



**St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch
September 2026
Newsletter**

Message from the Manse

Dear Friends

New Beginnings

September always seems to bring with it a sense of new beginnings. The summer holidays come to an end, school uniforms are found at the back of wardrobes, new shoes are bought, pencil cases are filled, and children and young people prepare to step into classrooms, colleges and universities once again.

For some, there is excitement. The excitement of seeing friends again, meeting a new teacher, moving into a new year group or perhaps starting somewhere completely new. There are new things to learn, new experiences to enjoy and, hopefully, new friendships to make.

But alongside the excitement there can also be nerves. Will I make friends? Will I find my way around? Will I like my teacher? What if I get lost? What if everyone else seems to know what they are doing and I don't?

I think those feelings don't necessarily disappear as we get older. We might get better at hiding them, but new beginnings can be both exciting and daunting at any age.

This September is particularly special for me as my daughter Hannah is heading off to Chester University to study Sociology with Criminology. She will still be living at home, so I won't quite have the dramatic university send-off of watching her disappear with a car full of belongings! But even so, there is a mixture of excitement, pride and nerves.

I can still remember dropping Hannah off for her very first day at nursery. I was trying to be brave and reassuring, while inside I was panicking about everything. She cried. I cried. And I wondered how on earth I was going to leave my little girl there.

And yet, somehow, we did.

She found her feet. She made friends. She learnt new things. She grew in confidence. And before long, nursery became just another part of her life.

I suspect that this September there may well be a few tears again — although I'm sure Hannah will be much more composed than I am! As I wave her off towards this next chapter, I will probably have all the same questions running through my mind. Will she be alright? Will she make friends? Will she enjoy it? Will she find her way around? Will she remember to eat properly?

Perhaps that is one of the things about new beginnings: we don't always know exactly what lies ahead, but we can trust that we don't face it alone.

The Bible is full of people who found themselves facing new beginnings. Abraham was called to leave what was familiar. Moses was asked to lead God's people into something new. The disciples left behind the lives they knew to follow Jesus. Again and again, God met people at the beginning of something new and reminded them that he would be with them.

One of my favourite promises is found in Isaiah:

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God."

Perhaps that is something worth remembering as September begins.

For the child walking through the school gates for the first time.

For the teenager starting secondary school.

For the student heading off to college or university.

For the parent trying very hard not to cry as they wave them goodbye!

And for any of us who find ourselves facing a new chapter, a new challenge or an unfamiliar situation.

New beginnings can be exciting. They can be frightening.

Sometimes they can be both at exactly the same time.

But we don't have to have everything worked out before we take the first step.

God goes with us into the new places, the unfamiliar surroundings and the things we don't yet understand. And perhaps, like those first days at nursery, we will look back one day and realise that the thing we were so nervous about became part of a wonderful new chapter.

So, as September begins, may we pray for all those starting something new. May children and young people find good friends, kind teachers and welcoming communities. May parents have the courage to let go when they need to. And may all of us have the confidence to step into whatever lies ahead, trusting that God is already there. And if there are a few tears along the way, perhaps that's alright too. After all, sometimes tears are simply another way of saying, "This matters to me." Whatever new beginning September brings for you, may you know God's presence beside you, God's love surrounding you, and God's hope guiding you into all that lies ahead.

A prayer for September

Loving God, as we begin a new season,
be with all those who are starting something new.
Be with children beginning school,
young people moving to new schools and colleges,
and students beginning university or training.
Give them courage when they are nervous,
friends when they feel lonely,
confidence when things are difficult,
and joy as they discover new opportunities.
Be with parents and families too,
especially when letting go is difficult.
And for all of us, whatever new chapter we Help us to trust
you with the future,
to take each day as it comes,
and to remember your promise:
"Do not fear, for I am with you."

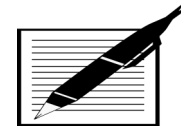
Amen.

With Blessings for September,

Rev'd Donna

Steward's Letter

Dear Friends,



The Recycled Sewing Bee enjoyed afternoon Tea at Brown Knowl On 25th July and it was there that I got the idea, from Rev. Donna, to make our LA (Local Arrangement) service of 2nd August into a Songs of Praise Service. The following day at church I asked everyone for their favourite hymns. I collected eight hymns and when I spoke to Gwen, our organist, she was happy to play them. I gave people the opportunity to talk about their chosen hymns and some people were happy to. Marion said she had a hymn without music and she would like to read it as a prayer, and so our Songs of Praise service gathered momentum. Andrew and I usually work together on Local Arrangements and he agreed to write the prayers but I was a bit worried when he emailed me later and told me he wouldn't be able to attend the service. I needn't have worried. Chris quickly stepped in and was happy to help. I led the service and Chris read the prayers, Sarah did the offertory and I said the offertory prayer (prepared by Andrew). We began with, Make me a channel of your peace, suggested by Pete Shingler, and ended with Jerusalem, suggested by Bronwen Foreman. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I'd like to thank everyone who had any part in it. It was wonderful to work together with you all on the service and I hope we can do it again. I enclose Marions spoken hymn below.

Your steward and friend,
Dot

For everyone born, a place at the table'

For everyone born, a place at the table,
For everyone born, clean water and bread
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
For everyone born, a star overhead.

'For woman and man, a place at the table,
Revising the roles, deciding the share,
With wisdom and grace dividing the power,
For woman and man, a system that's fair.

For young and for old, a place at the table,
A voice to be heard, a part in the song,
The hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
For young and for old, the right to belong.

For everyone born, a place at the table,
To live without fear, and simply to be,
To work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
For everyone born, the right to be free.

(ALL TOGETHER)

**And God will delight when we are creators,
Of justice and joy, compassion and peace
Yes, God will delight when we are creators
Of justice and joy, compassion and peace.**

Shropshire Historic Churches Trust

Ride & Stride Event

Once again, we have registered St John's with the SHCT fund raising event, Ride & Stride which this year takes place on Saturday 12th September, as part of Heritage Weekend.

This is a 3-pronged event.

- 1.) The church opens to visitors from 10am to 6pm with people manning it through the day. Visitors will come from across the county (and neighbouring ones) either walking, cycling, or riding horses or in a car, to as many churches/chapels as they can manage.
- 2.) Members of the church can Ride or Stride between as many churches/chapels as they are able in the time.
- 3.) Participants (Riders, Striders and church sitters etc.) obtain as much sponsorship as possible. It is possible to Gift Aid which is a valued extra.

So, if you would like a morning or afternoon driving round beautiful Shropshire countryside, and raising funds from sponsorship at the same time, then this is your chance.

If you don't want to take part yourself then you can help by sponsoring the groups from church – Dot is going to walk with a friend and Chris, Elaine and Sarah will be driving round. Sponsor sheets will be at the back of church. There will also be a sheet for you to volunteer to steward the church for an hour to welcome visitors and provide them with refreshment. The church will be open as part of Whitchurch Heritage weekend so there should be several visitors.

Join us for a fun

BEETLE DRIVE!



A classic dice game of luck,
fun and friendly competition!

INCLUDING A
**FISH & CHIP
SUPPER!**



ALL
AGE
EVENT



**FRIDAY
25TH SEPTEMBER**



7PM



ST JOHNS METHODIST CHURCH
Whitchurch



Please contact *Chris* on

to book a place



BBT@St Johns

Monday from 9.30-11.30am in term time
Please join us for coffee chat craft songs & stories
plus a rummage through the clothes swap boxes to get
ready for Autumn.

Bumps Babies and Toddlers is back again on Monday 7th September after the Summer Holidays. We look forward to seeing familiar faces and welcoming new Mums, Dads, Grandparents and carers with their Babies and Toddlers and we send our love and blessings to everyone starting at a new nursery or school this September.

The Rota for September is below. :

	Leader	Opening up	General & Craft	Kitch
7 th Sept	Kathryn	Briony	Chris & Sarah	Elaine
14 th Sept	Kathryn	Briony	Brenda & Sarah	Elaine
21 st Sept	Kathryn	Briony	Chris & Dot	Sarah
28 th Sept	Kathryn	Chris	Brenda & Dot	Elaine
5 th Oct	Rev Donna	Mike	Chris, Dot & Sarah	Hazel

If you would like to help or just want to come and say hello, please speak to someone on the rota.

On 21st and 28th September we will be creating a fabric art work for the textiles exhibition at church for the Blackberry Fair.

*Advance Notice! We will be celebrating **Harvest on Monday 5th October** and all are welcome to join us for singing & story with Rev Donna at 10am.*

Services & Preachers

Sept 6th	Local Arrangement (Avril)
Sept 13th	Rev Donna (Covenant Service)
Sept 20th	Rev Neal Street
Sept 27th	Pat Maidment
Oct 4th	Rev Donna (Harvest Festival)

Zoom Services

ZOOM Services will be on Sunday 20th September and 18th October at 4,00pm. Everyone is welcome for a short service and time of fellowship. Contact Avril for the link.

TEA & COFFEE ROTA

Please could you provide milk and biscuits, taking the biscuits home if they are not needed. Tea and coffee are provided

Sept 6th	Elizabeth and Pete
Sept 13th	Briony and Linda Weston
Sept 20th	Chris and Elaine
Sept 27th	Hazel and Linda Jenkins
Oct 4th	Brenda and Sarah

**Please also take the tea towels and towel home, wash and return.
If the dates above are not convenient, please arrange a switch.**

Property Update

Some of you may have noticed that the cupboards under the sink in the kitchen have been removed. This is because the chipboard carcasses were rotten in places. The outer wall is drying out and then the area will be covered with a curtain while we discuss how best to improve the church kitchen next year.

Kilvert's Diary (extract)

Contributed by Elaine

On Friday 2nd Sept 1870 the Reverend Robert Francis Kilvert entered in his diary a visit to Capel-y-Ffin (about 8 miles from Hay-on-Wye) to see Father Ignatius a Church of England Benedictine monk who was building and founding an Abbey. Rev Kilvert describes him as 'a gentle and simple man with kind manners although excitable and entirely possessed by the one idea'.

Being unworldly, innocent and unsuspecting the workmen and masons constructing the monastery took advantage of Father Ignatius and the project was not going well.

The monastery is now a grade 2 listed building with distinctive arched windows and extensive old structural character and a self catering venue for hire.

DIARY ENTRY

I stood in the lane near the Honddu Bridge for some time talking with Father Ignatius . I asked if he would not find an ordinary dress more convenient and practical and less open to insult and objection. But he scouted the idea of abandoning his distinctive monastic dress. He said he had once given it up for a few days, but felt like a deserter and traitor till he took to the habit again. Then he again became happy. The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, he said, had suggested the same thing, but he turned the tables on the Bishop by asking him why he did not discard his own foolish and meaningless dress, far more irrational than the Benedictine habit, every part of which has its meaning. The Bishop laughed and said there was a good deal in what Father Ignatius said. He thinks the Bishops are coming round to his side. We shook hands and departed. 'Goodbye, Father,' he said with an earnest kindly look, 'and thank you for your good wishes. You must come and see us again when we have our guest house ready'. When we had parted a little way and our roads had diverged he called out through the half screen of a Hazel hedge, 'Father ! Will you remember us the next time you celebrate the Holy Communion ? 'Yes,' I replied, 'I will'.

Whitchurch Foodbank Harvest Appeal
(Together with Trussel)

Help support you Foodbank this Harvest.

The foodbank will again be providing food parcels to local individuals and families facing hardship

Donate an item or two from the shopping list below. OR

Donate Money to help cover the cost of storing and distribution of food.

Shopping List

Tinned Carrots/peas/sweetcorn	Family Biscuits
Coffee (Small)	Cereals
Fruit Juice (Long Life)	Sponge Pudding
Jam	Custard

BIG Brew at 40

(Fighting for Trade Justice since 1986)

Whitchurch Market Hall

18th September 9.30—12.00

Celebrate with us and enjoy a cuppa, cake and chat

Jumble Sale

At St. Johns Methodist Church,Whitchurch
on Saturday 19th September 10am-12noon

Including: Raffle, Cake& Produce stall, Bric-a-brac & Refreshments

Please mention this event to anyone you think might be interested

You are invited to Our Covenant Service Sunday 6th September 2026 at 10.30am

As summer draws to a close and a new season begins, we warmly invite you to join us for our annual Methodist Covenant Service on Sunday 6th September at 10.30am.

The Covenant Service marks the start of the new Connexional Year, making it a particularly fitting time to pause, reflect, and renew our commitment to God. Just as many people make a fresh start in January, Methodists have long used this special service as an opportunity to begin the church year by dedicating ourselves afresh to God's service and guidance

If you've never attended a Covenant Service before, don't worry – there are no membership tests, contracts to sign, or homework assignments! The service centres on the Covenant Prayer, a much-loved Methodist tradition that encourages us to place our trust in God and be open to wherever He may lead us in the year ahead.

While there is a thoughtful and reflective side to the service, it is also a celebration of God's faithfulness and a reminder that we journey together as a church family. It's a chance to look back with gratitude, look forward with hope, and renew our relationship with God and one another.

Whether you've worshipped here for many years, are new to church, or are simply curious about Methodist traditions, you will be made very welcome. So why not come along and join us as we begin the new Connexional Year together? We look forward to welcoming you on Sunday 6th September at 10.30am.

Prayers

We all pray in different ways and at different times. Rather than produce set words which you may not find fits with your thoughts, I am highlighting events and situations across the spectrum from global to local and personal which reflection and prayer.

The war in Ukraine has now lasted over three years and thousands died . We pray that the a just settlement arises from the peace plan. Gaza , Israel and Yemen are other areas of great concern. More recently Iran and Lebanon have had major problems. Pray for just solutions

Natural disasters such as flooding, fires, earthquakes and climate extremes. Remember the aid workers in these situations. Think of climate change and the governments who need to respond to tackling it in time

Across the world there is so much repression and fighting—some situations we rarely hear about

In our own country many are struggling to make ends meet. Solutions need to be found.

Our community reflects the national picture and its response through the various agencies and charities should be remembered. We know people of Whitchurch prove to be ever generous through the FOODBANK

Our church has a mission in Whitchurch and all our activities are centred on being in the community through BBT, More+ on Monday and Thursday. Our Church Council as trustees have responsibilities in making decisions for our church.

Let us pray for Donna as she continues her ministry with us

Then finally ourselves, families and friends - whether joyful or sad we are aware of our needs and those of others.

As we hold our Covenant Service let us seek to be true “Soldiers of Christ”

Taxi

For anyone requiring a lift to church please contact Pete Shingler and if he is able he will bring you to church.

Heritage Open Day 12th September 2026

Our Church will be open from 10am to 6pm on Saturday 13th September to coincide with Ride & Stride.

The entry on the website heritageopendays.org.uk says
*Full access to a Victorian Gothic Revival Methodist Church
A chance to view the interior of this church, opened in 1879.
It includes two WWI memorial plaques, one of which came from Castle Hill Methodist when it closed.*

The organ was originally by Brindley & Foster but rebuilt around 1989 by Charles Whiteley of Chester.

Beautiful stained glass windows include ones dedicated to parishioners Mary Beckett, Joseph Savage, William Smith, Joseph Walford, Thomas Lythgoe and Samuel Venables.

We will be offering tea, coffee and cakes throughout the day and welcoming people to look around our lovely church.

If you are able to help please sign the sheet at the back of the church.
All donations from visitors will be sent to Shropshire Historic Churches along with the money raised by those taking part in Ride % Stride. Half the money will then be donated back to St Johns to spend on our heritage building.

Sound

Mike is away for most of September and this leaves Sarah and Andrew to handle “Sound” on the 4 Sundays. We really do need a couple of other members to volunteer to give us greater flexibility. Please contact Mike to discuss.

More & More!

With all the other dates being mentioned throughout the Newsletter, let's not forget

More on Monday 12 noon to 4 pm

And More on Thursday 12.30 pm to 4.00 pm

Come along for the fellowship!

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Please let Dot Charlesworth have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by Monday 21 September.