

Newsletter

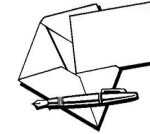


St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch

May 2024

Message from the Manse

Dear Friends,



Why is it that when the house is full of chocolate all I want is a sweet?

It might be 3 weeks since Easter but the manse is still littered with the remnants of Easter eggs, but I really don't fancy any chocolate. So, I had a rummage through the cupboards and found a box of Liquorice Allsorts – Dave's favourite. I personally don't like them; I much prefer a Haribo or a rhubarb and custard. However, instead of going out to buy some sweets I thought I would talk about them instead and since this box of allsorts is here, I might try to gain some inspiration from them!



Liquorice Allsorts have been around since 1899 and the story goes that one day Bassetts sent one of their salesmen, Charlie Thompson, from their factory in Sheffield to Leicester to demonstrate their newly manufactured liquorice sweets to a potential buyer. During the demonstration the salesman accidentally knocked over his box of samples on to the floor in front of the buyer. Seeing all the wonderful, colourful mix of sweets on the floor, the buyer asked Bassetts to produce just such an assortment for him to sell. What this became was the mix of sweets we now know as Liquorice Allsorts.

In the aftermath of Easter, I think the disciples were left a bit like the box of liquorice samples, turned upside down and scattered on the floor. The disciples were a bit of a 'random mixture' of people – fishermen, a tax collector, activists and others whom we know little about, each with their own colourful personalities, good and bad traits, each with their complex layers of failures and doubts just like the diverse 'allsorts' in the box. While Jesus had been alive, they

had stayed in reasonable order because Jesus had made it so (like the box of sample sweets the salesman carried).

But when Jesus was arrested and crucified the disciples were scattered, and although after the Resurrection on Easter Day they regrouped in the upper room for a while, like the liquorice sweets being replaced in their sample box for the journey back to Bassetts; and here they were until after Jesus' Ascension back to heaven and now feeling as if they had been poured out onto the floor all over again in a mess and mixed up.

But sometimes from what looks like chaos something wonderful begins to flourish. The 'happy accident' of the salesman and his liquorice sweets became the well-loved box of Liquorice Allsorts that is still popular today, over 120 years later.

And the disciples? Well, they went on to be filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (this year celebrated in our churches on 19th May) and started the Christian Church which shared the Good News of Jesus with all the world and its message flourished!

And the Christian Church is still sharing that Good News now, over 2000 years later and encouraging people, whoever they are, to follow in the way of life that Jesus demonstrated and to share God's love in the world.

Just like Jesus called a bunch of 'all sorts' to follow him and to build something wonderful to share God's love, God still calls all sorts of people to be part of the Church today, in their local churches, in villages, in towns and cities all over the world.

Whoever you are, whatever your past holds, whatever you look like, whatever age you are, you are welcome in God's Church because God loves all sorts!

With blessings,

Rev Donna

Open Letter to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on the Rwanda Bill

- signed by the Methodist Church and 250 other organisations

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to express our shared outrage at the passage of the misleadingly named ‘Safety of Rwanda Act’. This is a shameful and performatively cruel law that will risk people's lives and betray who we are as a society.

We all want to be safe - and we want that safety for each other, too. As a country, we are proud to uphold our responsibility to support refugees. Given the chance, communities across our country go the extra mile to welcome those in need. The wider public do not support the Rwanda plan.¹ But this law would enable the Government to forcibly expel people seeking asylum - including children and survivors of trafficking and modern slavery – despite concerns they could be put at grave risk of harm and human rights abuses. The Rwanda plan will force people who have fled violence and persecution into detention centres where they may face abuse and mistreatment, with no time limit. They will then be removed to a country to which they have no connection, despite our country's Supreme Court ruling that it is unsafe for them. Through this law, the Government will put them at grave risk of mental and physical harm, and of being returned to danger in the countries they fled.

Despite the clear ruling from the Supreme Court, the Government is rewriting the facts so they can shirk our responsibilities to refugees. In doing so, the Government would break international law and further shatter the UK's commitment to justice and the rule of law. While this is a targeted attack on refugees and migrants, an attack on one group's rights is an attack on all of us.

Outsourcing our asylum system to other countries is never acceptable. It abandons our duty to share in the global responsibility towards those forced to seek safety. Instead of continuing down this dangerous path, the Government must guarantee that asylum claims will be heard fairly on our shores, and open safe routes so that people are not forced to take dangerous journeys.

As organisations working towards a better future for all, we believe in kindness and compassion. The Government must listen to the people, abandon this deplorable deal with Rwanda and similar plans with other countries, and protect those who need sanctuary.

¹ *British Future / Focaldata poll, published 17 March 2024: “Only 24 per cent of the public think the government should try to get the Rwanda Bill through in its current form” - “Less than a quarter of the public back Rwanda Bill in current form, poll finds”, Politics.co.uk, 18 March 2024.*

Don't use asylum seekers as a 'political football', warn Church leaders

23 April 2024

Senior leaders from the Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches have expressed their gratitude for those who work alongside refugees and asylum seekers, in the face of rising hostility and unjust malignment of this support from some quarters in recent weeks.

Their statement follows the passing of the Safety of Rwanda Bill through parliament, and news of further lives lost in the English Channel overnight.

“We retain deep misgivings about the Safety of Rwanda Bill, passed in Parliament last night, for the precedent it sets at home and for other countries in how we respond to the most vulnerable. This includes victims of modern slavery and children wrongly assessed as adults, whom we have a duty to protect.

As leaders in Christian churches we wish to express our profound gratitude to those who live out Jesus's call to feed and clothe the poor, and to welcome the stranger, through their work with asylum seekers and refugees, at times in the face of opposition and prejudice.

We note with sadness and concern the rise in hostility towards those who come to these islands seeking refuge and the way in which the treatment of the refugee and asylum seeker has been used as a political football.

We are disappointed that the kindness and support offered by churches and charities to the people at the heart of this debate - those fleeing war, persecution and violence trying to find a place of safety - has been unjustly maligned by some for political reasons.

In their response to the tragic attack in Clapham earlier this year, some former Home Office ministers, MPs and other commentators sought to portray churches and clergy as deliberately facilitating false asylum claims. It was for this reason, at the request of Anglican leaders, that representatives of our Churches met the Home Secretary in February. When asked, neither he nor officials could provide evidence to support the allegations of widespread abuse. Home Office Ministers have since confirmed this in a written parliamentary answer, and on questioning by the Home Affairs Select Committee. Follow-up meetings have since been agreed to promote closer cooperation and co-working between the churches and the Home Office.

Like so many in this country, we seek to support a system that shows compassion, justice, transparency and speed in its decisions. We grieve the appalling loss of

life in the Channel today. There may be differences between our churches and Government on the means by which our asylum system can be fair, effective and respecting of human dignity, but we do agree that borders must be managed and that vulnerable people need protection from people smugglers. We have pledged to continue to work with the Home Office, and we do so in good faith.”

Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby

Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell

Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun

Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary, The Baptist Union of Great Britain

Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, United Reformed Church General Assembly Moderator

Revd Gill Newton, President of the Methodist Conference

Warm Welcome Spaces are blessings

Jude Levermore, Head of Mission in the Methodist Connexional team, preached at the Evensong service for supporters of the ‘Warm Welcome’ campaign on Wednesday 17 April at St Paul’s Cathedral.

Around 1,000 people attended the service, many of them have been involved with the campaign as organisers, volunteers, guests or donors and wanted to get together to celebrate a second year of providing Warm Welcome spaces for people who need them.

Launched for the winter of 2022-23, the Warm Welcome campaign began as a response to the cost of living crisis. The Warm Welcome campaign has now grown into a wider

movement for belonging and connection in over 4,000 community spaces made by and for everyone. They bring hope, friendship, and human warmth to communities, helping people feel less isolated and less lonely while boosting wellbeing.

This year, the Warm Welcome team created new relationships, including with National Grid. Their Community Matters Fund granted £2.7m to more than 400 Warm Spaces.

Shafraz, an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka shared how much the warm welcome spaces in Waltham Forest mean for him and his family. “For me and for many other asylum seekers, warm spaces continue to offer warmth, friendships for life and support at the time when we feel isolated and vulnerable.”

Prayers, led by Revd Robert Coupland, Sacrist, highlighted the stand against injustice and oppression, as well as the sheer desire of Warm Welcome’s partners (Kids Matter, Libraries Connected and representatives of Warm Welcome Spaces or the Good Faith Foundation to name but a few) to help ignored and unseen people.

As the Methodist Church in Britain was instrumental in starting Warm Welcome, Jude Levermore, Head of Mission in the Connexional team, was invited to preach. Her sermon was based on Isaiah 58. 6-11 and 2 Corinthians 3. 1-3 from which she emphasised two points.

1. De-bunking a theory of ‘what goes around comes around’ she firstly stressed that the blessings on offer through Warm Welcome Spaces come in a variety of often unexpected ways, “If we open a Warm Welcome then we shall be blessed by friendships blooming in unexpected places [...] Warm Welcome. This is the transformation that the gospel, the good news promises.”

2. For her second point, Jude stressed the importance of love, kindness and patience as preached by Saint Paul. Speaking in particular to those who had been involved in warm Welcome

Spaces she said “You are a letter, you, ‘yourself’, made your heart available to be written on by God, you’ve made a difference, and your message of love does make a difference [...] Our society is made more whole because of you.”

“What matters is what’s written on our hearts, and the invitation for us is to let God free, to write new stories, warmer welcomes and personal and community transformation because the Spirit of the living God, the road of love has no end

– Amen.”

The Trees

*"The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.*

*Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.*

*Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh."*

- *Philip Larkin, (1922-85) English poet, novelist, and librarian*

Steward's Letter



On Mothering Sunday we attended, on behalf of St John's, the Induction Service for the new rector, Christopher Precious, and curate, Philippa White at St Alkmund's. Because it is the established church there was a lot of legal requirements within the service which did take some time, but it was a joy to be part of a full church singing heartily a number of well known hymns. The hymn, "Bind Us Together Lord", seemed particularly fitting for Christians from all denominations worshipping together. We hope and pray that the work of Churches Together continues to make it's presence felt in Whitchurch.

When we booked our holiday last year we didn't think to check the calendar for Easter. So for probably the first time ever we are not at home. We shall certainly miss the Walk of Witness on Good Friday. Carrying the cross around the town centre, singing Easter Hymns and having bible readings is a real occasion when members from all the churches come together to witness their faith in public. We are always struck by the number of passersby who stop, listen and sometimes join in the singing. For those of you who take part this year rest assured Hazel and I will be thinking of you. We are in Lucca, Tuscany, Italy on Good Friday and Marseille, France on Easter Sunday. Our thoughts and prayers will be with you as you celebrate our risen Lord.

I wrote all this before we left and most of you will know it all went awry. After 5 days on the cruise I had an operation for a hernia in Naples. So three days later, Good Friday, we had a 14 hour journey from Naples via Paris to Manchester arriving home at midnight. Although the support had been excellent we were both exhausted. Hazel says I was babbling on and incoherent (how did she spot the difference from normal?). So Easter 2024 will stick in my memory for ever.

Many thanks to all those who have been in touch through calls, cards and visits and I can confirm I am well on the way to full recovery. I look forward to seeing you at St Johns soon.

God bless you all.

Mike

Preachers for May

5th Rev. Donna Broadbent-Kelly (Local Mission Area Communion)

12th Christian Aid Service

19th Peter Jackson

26th Graham Dimelow



Stewards Rota for May

5th Dot

12th Hazel

19th Andrew

26th Mike

"It was such a spring day as breathes into a man an ineffable yearning, a painful sweetness, a longing that makes him stand motionless, looking at the leaves or grass, and fling out his arms to embrace he knows not what."

- John Galsworthy (1867-1933) English novelist and playwright.



St. John's Methodist Church

Presents a series of FREE Midday Concerts
in May

As follows:

Friday 3rd May: Ukes Aloud followed by a Monologue by David Hack and a 'Singalong to Show Numbers' with our resident organist Gwen Reeves.

Friday 10th May: Elaine Gollins and Christopher Jones, Oboe and piano duets. Christopher Jones, organ solo. Poetry and prose with Bob Charlesworth

Friday 17th May: The Tither Recorder Ensemble followed by the Trigelows - Vic, Helen & Rachel.

Friday 24th May: Whitchurch Singers (WS) with a piano solo by Maurice Posniak, a Monologue by Graham Turner, and a solo (supported by the WS) by Stephen Price WS's Lead.



All concerts will be followed by a complementary ploughman's lunch and your donations will be gratefully accepted



Christian Aid Week 12th -18th May

Gifts will help fund training in Community Workshops so that people can learn to push back against the inhumanity of poverty and find out how to establish steady incomes and provide homes, food, clothes and essential healthcare for their children. Aline, who was left homeless in Burundi when her abusive early marriage ended, set up as a grocery wholesaler as a result of a community workshop with trainers funded by Christian Aid. She says "I don't want my children to have a painful life like mine, remembering it makes me weep."

Events for Christian Aid Week

Sunday 12th May 10.30am: Churches Together in Whitchurch
Christian Aid service at St. John's. There will be envelopes for your gifts



Saturday 18th May 10am to 12noon -
Coffee Morning at Bargates

Saturday 18th May 10am to 2pm
Street Collection on Whitchurch High Street

We hope you will join us for these events. If you would like to help, please let us know

Thank you for your support.

Brenda & Briony



*"The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his Heaven—
All's right with the world!"*

*Robert Browning (1812-89) English poet & dramatist
"The Year's at the Spring"*

Help for May Concerts Please?

**We need help with the preparing and serving of lunches at the
midday concerts in May on:**

3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th of May.

If you help in any way please speak to Dot or Chris.



Property Matters

(1) You may have noticed that some of our **Fire Extinguishers** have been replaced or repositioned to make sure that they are not too high for everyone to reach. There are also some new signs in place. This is to make sure that we comply with the latest Fire Regulations as required by Methodist Insurance.

*(2) We currently have 3 **wheelchairs** in the vestry for use at church. However, we really only need one and there may be other people who could benefit from a wheelchair. If you are someone who kindly donated a wheelchair, or if you know who did, please speak to Dot or Briony so we can talk about how best to use them in the future.*

(3) The **guttering** around the church is in desperate need of repair as when it rains water is running down the walls outside and penetrating into the church and halls. The cost of replacement is likely to be in the region of £50,000 as we must use cast iron because we are a Grade 2 listed building. We are looking at obtaining grants to help with this cost but we will also need to do some major fundraising in addition to our fundraising to help with our regular running costs. If anyone has any ideas, or knows someone who replaces cast-iron guttering, please speak to Andrew or Briony.

St. John's Church Annual General Meeting

The Church AGM will be after the service on 9th June 2024.

QUIZ NIGHT

Tallarn Green Village Hall

Friday May 10th 7.30pm

Teams of 4

Entrance £8 for adults, £5 for under-16's, includes refreshments

Please call 07795529492 to reserve a table for your team

*"Winds of May, that dance on the sea,
Dancing a ring-around in glee
From furrow to furrow, while overhead
The foam flies up to be garlanded,
In silvery arches spanning the air,
Saw you my true love anywhere?
Welladay! Welladay!
For the winds of May!
Love is unhappy when love is away!"*

James Joyce (1882-1941) Irish novelist, poet and literary critic

"Winds of May"



BBT@St Johns

Bumps Babies and Toddlers continues to provide a friendly welcome to children and their families and new children are coming along each week. They enjoy craft, toys and toast with singing, stories and prayers and last week they were thrilled when Kathryn brought along a lamb. If you would like to help or just want to come and say hello, please speak to someone on the rota..

There will be no BBT on 6 th May or 27 th May as these are Bank Holidays.

The Rota for May is below:

	Leader	Open up	General & Craft	Kitchen	
6th May	Bank	Holiday	NO	BBT	
13th May	Kathryn	Briony	Dot/ Elaine	Sarah	
20th May	Kathryn	Briony	Brenda	Sarah	
27th May	Bank	Holiday	NO	BBT	

Zoom Service

The next Zoom service will be on Sunday 19th May at 4pm.

Please ask Avril for the link.

*"Ask of Her, the mighty Mother.
Her reply puts this other
Question: What is Spring? -
Growth in every thing -*

*Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and green world all together,
Star-eyed strawberry breasted
Throstle above Her nested*

*Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within,
And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell."*

*Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-1889) English poet
and Jesuit priest "The May Magnificat"*



**Methodist Women
in Britain**

For women, for justice, for Christ

The envelopes for the Easter Offering of the Methodist Women in Britain are available. The money donated goes towards the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church of Great Britain. The envelopes can be placed in the collection bags and there will be a service to dedicate the offerings in May.

Dates for May

BBT. 9.30—11.30am Every Monday in term time

MORE. Mondays 12-4pm

Thursdays 1-4pm

Drawing Room. Thursdays 10-12.30pm

Tallarn Green Quiz 10th May 7:30pm

Christian Aid Week 12-18ths—see this newsletter for various events

ZOOM Service. Sunday 19th May 4pm

Deadline for June Newsletter. Tuesday 21st May

Recycled Sewing Bee. Saturday 25th May 12-4pm

Midday Concerts 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th of May 12noon-2pm

Ordination of Fiona Weir

Fiona Weir, our previous ministers wife, will be ordained at Bradford Cathedral on 30th June 2024

*"Queer things happen in the garden in
May. Little faces forgotten appear, and
plants thought to be dead suddenly wave a
green hand to confound you."*

— W. E. Johns (1893-1968)

English author & journalist

June Newsletter

Please let Mike Nimmo have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by Tuesday 21st May.

The Drawing Room Group

We meet every Thursday morning at
St. John's Methodist Church 10am to
12.30pm.



If you already enjoy drawing or if you want to learn please come and join us. Materials are provided.

Just come and try it the first week is free!

It's the best couple of hours of the week according to Mark, one of our members.

Contact me for more information.

Bob Charlesworth

"That is one good thing about this world-there are always sure to be more springs."

— L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942) American writer

Recycled Sewing Bee and The Linus Project

At our March meeting we were visited by the local coordinator from the Linus Project who came to talk to us about making quilts. Linus is a cartoon character who always has a comfort blanket and the project was started to give comfort to sick babies and children in the form of patchwork quilts. We are hoping to make some quilts for either the Special Baby Unit at Wrexham hospital or the Cerebral Palsy Unit at Gobowen.

We meet once a month 12-4pm. Our Meeting dates for the rest of this year are,

Saturday 25th May

Saturday 29th June

Saturday 27th July

Saturday 31st August

Saturday 28th September

Saturday 26th October

Saturday 30th November

Saturday 21st December—Christmas Coffee at Joli at 2pm

Dot Charlesworth

"May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope."

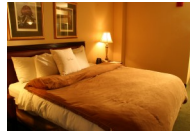
- Emily Brontë (1818-48) English novelist

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"Spring is when life's alive in everything." -

Christina Rossetti (1830-94) English poet

"Spring is the time for plans and projects."

- Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) Russian novelist

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