



Message from our Ministers...

Despite the fact that it is absolutely bucketing it down as I sit and write this, we are beginning to enjoy some lighter evenings and some warmer and possibly even drier weather! Whilst I love all the seasons for their variety and what is oft brought by each of them, Spring has to be my favourite. It's why we married in April (amongst other reasons), I wanted there to be blossom on the cherry trees, falling like confetti – idealistic romantic that I am! Well, they were in bloom in Cambridge (where we were living), but not in Chorley (where we married)!! Ah well.

The thing that I love best about spring is potential, the potential that is found in every forming bud, every laid egg, every break in the clouds; the potential for new life, for warmth and vitality. Now, we all know that not every bud will bloom, nor will every egg bring forth a new little life, and we are certainly aware that not every break in the cloud will render warm sunshine on our faces, but spring is also the time when we become aware that the tomb which by all accounts hold only death, becomes the tomb that is burst open by life and light, forgiveness and freedom.

We all face great challenges in life, sometimes they feel manageable, other times entirely overwhelming. Acknowledging the difficulties is vitally important, as battling through them can often leave greater and deeper scars. Beautifully, God created us to be in community with one another, and whilst acknowledging the need for help is often difficult, we all need it sometimes. For through His people



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directly, the Spirit of Christ is ready to pick us up, to carry us when we need it, and to fill us with hope. So that when the time comes we are ready, that potential within us might blossom into light and life and beauty, not just for us, but for the benefit of all those around us.

Jesus said: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10b). In the darkness of the earth a seed contains all the potential it needs, even if we are not aware of it until it bursts through the ground. In the darkness of the tomb, we encounter God's understanding of potential. For from that place of death, we find that Jesus shatters the world's limitations so that we can live our full, potential-realised, abundant lives.

This Easter season, may you find yourself 'bursting forth' into your abundant life as you enjoy the blossom!

Blessings,

Ruth



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Retirement – An end or a new beginning?

Sometimes a Minister's message acquires more significance with time and the flow of events. Several years ago, Rev Ashley Cooper told our 9am congregation that an American research project into what made people happy had revealed that it was not money but a combination of someone or something to love, something to look forward to and something to do. In other words, a sense of purpose.

This Lent, his words came to mind when Rev Kathryn Stephens talked on Jesus's selection of His disciples and their acceptance of and adaptation to their task. Obeying the command 'Follow me' ticked all the 'happiness' boxes. Commitment was total and permanent, though details of action and planning changed. Early Christians were finding their way. St Paul introduced what we would now call specialisation such as healing, prophesy and miracles. It was the first religion to adopt inspired, consistent and organised effort for a higher cause.

So how is this relevant today? In former times most lifespans were too short for retirement and there were no pensions. Now longer lives can mean long paid retirements with the potential for loneliness and feeling that you're no longer needed or useful. For some of us, there may be a tendency to sit back.

Is this right? These extra years are our last chance to make a difference to those around us and to our faith. They give us a chance to give God a better return on His investment in



us. Retirement for me is an opportunity to revive dormant talents to cope with a changing world. In view of the seriousness of the nation's problems, and indeed, those of humanity in general, every person capable of a positive contribution can look for a chance to make it better. Age also doesn't necessarily need to be a barrier. Kathryn referred to a 100-year-old lady in her former congregation who prayed for her. She was grateful for those prayers.

Perhaps it's best to close with a well-known hymn:

*Father, hear the prayer we offer.
Not for ease that prayer shall be.
But for strength that we may ever
Live our lives courageously!*

Margaret Brown



Update – Community Event



On Thursday 14th March, 18 agencies from across Stoke-on-Trent set up their stalls in the lower hall for the Community Grocery and Swan Bank Information Event.

There was a great atmosphere and a sense of coming together to support the community. Thirty-five members of the public attended the event, accessing help, advice and support. One gentleman received help to look for employment; some people received financial assistance, while others received information on Literacy and Numeracy courses from Adult Learning.

Everyone received free books from the National Literacy Trust who will be working with Georgie and the Community Grocery by providing free books for all their customers.

Throughout the day, all the agencies were able to connect with each other and share up-to-date information. They all said that it was a worthwhile event and look forward to working with the Community Grocery and Swan Bank in the future.

I would like to thank everyone who helped to make this a successful event and look forward to the next one.

God Bless

Nan

Update - Easter Lego Hunt

What an amazing turn out for our Easter Story trail on Palm Sunday. Much fun was had, LEGO was built, crafts made, faces painted, hot dogs consumed and the Easter story explored.



A special thank you to all those that helped make this such a success. Here are some highlights of the afternoon.



We may be finding bits of Lego around church for weeks to come!



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April Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	7 th April	14 th April	21 st April	28 th April
Swan Bank	9.00am 10.30am 6.15pm	Brabbs Brabbs Stephens	Stephens Stephens Taylor	Jeffries Jeffries A Johnson	A Johnson/Hickerman A Johnson/Hickerman Jeffries
Potter's Church	9.30am 11.15am	Cooke Cooke	Price Price	Price/Hancock Price/Hancock	Phillips Phillips
Oasis Church	10.45am 6.00pm	Kirk	Nixon	Dalton	Community Sunday
Wesley Hall	10.45am	Own Arrangement	Stanyer	Mason	Tattersall
The Gateway	10.45am	Boateng	Brooks	J Johnson	Wilshaw
Mount Pleasant	10.45am	Tretheway	Harrison	Tindale	Hancock 🏆
Packmoor	11.00am	Tindale	Dutton	Batho	Wakelin 🏆
Village Church	11.00am	Brooks	Jeffries	Wyatt	Jeffries
Whitehill	10.30am 6.00pm	Leese Wakelin	Tindale Chapman	Cooper Q & A	Shaw Cooper 🏆

Little Treasures Group

Much fun was had by all at our Little Treasures group this morning (Tuesday 19th March). We would like to say a huge thank you to The National Literacy Trust who kindly donated books for all our children. They were gratefully received by all. We look forward to seeing you all again, after our Easter break, on Tuesday 9th April.





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The story of Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum



In 1983 I learnt that Englesea Brook Chapel had only four members and was scheduled to close. My response in a flash was,

“Englesea Brook must be the place for the Primitive Methodist Museum”.

So, the campaign to save Englesea Brook Chapel was launched through the pages of the *Methodist Recorder*. Alan Rose from Mottram, Colin Dews from Leeds and myself from York went into action, the money was raised and Englesea Brook was saved!

I then moved to the Potteries to develop a programme of outreach for schools. Very many school assemblies were taken using artefacts from the museum. The 'Christmas' and 'Easter' programmes were set in the context of the Romans. A coach travelled from the Potteries on a former Roman road, the children wore Roman costume, wrote on wax tablets and made calculations using Roman numerals. The Christmas or Easter stories were then acted out. The Victorian programme used mob caps, pinafore dresses and writing on slates. The teacher was very strict, but although the cane was in view it was fortunately never used! The 1940s and World War 2 programme used gas masks, clockwork trains to wind up and set running, bus conductors with tickets and bell punches, plus bicycles and tricycles to ride on.

Stephen Hatcher.

In June 2016, The Reverend Dr Stephen George Hatcher received the award of the British Empire Medal due to his services to Methodism, Heritage and Education.

Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum is open for heritage talks, bible studies and tours in the peaceful hamlet of Englesea Brook, on the Cheshire/Staffordshire border, with easy access from the M6 (Junction 16). The present director, Ruth Hilton is asking if we have Methodist memorabilia in our homes that could be featured in future editions of 'Englesea Extras'. If you do, please contact her to share these 'Hidden Treasures' which is the President and Vice-President's theme for this year (director@engleseabrook.org.uk).

<https://engleseabrook.org.uk/>

Ode to the first ladies walk!



For goodness sake, Rudyard Lake

*Shout out to all 'come for a walk'
With friends new and old and a chance to talk*

*Rain or Sun and in the fresh air
Take in the view and time for a prayer*

At your own pace, In this wonderful space

*Don't worry if you're slow
Gives the friendships more time to grow*

*One down and a lot to go
Feedback good so let it flow*

*A chat at church on Sunday
The general opinion a fun day*

*The word has spread and more friends on their way,
Nothing better nothing more to say*

Except the real meaning of 'for goodness sake' is: for the sake of everything good or pure or decent or honest.

by

Liz Thompson





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SWAN BANK NOTICEBOARD

There are lots of on-line learning opportunities available from the Methodist Church. If you are interested in knowing more then please follow the link below.
www.methodist.org.uk/media/29680/learning-network-brochure-feb2023.pdf

Just a reminder to 'keep-the-date' for a church social event on Saturday 18th May with a 7.00 pm start. There will be a supper and a quiz organised by Kathryn and Ruth.

Regular Weekly Events at Swan Bank

Sunday

Sunday Night Young Adults – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm

Monday

Prayer Time – Meeting Room 1, 9:00-9:30am

Bible Study – Meeting Room 1, 10:00-11:30am

Gospel Choir – Main Church, 7:30-9:00pm
2nd & 4th Mondays of each month

Tuesday

Little Treasures (0-4 years old)– Lower Hall, 9:30-11:00am (*term time only*)

Chatty Café – Coffee Lounge, 10:00am-12noon

Tuesday Club – Coffee Lounge, 1:30-3:30pm

Tuesday Night Youth (11-16 years old)– Youth Room, 7:00-8:30pm (*term time only*)

Wednesday

Knit & Natter – Coffee Lounge, 10:00am-12noon

Foodbank – Coffee Lounge, 2:00-4:00pm (*To receive a food parcel an E-voucher will be required beforehand from a referral agency*)

Thursday

Younger Youth (School years 3-6) – Upper Hall, 5:45-7:15pm (*term time only*)

Youth Club (11-16 years old) – Upper Hall, 7:30-9:00pm (*term time only*)

Saturday

Messy Church (Primary aged children)– Lower Hall, 10:00am-12noon (*first Saturday of each month*) Breakfast included and only £1 per child!

St Nathaniel's School Easter Service



A great morning was had when church hosted St Nathaniel's School for their Easter Worship. Even better to be sharing it with Rev. Shell Penduck who realised that today (21st March) was

the very day, 26 years ago, she made the decision to follow Jesus - right here at Swan Bank! And what a blessing she is to our community!!



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What's on further afield...

For those that fancy a challenge why not consider doing a 6-day pilgrimage walk in our local peak district. Dates will be available from 18th April 2024 onwards. See the website below for further details.

www.peakwesleyway.com



Peak Wesley Way

A six day self guided pilgrimage from Matlock to Edale sheltering overnight in Methodist chapels.

Book your pilgrimage today



peakwesleyway.com

Annual Civic Prayer Breakfast is at the Kings Hall, Stoke on Friday 10th May

2024 STOKE-ON-TRENT ANNUAL CIVIC PRAYER BREAKFAST



Friday 10th May 7.30 - 10.00am KINGS HALL, STOKE

"Seek the welfare of the city and pray to the Lord on its behalf"

Tickets still only £10.00
Includes full English breakfast

By Card

Call 07825 745142

By Cheque

Send to: Saltbox, Bemersley House,
Gitana Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent,
ST1 1DY

In Person

Buy from: Methodist Book Centre,
Gitana Street, Hanley, ST1 1DY

General enquiries

email@saltbox.org.uk



Guest Speaker
Rt Revd Jan MacFarlane
Assistant Bishop &
Interim Dean of
Lichfield Cathedral



Interview
Jonathan Bellamy
Chair of
Stoke-on-Trent Business
Improvement District



Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

Office hours:- 10am - 4pm, Tuesday – Thursday



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admin@swanbank.org.uk



www.swanbank.org.uk

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:



www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams



www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB

Future Articles

If anyone has any stories or articles to be considered for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Shirley Brooks or Nigel Johnson directly or email :-

officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk.