus we owe £18,000 of the loan for the Access work. Whilst we agreed to pay the loan back over 10 years if possible, we need to address the Assessment deficit.

The Assessment is our contribution towards the running cost of the circuit e.g. Minister Stipends, lay workers, office expenses etc... For many years our collections have not met the Assessment which for this year is £2106 a month, let alone our running costs.

Our projected budget for 2020/21 is £33,500 which will leave us with another deficit if we cannot return to our normal levels of fund raising. Covid lockdowns have substantially reduced our collection income plus the loss of all our events. We all need to pray for guidance on a way forward.

We have been put in a position by the circuit to pay our debt & allocated assessment or start thinking about the future of St John's in Whitchurch.

I have found this very hard to write but we have to face facts.

God Bless you all

Pete (Financial Steward)

Thanks to Jim & Sheila



This Newsletter is likely to be the last that is printed while Jim and Sheila Walwyn are resident in Whitchurch. Jim would say he doesn't want a fuss. Leaving in a pandemic means we cannot acknowledge the immense contributions the two of them have made to St. John's. It would require another article to write about his involvement in Whitchurch!

Jim and Sheila came to live in Whitchurch in 2006. Church – wise, they looked round (including Wem Baptist) but eventually they found a home at St. John's. Quickly becoming involved in the life of the church, in 2009 Jim became a Church Steward. An excellent Steward who was always present at events, lending a hand, getting the Stewards to wear badges, so they could be identified. He gave up Stewarding in 2013 to become the church Treasurer, taking over from Katie Johnson.

When the church needed a person to take over the lead role for the Access Project, Jim agreed to do this, subject to us finding a new Treasurer. So in 2016, Jim took the lead role, some would say Jim was like a terrier dog having got hold of this project, he didn't let it go until it was completed! So in 2019 the Church, under Jim's leadership and drive was able to provide level access in and out of the building. The scheme began in the year 2000, so it took 19 years to bring it to fruition! Jim organized many concerts, the Talents that encouraged all to be part of the Fund Raising and applied for Grants, without which we would not have been able to proceed.

In between these large tasks, Jim became the Coordinator Editor of the monthly Newsletter and contributed many articles himself. He also willingly assisted with the weekly Taxi Service, he was on the Sound Rota and filled in on the overhead when needed.

The posters in the outside notice board have been donated and pinned up by Jim.

We had good fellowship together when we decorated the Guildroom under Pete and Maurice's supervision and guidance. Somewhere in between this, Jim accepted the role of Circuit Steward.

Behind every good man is a woman. Sheila has supported Jim in this work.

To Sheila, I say thank you for allowing Jim to give of his time. Sheila has also contributed with the Prayer Board and the prayer book. Many people in the church have received a card from Sheila to celebrate significant events, Get Well and condolences. An excellent writer, Sheila has contributed many articles to the Newsletter, telling of her childhood, different memories and poems. A number of poems have been shared in our Midday concerts and other events.

Jim and Sheila have been generous with their giving, financially and in their time.

Thank you both very much.

You leave Whitchurch and the Midlands to join the elite in the south! We wish you both good health and God's Blessing. We shall miss you.

Brian Faulkner.

Situations Vacant.— Still!



No.1 Taxi Drivers---- For when return to normal Sunday service.

No. 2 Projectionist.

No. 3 Newsletter Editor.- To join the other monthly editors

If you are able to volunteer for any of these roles please contact me.

Stay safe

Maurice.

A Prayer



Christ the Light of all who love you, help us to make ready for your birthday by preparing room for you in our hearts.

Let no selfishness darken our homes; let no ill-feeling spoil our fun. Bless our families – may they be like the Holy Family into which Jesus was born. Help us to make our homes happy places, to do our work cheerfully and well; to share with others. Draw us closer together by showing us the way to love you and others.

Father God, we know that this Christmas may well be different from other Christmases because of the effects of the Corona virus affecting millions of people worldwide. Help us to stay positive and not to lose sight of the reason for Christmas – the birth of your Son Jesus. During Advent give us the strength and motivation to respond to your call as Mary responded; help us to remember that all things are in your hands.

We pray for all humankind and especially for those suffering poverty, persecution, slavery, oppression, injustice and the effects of conflict. We ask you to give compassion, wisdom and courage to those in authority that they, and we, may defend those who suffer and work to bring relief wherever possible.

We give thanks for all your people who have worked tirelessly to find a vaccine to fight the effects of the Corona virus and we pray that their efforts will be successful and many lives will be saved.

Lord, we pray that you will provide solace and inspiration to those who feel detached from you at this moment; those who feel that you may not be present in their daily lives. At a time when many question the relevance of the Church give us the presence to be witnesses in the world – witnesses that strengthen the presence of Christ in our communities.

Throughout the Advent season we anticipate the coming of Christ; help us to remember that Christmas is about people - the family of Mary and Joseph and the joy of a new baby, no different from so many families the world over. In our build-up to Christmas, help us Lord to remember the simplicity of the first Christmas; the sign of a child born in a stable to die for us. **Amen**

A Christmas Tale



An American, Alan Abramsky, tells how under a cultural exchange programme, his family hosted a rabbi from Russia. One night when they had finished eating in a Chinese restaurant, the waiter presented each of them with a small brass Christmas tree ornament as a seasonal gift. When someone at the table pointed out that the ornaments were made in India, they all laughed except the rabbi. Tears trickled down his face. When they inquired if he was upset by being given a gift from a Christian festival, he replied, "Nyet I was shedding tears of joy to be in a country in which a Buddhist gives a Jew a Christmas gift made by a Hindu"
(drawn from Life, Love and Laughter by Rev James A Simpson)

FOODBANK -Thank You



Dear all

On behalf of Whitchurch Foodbank I would like to thank you for your donation of food made recently from your Harvest Service. It amounted to 73.3kgs.

We are grateful for all donations, especially at this difficult time, and you can be sure it will be used to help people in need in Whitchurch and the surrounding area.

I have enclosed a certificate which you may like to display on your notice board.

Thank you again

Kind regards

Judy Bellingham
Secretary Whitchurch Foodbank

St John's Church. 2006 / 2020 Ramblings of an old man!

When I looked at my Desktop, I found to my horror that I had called this article "The End". What a silly ridiculous title! It is, of course, not near the end. No, it is the beginning! I started to reflect on why I should call these few lines the beginning, and, out from my heart flowed all the reminiscences I've had since joining the church is 2006. 14 years! Where have they gone? What did I do with them?

our house has sold (again!) & we intend moving just after Christmas.

These are, of course, just the ramblings of an old man.

It seems like yesterday when a gentleman called Rev Ronald Taylor came to see Sheila & I. We were, at the time, flirting with the Baptist Church in Wem. We heard some wonderful inspirational sermons from Pastor Phil Wright & bumped into Mr & Mrs Letchford who made us feel very welcome. However, our strong Methodist roots kept pulling us back to St John's. It was a wonderful coincidence to find that our Minister from our church in Wolstanton had indeed already been Superintendent Minister in Whitchurch. A wonderful coincidence! Even our house had previously been owned by the Price family, well known to most St John's folk.

There were many problems at St John's, & we struggled for a while. We were fortunate when Rev Michael Parrott arrived - a very experienced & wise man. Michael was coming to the end of his Ministry, but he still had a lot to offer. His were a very safe pair of hands which steered the church into calmer waters (excuse my metaphors!). A dedicated group of Stewards helped to give the church stability - good & faithful servants (I think in particular of people like Gordon Davidson & Derek Morris) but many of whom are still working tirelessly in the church today. I don't really like naming names, but I think about people like Pete Shingler, Maurice Latham and Brian Faulkner who are working so hard to get the church through this dreadful virus. Rob Weir has also brought his technical skills to augment all the work done by Vic Trigg. Names trip off the tongue, but please excuse all those I have missed.

As is fatal (for me) I allowed my mind to wander! I began to think about all the other servants of the church - many still very active & some, sadly no longer with us. Where do I start? Well what about all those unsung heroes of the kitchen the wonderful Family Committee! My thoughts turned towards all those magnificent ladies. Vic Trigg came into his own as he organised games and quizzes (fiendish!),

We have had several brands of Father Christmas over the years. I tried to dodge Dorothy as we approached the Christmas Party – she was sure to ask me to get inside that hot sweaty suit again! I can still see Mike Nimmo dancing up and down the Civic Hall dressed as Santa!

Apart from the Christmas Parties, my mind wanders towards all the other events promoted by the Family Committee which included Afternoon Teas, Coffee Mornings, Easter Breakfasts, Anniversary Lunches, Harvest Suppers. I think they used to call them Faith Teas – wow there was plenty of Faith and even more cakes and Tea!

Thanks are due to all the hard work that Chris Crowther put into the afternoon fellowship each month. We may well have struggled for support but I remember many of our meetings; in particular the lovely afternoons at Norman & Elaine's garden and all those lovely cakes! Lyn Fowler invited us to her garden for a lovely tea (& cakes) and in the Autumn we would visit Bellis' for Christmas shopping (& scones). Happy days! Thanks to everyone for their generosity.

I suppose one of the periods I enjoyed most was when we did the Safety and Access Project, People seemed to think that this was done just by me. Oh, how wrong. The project started out to replace the roof, As we could not afford this the plan became a Safety & Access Project, Mike Nimmo worked tremendously hard to get things started and I just finished things off, Only time will tell whether we have done the right thing or not. What next?

On Sunday, 1st November, we held a service of Remembrance. This was to remind us of all the people who had died during the last 12 months. I became quite emotional and upset as I thought about all the friends I would not see again, and I name them now in my heart and on paper: Jane Cliffe, Gordon Davidson, Freda Hanlon, Mary Scott, Albert Minshall and Derek Morris. On becoming a Steward I was very grateful for the help & support I received from people like Andrew Fawcett, Gwen Reeves, Derek Morris & Janet Lees. This final piece is beginning to sound like a bit of a roll call and I apologise for that. However, as many people have said to me "The church is not about the building itself, but its mighty heart beats within the people who serve within it." So many people have worked tirelessly over the years to keep the heart and soul of St John's Methodist Church beating. For the future: I wish all my friends well for all your friendship over the years. I am told that the nearest Methodist Church to where we are going to live is quite modern and lively. I hope it's a church embracing all sorts of worship with room for the old & the new.

Anyone joining me in a Faith Tea? With fond memories. To all my friends at SJMC. Keep going!

Jim Walwyn

Further Lockdown Reflections by Mary

I get out of bed each morning,
Put on the same old clothes.
Look at myself in the mirror
And think 'Oh well here goes.'
I used to put my makeup on,
Wash and set my hair,
But now I just don't bother,
Does anyone really care?
I've no idea what day it is
They all seem just the same.
No outings to look forward to-
Oh what a wicked shame.
But then I think how lucky I am,
Much better off than some.
My phone is always busy
I've no reason to be glum!

Carols for Christmas

We are hoping that we will still be able to Carol Services, though of course they will be very different to normal! To allow as many to attend as possible, the plan is to repeat the Carol Service twice on Sunday 20th December, once at 3:30pm and once at 6:30pm; booking isn't essential, but do let us know if you have a preference to help us manage numbers. There will also be an Online Carol Service, at 7:30pm on the evening of Wednesday 23rd December - you can connect by phone with the following details, or use Zoom with the same details or the link that will be sent closer to the time:



Contact Rob weir for details

Advent Angels



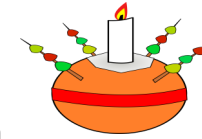
St Johns is thinking about Angels over Advent! Angels appear as messengers, bringing Good News and offering hope for the world - and that's something we want to share with those around us today. Rev. Rob is producing an Advent Booklet themed around Angels, which will be distributed shortly; and services through Advent will be themed around the appearances of angels in the Christmas Story. We've got a Banner to put up, and are looking to project an Angel Silhouette onto the building; we're even hoping to hand out Chocolate Angels to children if we can open the church for visitors! We're setting up an "Angel Trail" and trying to get people inside and outside the church interested - making, drawing and displaying Angels, with pictures going on the St. Johns Website and Facebook Page every day. There's an email address to send pictures to - StJohnsAngelTrail@gmail.com - let's do our best to share the message of the Angels with those around us this Advent.

2) *Advent Virtual Meetings*

As part of the regular Wednesday Zoom Coffee Morning, we're offering "Carols and a Cuppa" from 11am - a chance to sing along to a Carol or two, and think about their message; it will also be run as a separate session on a Thursday from 2pm to 3pm. All of these can be connected to by phone - it's a National Rate Call - using the following details:

Contact Rob Weir for details

The First Christingle



A long time ago, in 1747 in fact, in the land of Moravia lived a kind man. His name was John De Watteville and he was a Bishop. Bishop John spent his days telling everyone how much God loved them.

He wanted to find a way to tell the children in his village about Jesus, and about God's promises. Bishop John prayed and prayed asking God to give him a good idea. In time God answered his prayers and gave him a very good idea. Indeed it was such a good idea that it is still used around the world.

God inspired Bishop John to take an orange the next time he went to see the children in his village. He showed the children how round the orange was and full of goodness. He explained to the children that it was like the world that God had made – big and round and full of goodness.

Then Bishop John pressed four little sticks in the orange to be the four seasons of the year and onto the sticks he pushed some sweets and fruits and nuts. He explained to the children that these lovely things remind us of all the gifts God has given us in the world.

Next Bishop John took a small candle and pushed it into the top of the orange. He told the children that the candle tells us that God sent his son, Jesus, to be the Light of the World – to shine God's special light into all the places and hearts that were dark. Carefully he lit the candle so the children could see that God's light really does make a difference in our dark world.

Finally Bishop John told the children that Jesus loved everyone so much that he died for us on the cross. Bishop John said that Jesus' love stretched right around the world to include absolutely everybody. The Bishop gently wrapped a red ribbon round the orange to show Jesus' love going round the world.

The children were thrilled by his story. They begged Bishop John to tell them the story again and again, and they watched as he put the orange, sweets, candle and ribbon together. Bishop John had made the first Christingle.



Whitchurch – A lovely little town, with individual and unusual shops, a multitude of cafes and pubs & lots of canal walks and wildlife areas.

We came to Whitchurch 14 years ago, having lived all of our lives in the Potteries. We're 'Stokies' born and bred – well I am anyway!

I still love going back to dear old Stoke even with its reputation for smoke and industry. To me it will always be home! I guess we all have a place in our hearts for our birthplace, it is where we grew up and the love within families was there.

We have been quite settled here in Whitchurch for the past few years, we always attended St John's in Wolstanton near to Newcastle under Lyme for many years, so after trying a few churches here, such as St Alkmund's, Church of England, The Beacon, and Wem Baptist, we finally found our niche at St John's here.

At St John's we found lovely friendly folk who made us so very welcome and we have made many, friends along the way. I like modern worship very much but Jim prefers the traditional, so we found a mix of each here.

Jim in particular has worked hard to promote the church forward, and as you all know steered the modernisation project - of which he should be justly proud!

My sister and her family moved from Shropshire to the Norfolk border this year, so we are following her to be able to watch the youngsters mature and grow, and find companionship in our latter years.

It is a daunting prospect to us at our age, hopefully it will all happen early in the new year all being well. We are moving to a small village with just village shops and a river running through it. A pretty little place but so different from our life here!

So onward and upwards we go on our next adventure! It is with sadness we leave friends behind, but we hope we will see you again in the future. We can keep in touch by phone and e mails and maybe Facetime too!

Thank you all for your friendship and love – we shall miss you!!

Love from Sheila x

Love



Love grows
Love cares
Love sings
Love cries
Love acts
Love waits
Love wonders
Love does
Love takes risks
Love asks questions
Love tells stories
Love stands up for justice
Love makes you vulnerable
Love listens
Love does
Love builds hope
Love builds respect
Love builds bridges
Love builds courage
Love builds community
Love keeps on giving
Love does
Love beckons
Love challenges
Love weeps
Love dances
Love changes lives
Love dares
Love lasts
Love does

A Christmas Quiz (answers are connected with Christmas time clues, anagrams or hidden words)

1. You may dream of this (5,5)
2. Turn the tables (6)
3. Main attraction on the bill (4)
4. It is silent round the Christmas tree (6)
5. Finding old coins (4)
6. Nuts! (8)
7. Time for a punch up? (6,3)
8. The ship was sailing out of harbour (7)
9. Need an umbrella my love? (8)
10. To copy (4)
11. Many shelves were found in Santa's workshops (5)
12. Detective at the window pane (4,5)
13. GC, MM and DSO (11)
14. To kill say (6)
15. Eat in France (6)

Christian Aid

Please think about Christian Aid this Christmas.

Kumana in Ethiopia was without hope as climate change caused her crops to fail. But thanks to training from Christian Aid's partner, Kumana now has a thriving aloe vera soap-making business that empowers her to build hope into reality. Aloe vera thrives in the changing climate where other crops fail. The aloe soap provides much needed extra income, and is also helping fight off the further spread of the coronavirus pandemic in Kumana's village. Praise God.

This Advent, £15 could train one woman to make aloe vera soap, £80 could provide two goats to help a family build a better future and £290 could pay for the materials and tools to build a pond, providing life-saving, reliable water for a whole community

If the church is open in December there will be envelopes in the pews for your Christmas gift to Christian Aid. You can also give online via the e-offering autumn appeal link on the St John's website.

Services & Preachers

6th December - Rev. Rob Weir
13th December - Brian Faulkner
20th December - AM Rev. Brian Acty,
Carol Services (3:30 and 6:30) Rev Rob Weir
27th December - Rev. Rob Weir

3rd January - Nick Cutts
10th January - Brian Faulkner
17th January - Rev. Rob Weir (Covenant)
24th January - Mike Valentine
31st January - Rev. Rob Weir

Stewards

December. 6th. Maurice Latham.
13th. Robert Hewson.
20th. (am) Brian Faulkner..
3-30pm Maurice Latham and Peter Shingler.
6-30pm Maurice Latham and Brian Faulkner.
25th. Peter Shingler.
27th. Andrew Fawcett.

January 2021. 3rd. Maurice Latham.
10th. Robert Hewson.
17th. Brian Faulkner.
24th. Peter Shingler.
31st. Andrew Fawcett.

SPICK & SPANNERS

Dec 3rd Elizabeth Shingler, Briony Myles-Hook & Linda Jenkins
Dec 17th Mike Nimmo, Vic Trigg & Dorothy Faulkner
Jan 7th Sue Davies
Jan 21st Chris Crowther, Dot Charlesworth & Lynn Fowler

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February 2021 Newsletter

Please let Dot Charlesworth have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by Monday 25th January.

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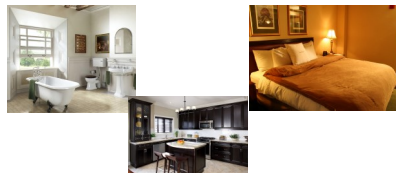
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kitchen, bathroom or bedroom



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WALKERS

