

TORRIDGE METHODIST CIRCUIT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2020 - Issue 107

Welcome to Edition Number 107

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This is the 5th Special Edition of the Newsletter, which we hope you will find useful during this period of uncertainty & distress in our homes, families, communities, nation & the wider world.

Any comments or items you wish to share, please contact the editor, Dave Watson by e-mail; phone 01237 451437 or to 6 Greenings Road, Buckland Brewer, Bideford, EX39 5LU.

As well as the Circuit Facebook page – **Torrige Methodist Circuit**, we have a private Facebook Group where we care share thoughts, prayers & other material on **Torrige Methodist Circuit Group**. If you wish to join please push the Join button & I can add you.

Please pray for our Ministers, Rob Blackhall, Andrew Vidamour & Lynne Burgon and all involved in the varied life of the Circuit; for those connected to the various Chapels & the communities in which they live & work.

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICES

There is a plan for a Circuit Service, to take place weekly on Zoom, which will use the Services that are printed in the Circuit Newsletter. The Services will start at 10.30am on Sundays – but the 'doors will be open' at 10.20am. The contact/entry details will be send out during the preceding week & the Service can be accessed via a computer/laptop with camera/microphone, I Pad/Phone or using a 'normal' phone. Even if you have a device with camera/microphone & do not wish to be seen – you can join in without the camera on.

If you do not receive an email or want further information – please contact Sarah Richards, Circuit Administrator on 01237 472649 or sarahrichards185@gmail.com

From Rev Rob Blackhall – Superintendent Minister

Dear Friends

What a year it has been! Few could have predicted what has been going on for the last few months. Even if such events had been predicted in a Science Fiction novel, we would have suggested it is too farfetched.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been above all else a terrible calamity – a tragic blight affecting so many. The death toll has been horrific. Fault lines across our society have open up – injustices made all the more apparent. In particular the protection around the most vulnerable in our society, not least care homes, has been troublesome. Clearly as a society we have much to learn.

On the other hand, we have, for once, properly been able to see and appreciate the skills of medical staff. The NHS is a wonderful organisation and rightly should be treasured, and resourced, including its workers. But even beyond that has been a realisation of other key workers, so often taken for granted. There has to be some adjustment in our society.

The genuine kindness and consideration of people towards their neighbours has shone through with some very impressive examples of going the extra mile.

Yes, there have been some who have been less than considerate of others, and flaunted the government advice. This virus is a killer and needs to be treated with the utmost respect.

We live in a changeable world; and that is so in the Church too. Who would have thought having services by zoom, and people ringing up to listen in. Some never imagined that you could do that – some never imagined that they could do that!

While it is different to being together in our beloved buildings we are at least together – and sharing with the services that others are joining in through this newsletter. I anticipate that all these things will carry on.

It is going to be tricky, time consuming and difficult to open our buildings. Safety is of paramount importance. We also need to consider what we can and cannot do when we return. For example, there will be no singing for a while; services will be shorter and numbers limited. And we know that some people will not be able to join us physically. What does it say about the Body of Christ that some will not be with us?

One of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians (5:22-23) is patience. I suspect we might need that in bucket fulls!

The other things that Paul lists would not go amiss too!

Within our circuit there is going to be change. Our dear friend and colleague Lynne Burgon is going to be retiring at the end of September. We are so grateful for her ministry among us, but we are going to miss her. And miss her dreadfully.

So, times are changing.

From 1st October things will look different. Andrew Vidamour and I will have pastoral Charge of all 14 chapels. Clearly that is going to involve a different way of working – that is going to be so for all coming out of the lockdown.

And how as a circuit can we move forward?

Too much of my time and your time over the last years has been spent with Church buildings and Church affairs. What I often hear, and it is right, it that there are too many doing too much. A few people are having to work hard to cover all the jobs in our Chapels. Property and finance are important, and the handling of those necessary things is part of our stewardship of what God has given.

Part of the joy of being a School Chaplain for 20 years was operating beyond the walls of a Church building. I hesitate to call working in a Methodist Boarding school the real world – but I think you can see my drift. Ministry and service is not about buildings. Our mission is with and to the communities in which we live and serve. That has to be the focus of what the Church is about – about what the Torridge Circuit is about. Why are we here? What is our purpose? How do we serve the present age?

We are looking to build a **ministry team** to take forward the work of **Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism**; in other words, “Our Calling”.

Well for a start, following the sale of the Shebbear Manse we are looking to employ a Children and Families worker to serve across the circuit, supporting existing work and developing new areas of work. We are also looking at appointing a, or more, Pastoral Worker, with particular emphasis with those of more senior years, not just in our Chapels, but beyond the four walls. Those appointments will be mission based, and I hope an exciting addition to our service of others.

And then, what about the considerable gifts of the people of God? Ministry is about the whole people of God, not just ordained Ministers? What gifts have you got that the Church could use?



Would you be prepared to offer a time each week for the service of our Churches, people and community? Visiting perhaps, regular phone contacting of those in our community? Perhaps hosting a small gathering in our one of our chapels, when we can return, to just be there to make a coffee and have a chat. Maybe you have skills to offer in worship, in prayer, or administration. We all have God given talents (didn't Jesus tell a parable along those lines!). How are we going to use those gifts for the Church of Jesus Christ in this time?

What are you prepared to do? What might God be **calling** you to do?

The future is uncertain, but it is also a time of great possibilities.

We have a great God who provides for us.

Keep safe - God bless - Rob

BIBLE READINGS IN AUGUST

For those of you who do not have a Prayer Diary (always a good publication to aid our private devotions) here are the readings for the month of August.

Day	Reading	Psalm	Hymn (Singing the Faith)
Sat 1	John 11:17-27	93	502 I know that my Redeemer lives
Sun 2	Matthew 14:13-21	145	401 Come, sinners, to the gospel feast
Mon 3	John 11:28-37	95	457 Author of faith, eternal Word
Tue 4	John 11:38-44	96	306 Now the green blade rises
Wed 5	John 11:45-57	97	492 Christ be my leader by night as by day
Thurs 6	Luke 9:28-36	47	261 Transfigured Christ, none comprehends
Fri 7	John 12:1-11	98	56 King of Glory, King of Peace
Sat 8	John 12:12-19	99	263 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Sun 9	Matthew 14:22-33	85	570 As we gather, Father, seal us
Mon 10	John 12:20-50	102:1-11	249 Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love
Tues 11	John 13:1-11	102:12-28	718 We lay our broken world
Wed 12	John 13:12-20	103	101 Before the world began
Thurs 13	John 13:21-30	104:1-23	620 Thou God of truth and love
Fri 14	John 13:31-38	104:24-35	625 Jesus Christ - Perfect Love
Sat 15	Galatians 4:4-7	45	120 We gladly celebrate and praise
Sun 16	Matthew 15:21-28	67	564 O thou who camest from above
Mon 17	John 14:1-14	105:1-11	736 In heavenly love abiding
Tues 18	John 14:15-17	107:1-16	373 Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
Wed 19	John 14:18-31	107:17-32	378 Father of everlasting grace
Thurs 20	John 15:1-6	107:33-43	389 Like the murmur of the dove's song
Fri 21	John 15:7-17	110	242 A new commandment I give unto you
Sat 22	John 15:18-26	111	382 Holy Spirit, come, confirm us
Sun 23	Matthew 16:13-20	138	151 This is the day the Lord has made
Mon 24	Luke 22:24-30	145	623 A safe stronghold our God is still
Tue 25	John 16:1-7	112	390 My God! I know, I feel thee mine
Wed 26	John 16:8-15	113	391 O breath of life, come sweeping through us
Thurs 27	John 16:16-24	114	117 Sing praise to God who reigns above
Fri 28	John 16: 25-33	115	490 Being of beings, God of love
Sat 29	Matthew 14:1-12	126	732 Day of judgment! Day of wonder!
Sun 30	Matthew 16:21-28	26:1-8	362 Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity
Mon 31	1 Peter 1:1-12	116	345 And can it be that I should gain

Daily reflections and questions to ponder may be found at
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/a-word-in-time/>

Also, you can find a pray of the day at
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day/>

WHEN YOU HAVE READ THE PASSAGE FOR THE DAY WHY NOT SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH A FRIEND?

From Revd Andrew Vidamour

Dear Friends,

The Olympic Games were due to be held in Tokyo this summer, but have been postponed until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. I enjoy watching many Olympic sports, but the athletics is always the highlight for me.

As I watch the track and field events, I am reminded of some of the great performances of the past: Bob Beamon's world long jump record in the 1968 Mexico Games, for example, or Jessica Ennis winning the pentathlon in London in 2012. The great Olympic names come flooding back to memory: Carl Lewis, Lasse Viren, Sally Gunnell, Mary Rand, Mo Farah, Kelly Holmes....the list goes on.

There is something special about these athletics events and those who take part in them, echoing the original Olympic Games held in Greece from about 700 B.C. to 400 A.D.. The Games then were, however, more brutal and competitive: only the winner of a competition was recognised (compared with the modern spirit of taking part as being most important), and competitors were sometimes killed in events such as chariot-racing and wrestling.

Even so, such Games were well known to St. Paul, and he refers to them more than once in his Letters. In 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27, he talks about being in strict training, as a Christian, to run the race and win the prize. This is a call to self-discipline as we seek to be aware of our frailties as well as our gifts (seeking God's grace and strength for both through prayer), and also as we look to the needs of others in life.

Then Paul also speaks of having 'run the great race, finished the course and kept the faith' (2 Timothy 4: 7), and receiving 'a crown that will never fade' (1 Corinthians 9: 25), unlike the crowns of wild olive leaves won at the original Olympics. The rewards of serving others and showing compassion will never be lost.

Likewise, in Hebrews 12: 1, the writer of that Letter describes running the 'race' of the Christian life as like being surrounded by 'a great cloud of witnesses', just as modern athletes perhaps recall the great Olympians of the past. So we, too, may be encouraged and sustained as we remember people who inspire us in faith, hope and love.

Most importantly, though, none of this involves the intense competitiveness we find so often at the heart of our society. Instead, God calls us to run our individual races in cooperative ways as we run not against other people but against all that would deny God's rule of love, peace and justice. In that way, the pattern of Jesus (our Pioneer or Forerunner in the race), lived out today, may help to turn the world upside-down.

May God's Spirit help us to be both gentle and determined athletes in the 'race' of life and faith.
Andrew Vidamour

From Revd Lynne Burgon

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying some nice summer weather. The other day I took my five-year-old grandson down to the beach for the afternoon. I spent a blissful couple of hours watching him enjoy the simple pleasures of life. It was a sunny day so he decided to strip off and enjoy the water, running and jumping in sandy puddles left on the beach by the outgoing tide. Pretend swimming in said puddles, getting muddy sand everywhere. We ate a lunch of sausage and chips from a cardboard carton sitting on the grass. As we enjoyed the food a man was playing a guitar and singing some well-known sixties songs, raising money for a cause that was close to his heart. We both joined in clapping and singing occasionally when we recognised the song (yes, the five year-old knew some of the songs!). Then we were off, running again to play on the equipment provided for children who were brimming with energy like him. A very pleasant afternoon that filled me with joy and happiness, something I was sorely in need of as my heart has been heavy with worries of others. That afternoon I joined my grandson living in the moment, not worrying about the future or reminiscing about the past, just living the day, glad to be alive.

There's a lesson for us all in this story, sometimes we spend too much time in the past or future, forgetting to enjoy the present. Future planning is good, as is learning from the past, but if we get too wound up in the cares and concerns of our plans we may miss out on what God has prepared for us today. That day I believe God gave me a gift. His message couldn't have been plainer, take time out and enjoy what I have already given you. I felt so blessed to have spent time with my grandson that day.

I wonder what will bring you pleasure this August? Perhaps a laughter shared lunch with family or friends, or a day walking alone along the coast path or maybe curling up with a good book sitting in a garden. However you choose to spend the summer months, I pray you will take time to reflect on what God might be saying to you as you take time out. Sometimes, maybe God just wants to watch you having fun, like I watched my grandson that afternoon. God Bless, Rev. Lynne Burgon

WEEKLY SERVICES TO USE ON ITS OWN OR WITH THE ZOOM SERVICE

SUNDAY 2nd AUGUST 2020

Call to Worship: *O Christ, deep water of joy, we long to drink from you! Come, Lord, in your eager love: free us from sinfulness; fill us with your praise; and we will sing your glory.*

Hymn: 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, The King of creation!' (16 HAP / 88 STF / 564 MP)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

Glory to you, O God, creator and Father, for the universe in which we live, and for humanity, made in your own image.

Glory to you, O Christ, who took a human body and redeemed our fallen nature.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit, whose will it is that we should be made whole in body, mind and spirit.

Glory to God to all eternity.

Forgive us our sins, O Lord: the sins of our present and the sins of our past, the sins which we have done to please ourselves, and the sins which we have done to please others.

Forgive our casual sins and our deliberate sins, and those which we have tried so hard to hide that we have hidden them even from ourselves.

(Silent confession)

*Forgive us, O Lord, for all our sins, for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

Psalm: 145: 8-9 and 14-21

Hymn: 'Praise and thanksgiving, Father, we offer' (350 HAP / 125 STF)

Bible Reading: Isaiah 55: 1-5

Bible Reading: Matthew 14: 13-21

Hymn: 'Help us, O Lord, to learn' (474 HAP / 501 STF)

Address:

Both our Isaiah and Matthew readings involve invitations to meals. Isaiah offers the nourishment of God's spiritual gifts even if we think we have nothing to give in return: 'you that have no money, come, buy and eat.' This is the 'rich food' of life in God's love, peace and wisdom.

Likewise, in the familiar story of the Feeding of the 5,000 (the only miracle of Jesus to be recorded in all four Gospels), the bread and fish are generously given away, reminding us of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper where we receive freely just by bringing ourselves to God, with all our hopes and fears, needs and joys.

In both passages, God makes much out of what seems to be little. In the current pandemic, our resources may seem to be fewer than before, in our personal lives, the life of the Church, our communities and our world. But as we offer what we have, acts of kindness and our prayers, for example, are multiplied by God's grace more than we can think or imagine.

What resources do we have to help build God's Kingdom of love?

What may Jesus' feeding miracle and the Sacrament of Holy Communion be saying to us about God's economy of giving and sharing in our current situation, in our own lives and in the Church and the world?

Hymn: 'Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us' (68 HAP / 238 STF/ 400MP)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession:

Generous God, we thank you for all the ways you nurture us in our lives, in body, mind and spirit.

We thank you for the physical food and water we have...

We thank you for the love we know and share...

We thank you for spiritual food in and through the Church and in other ways...

Holy God, we pray for the many millions of people who do not have enough food and water for life, through natural disaster, war, the coronavirus crisis or for any other reason...

We pray for greater justice and sharing, and for encouragement and wisdom for all who work for this, including me/us.

We pray for all who need and seek spiritual food and water, through times of illness or infirmity, grief or uncertainty, addiction or economic hardship, or in other circumstances.

We pray for peace, courage and hope, and a sense of your loving presence, for all people who long for that rich food you promise and offer us in Jesus.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. **Amen.***

Hymn: 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah' (437 HAP / 465 STF/ 201 MP)

The Blessing: *May God bless us with strength to seek justice. May God bless us with wisdom to care for our earth. May God bless us with love to bring forth new life, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen***

HAP: 'Hymns and Psalms' - STF: 'Singing the Faith'



Call to Worship

Jesus said: 'Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid.'

Our God is a powerful God, who does things way beyond our understanding.

But we have no need to fear, for we know we are safe in God's presence.

Let us come to our God now.

*Let us bow down and worship. **Amen.***

StF 610 Best of all God is with us (HAP 69, MP 649 The King of love my shepherd is)

Prayer

Lord, sometimes life following you can be difficult.

We find so many dilemmas and struggle so much, wishing it could be easier.

We so want to trust you and see your plan for us.

Help us this morning to relax into your presence, to clearly hear your word and be prepared to act on it.

As we approach you today, Lord, we probably feel pretty much like Peter – full of bravado to begin with, but then just not quite so certain of ourselves.

We come to you, Jesus, trusting that even if we feel ourselves beginning to sink under the pressures that we face, we know you are still there holding us up.

Please reassure us that you won't let go, no matter how we feel.

*Thank you, Lord. **Amen.***

A prayer of confession

Lord God,

I'm sorry for the times I take my eyes off you, and seek to do things in my own strength.

I'm sorry for the times I doubt that you can keep me on the straight and narrow.

I'm sorry for the times I ask you for signs.

*Lord, I pray that you will forgive my doubts and hesitations, show me your loving presence, especially when I most need it, and teach me to trust you at all times. **Amen.***

Reading:- 1 Kings 19:9-18

Comment

Elijah has stood against the increasingly corrupt empire that is Israel. He has defeated the prophets of Baal. And he has fled fearing retribution and feeling utterly alone. In his mountain hideaway God comes and finds him and asks what he's doing. His answer is that he is alone. So, God promises to pass by his cave. Wind, earthquake and fire ensue but God's not in any of it. Then sheer silence. And Elijah comes to the mouth of the cave to

receive instruction from God who tells his prophet to get about his business (vv.15-17), and reminds him, finally, that he's not alone – 7,000 are waiting for his lead.

StF 482 There is no moment of my life (HAP 428, MP 683 There's a wideness in God's mercy)

Reading:- Romans 10:5-15

Comment

Having lamented Israel's resistance, Paul's ministry comes to the fore – especially in verses 5-13. How can the good news about Jesus be the demonstration of God's faithfulness to his promise to Abraham, if Abraham's descendants don't see it? This is Paul's agony: he's seen it – why can't his fellow Jews, who know the Scriptures as he does (10.2), see it? Gentiles are responsive but Jews aren't.

Reading:- Matthew 14:22-33

StF 342 All hail the power of Jesus' name! (HAP 252, MP 13)

Reflection

1. Jesus' need of prayer
What is our pray life like? When do we need to be alone with God? If we do, where do we go? And why?
What is it like to be alone? Both Elijah and Jesus spend time alone, and learn something of God.
2. Jesus walking on the water – Who is this Jesus?
As dawn breaks, the disciples are confronted with the sight of Jesus striding out across the water. And they are terrified. But Jesus speaks comfort. Far from being a ghost, he says, 'It is I.' This is a strong suggestion that there is something in Jesus' identity that is beyond human. God in the Old Testament spoke as the 'I am', so Jesus possibly does the same here. There is also a strong echo of the instances when God is pictured in the Old Testament as walking on or through the sea (Job 9.8; Psalm 77.19; Isaiah 43.16).
3. Peter
We are then treated to one of the great entertainments of the Synoptic Gospels: Peter inviting Jesus to tell him to get out of the boat, doing so and almost immediately sinking and crying out for rescue. Back in the boat, Jesus gently chides his lack of faith and the disciples worship him as 'Son of God'. Is there something beyond seeing Jesus as the king of Israel here?
Peter has doubts, but he is often considered (on the basis of his role in Acts) to be the greatest of 'the twelve'. Does his question to Jesus help us to go on in faith despite our own doubts? His getting out of the boat is as symbolic as his leaving the life of a fisherman and going to become a disciple of Jesus. He leaves security behind. Can we? If we are always careful to stay within our comfort zone, do we avoid stepping out in faith?
Are we prepared to dip our toe in the water for Christ?

StF 250 Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult (HAP 141, MP 359)

Intercessions

Lord God, we come before you to pray for all those people for whom taking risks is a way of life.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for our emergency services – paramedics, the police, the fire service – all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disaster, and many more.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who take risks in your name, Lord Jesus – those who take your word where it is most needed – and for people who grapple with faith and doubt.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

StF 645 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life (HAP 689, MP 770)

Blessing

Peter only knew life as a fisherman.

But he got out of the boat and followed you, Lord.

Help us to hear your voice, get out of our boats and follow you.

In the week ahead, may the world and its problems decrease as you increase in our lives.

Keep us focused on your way, looking ahead and trusting you.

And the blessings of Almighty God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

SUNDAY 16th AUGUST 2020

Call to worship

Come, with purpose, into the presence of the living God.

Come to worship, and to be amazed, to discover and learn new things.

Come, knowing that God welcomes us all with open arms. Amen.

StF 608 All Praise to our Redeeming Lord (HAP 753/ MP 19)

Prayer of Adoration

Living Lord, we praise you that you are a God who loves. You have given us a marvellous world, to live in and to share with all your people. You, O God, love everyone equally, and we thank you that we are each unique. We thank you that each one of us has so much to give – and to receive – from each other. Thank you for each new experience that you give us. Amen.

A prayer of confession

Lord, sometimes we look as though we are listening to others.

We may even make all the right noises!

But we confess that our attention is often anywhere but where it is supposed to be.

Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.

*Sometimes we are too distracted by our own concerns.
We care only for ourselves,
and listen only to those who say what we want to hear.
Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.*

*Sometimes we don't listen to people
because we don't like them,
or because they are different from us.
Sometimes we have bad or unhelpful thoughts.
Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities.*

*Sometimes we don't listen to you, Lord,
because we are too busy,
or a bit frightened about what you might say to us.
Forgive us, Lord, for missed opportunities. Amen.*

Psalm 133

StF 619 Thanks for friends who keep on giving (HAP 758 /MP 329 In Christ there is no east or west)

Reading - Isaiah 56:1,6-8

Reading - Matthew 15: 10-28

StF 705 It is God who holds the nations in the hallow of his hand (HAP 404) (MP 456 Make me a channel of your peace)

Reflection

At first glance the two sections of this passage seem unconnected. But read together, the second story (from v.21) takes on a different hue. It all starts with the Pharisees criticising Jesus' followers over their hygiene (v.2), to which Jesus replies that what makes people unclean does not come from what they put into their mouths, but from what is in their hearts. His disciples tell him that he has upset the Pharisees with this answer, and he tells them that he does not care – because they are blind guides. When Peter asks Jesus to explain the parable, it's unclear what he is referring to – is it verse 11 or 14? Jesus explains his saying about food, and goes on to say that people demonstrate they are unclean by what they say and how they treat other people.

The story of Jesus' encounter with the woman shares the thematic link of food and belonging. Indeed, the whole of chapter 15 can be seen as a collection of stories that have to do with the basis of inclusion in God's people.

So, a Canaanite – and we might recall that there are two such women, Rahab and Tamar, in Jesus' family tree (Matthew 1.3-4) – seeks healing for her daughter. Jesus is silent. But the woman must have persisted because his disciples implore Jesus to send her away because of her incessant shouting. Jesus tells her he has come only for those born in the house of Israel – perhaps one of the disciples had suggested that if Jesus did what she wanted, she'd leave them alone. But she persists, kneeling before him, imploring him to help. Jesus reiterates his previous answer, injecting it with typical Jewish anti-Gentile invective – 'dogs' – suggesting that what is meant for Israel should not be given to outsiders.

Generally, use of the term 'dogs' in the Old Testament is a derogatory one, a metaphor for people who are beyond the pale. It sounds like a final rejection of the woman's request. Yet, it could be seen as a proverbial saying that offers an invitation to respond. And this the woman does, giving as good as she gets, concluding the proverbial statement by suggesting that the children, of course, are fed first – but the house dogs then get their share.

Jesus is amazed. Peter, listening to this, was told a short time ago that he was a man of little faith; now he hears Jesus saying that this woman has great faith. The contrast is obvious, and not just with Peter but also with the leaders of the house of Israel (15.1-9). Although Jesus has primarily come as Israel's Messiah, his ultimate goal is to reach the nations with his saving grace.

The Gospel writer surely didn't intend us to have a bad impression of Jesus from reading this story, so what is he doing? The long Gospel reading is needed to get the full sense of the two stories. The Pharisees are scandalised by Jesus' words, so shocked that they cannot listen – the word Matthew uses literally means 'a stumbling block'. So, they can't listen to the message that to do what God wants means controlling the tongue more than avoiding non-kosher food. The singer Stormzy has many songs with a religious message, but some people will find the style and the language so off-putting that they are unaware of the content. The style is a 'stumbling block' to hearing what he has to say. Are both Jesus and Stormzy deliberately provocative in their message?

The largely Jewish-Christian audience for whom Matthew writes would appreciate the sharp debate between Jesus and the Canaanite woman – it was part of their religious culture. The woman is commended because the depth of her need is greater than any possibility of taking offence. She is acutely aware that as a non-Jew she may not deserve anything at all, but she isn't going to give up. The story is told to strengthen our faith. Don't take offence, don't give up if you think you are being ignored, don't give up when others try to put you off, and don't take no for an answer. She knows Jesus' reputation and knows that he could heal her daughter if only he would. What looks somewhat racist (calling the Canaanites 'dogs') is turned around. In a society in which women didn't speak to men, a woman is heard. This foreign woman, who had the temerity to speak to Jesus, has been offered salvation. The gospel is for people of all nations. Women matter. She has been fed, and indeed can share in the heavenly banquet – a point recalled in many English-speaking eucharistic traditions: 'We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.' She is one of us and we are one with her.

StF 506 My heart is full of Christ, and longs (HAP 799)

Prayers of intercession

The Canaanite woman sought your help. She loved her daughter so much, she was so desperately in need, that she wouldn't give up till she had her answer.

*We pray in faith. - **Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.***

Lord, may we learn from this woman, to wait on you expectantly, patiently, persistently, doggedly. Grant us the courage of our convictions when we truly believe we are doing your will.

*We pray in faith. - **Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.***

We pray today for those who feel excluded, whatever their situation, whatever the reason: for prisoners, refugees, the homeless; for the sick, the mentally unstable; for any who feel that they are outsiders.

*We pray in faith. - **Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord.***

*We pray for ourselves when our faith is weak, or we feel that we don't belong.
We pray in faith. - **Hear us and answer our cry, blessed Lord. Amen.***

Lord's Prayer Sharing of News

StF 550 Forth in thy name, O Lord I go (HAP 381 / MP 159)

Prayer

We go out today, renewed and strengthened in faith, ready to serve you, Lord, and find you in the people we meet. We go out to follow you, and our hearts. Lead us, good Lord.

*And the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Be with us all, evermore.
Amen.*

SUNDAY 23RD AUGUST 2020

Call to worship

This week we are encouraged to think about the work of the Holy Spirit. I am also taking this opportunity to use some liturgy from the 'Wee Worship Book' which has been compiled by the Wild Goose Resource group, based in Iona.

So let us prepare to worship God using these opening responses from Iona....

Opening responses

*May God be among us throughout this day **Amen***

*May Christ be beside us throughout this day. **Amen***

*May the Spirit be within us throughout this day. **Amen***

May we, as God's people, be at one with the saints in heaven and live in harmony with the Blessed Three to whom be praise and glory forever. Amen

Hymn - Come down O Love Divine. (StF372/HP281)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us pray...

*Each good thing we have received – **From God it came***

*Each thing we enjoy – **From God it comes***

*Each thing we pray for – **From God it will be given***

God of life, you are the source of all goodness and the satisfaction of all our desires...

*Our understanding of you is small; **increase it we pray.***

*Our desire to do your will is weak; **enliven it we pray.***

*The seed you have planted has yet to bear fruit; **ripen it we pray***

But first create in us clean hearts as we unburden ourselves of guilt, of anger, of fear, of pride, of hardness of heart and of weakness of intention.....(silence)

*Jesus, Son of God – **Have mercy on us***

*Jesus Saviour of the world – **Make peace with us***

*Christ, King of glory – **Be with us and for us where ever life takes us.***

*Be our shield, our healer, our King - **Let your perfect guidance protect us. Amen***

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn – Breathe on me breath of God. (StF370/MP67)

Psalm 139. 1-13 – (StF835, responsive psalm)

Hymn – Spirit of God, unseen as the wind (StF 394)

Reading – Matthew 16.13-20

Reflection

It is generally accepted that the purpose of Matthew's gospel is the revelation of Jesus as Messiah. That Jesus asks this question of the disciples in Caesarea Philippi, a mainly pagan community that lay miles away from the Roman centre of influence, shows how dangerous the answer to his question was regarded. Many stories abounded concerning the Jewish Messiah, no one really knew how or when the Messiah would come but they all believed that the Messiah would bring about God's Kingdom on earth. Therefore, to even speak of Jesus being the Messiah would be dangerous if whispered in the wrong ears. The Messiah would be seen as a threat to Rome. Yet Jesus needed to know that his disciples, his chosen followers, did indeed understand who He was. Clearly we see from Peter's reply that most saw Jesus as a prophet, not a foreteller of the future but God's mouth piece, one who challenged injustice and wickedness especially in those who wielded power. However, those closest to him saw Jesus as much more than that. Here Peter acts as spokesperson and speaks out loud, the knowledge that they believed Jesus to be God's Messiah.

The reply Jesus makes '*Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven*' (Matthew 16.17) indicates that Peter had spoken the truth and Jesus accepted the title of 'Christ, the Son of the living God' who we understand as Messiah.

What role (if any) do you think the Holy Spirit plays in this conversation between Jesus and his disciples?

Why do you think that?

Hymn – Lord Jesus Christ (StF594/HP617)

Prayers for others

In our gospel reading Jesus blessed Simon Peter for speaking the truth as revealed to him by God the Father. His blessing was to promise Peter that he would receive the keys to God's kingdom. What a blessing and what an awesome task. It's a task we today join in with as we seek to bring the gospel alive to others. In our prayers today let us join together in asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to us, those who need the doors of heaven opening today.

Father, through your Son our Saviour and in the power of the Spirit, we come before you now on behalf of others...

We pray for those who are struggling with their faith, for those who have lost touch with you, for those who feel isolated and alone, help us to bring your light and love....

We pray for people who feel in the dark, who cannot see the light of the gospel, we ask that you would reveal those to us who need to hear a comforting word of a timely phone call...

We pray for those who have rejected your gospel of love and forgiveness, through being led astray by disappointment, anger or bad things happening to them, help us to bring your peace and comfort into their world....

We pray for those who are hurting, whether mentally, socially, physically or emotionally. Invite us Lord to be part of the answer to their prayers....

Father God, we know that through the birth, death and resurrection of your Son Jesus, we now have the power of the Holy Spirit to aid us to bring your Kingdom here on earth. We thank and praise you that you invite us, like Peter, to hold the keys to heaven. Thank you Lord for trusting us with bringing your gospel to others. May we be empowered by your Holy Spirit, this day and always, so together 'your will shall be done on earth as in heaven'. Amen

Hymn – Down the mountain (MP821)

A sending out prayer

*O God of our pilgrimage, who has led us to your living water; refresh and sustain us as we go forward on our journey. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen***

*May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us all, this day and always. **Amen***

SUNDAY 30th AUGUST 2020

Call to Worship: *Shine into our hearts, O Christ, with the pure light of your clear knowledge of God, and open the eyes of our minds to your teaching, for you are the light of our souls and of our whole selves, O Christ our friend and our brother. **Amen.***

Hymn: 'Let all the world in every corner sing' (10 HAP / 57 STF/ 404 MP)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

O God, we thank you for this universe; for its vastness and its riches, and for the variety of life which teems within it, including ourselves. We praise you for the sky and the winds, for the clouds and for the constellations of the heavens.

We praise you for seas and rivers, for mountains and trees, and the grass beneath our feet. We thank you for the natural splendour around us, for birdsong and for the scents of summertime. Open our hearts, we pray, to all this joy and beauty, as well as to your mercy and care in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We spend a few moments in quiet confession as we recall our sins before God....

*O Holy Spirit of God, cleanse our eyes to see as you see; cleanse our ears to hear you speaking to us; cleanse our lips to speak only your words; cleanse our minds to know clearly what is from you; cleanse our hearts and fill them with your overflowing love, for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen***

The Lord's Prayer

Psalm: 26: 1-8

Hymn: 'Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart' (HAP 548 /520 STF)

Bible Reading: Romans 12: 9-21

Bible Reading: Matthew 16: 21-28

Hymn: 'Come, Lord, to our souls come down' (470 HAP / 493 STF)

Address:

The current Black Lives Matter movement reminds us that there is more than one way of reading human reality past, present or future. Up to a point, too, we may choose which narrative (or narratives) we prefer to follow and seek to adopt for our future path, whether in our personal journeys or as part of a group of people such as the Church.

So we may be aware, for example, of the narrative of controlling and exploiting power which may dehumanise and devalue people: recently, we have been reminded that slavery is one example of this, and we must remember and oppose modern slavery in all its forms as well as questioning and distancing ourselves from past slavery.

By contrast, we have the narrative of the Cross of Jesus Christ which deliberately promotes self-offering and servanthood as creative ways of being human under God. This is 'the road less travelled', in the words of the American poet Robert Frost. Or, as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus put it: 'The way up is the way down', challenging some views of where true power lies.

We need to choose between such different outlooks, just as Jesus' disciples were called to do in our Gospel reading (Jesus' challenge to 'take up your cross and follow me') and as Paul encourages us to do in our Romans passage: for example 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'.

What does the Cross of Jesus say to us about God's way of looking at the world, including humankind?

How does 'taking up our cross' change our way of looking at the world and its meaning and purpose?

Hymn: 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds' (257 HAP / 322 STF/ 251MP)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession:

Gracious God, we give thanks for your blessings in the quietness of hearts...

Holy God, we pray for the healing of your world and its peoples:

For the healing of the natural world, broken and torn by pollution, greed and other wounds...

For the healing of the nations, where there is conflict between and within countries, and where the effects of coronavirus are destroying lives and livelihoods...

For the healing of the Church, where there is division, and where we seek renewal and restoration in this time of pandemic...

For the healing of all who suffer in body, mind and spirit, as we call to mind in particular those we know...

For our own healing, where we know pain, fear, anxiety and other difficulties....

*In the name of Christ the Healer. **Amen.***

Hymn: 'Make me a channel of your peace' (776 HAP / 707 STF/ 456 MP)

The Blessing: *Holy God, we place ourselves into your hands. Bless us and care for us, be gracious and loving to us; look kindly upon us and give us peace, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.***

HAP: 'Hymns and Psalms' - STF: 'Singing the Faith'

PARKHAM METHODIST CHURCH

At the time of writing we have just heard that Mary Bowes, one of our Chapel members has died. The funeral service will take place at Parkham Chapel Cemetery – we remember husband Don, sons Ian and Alan, daughter Gillian and their families in our prayers. She was a lovely lady of faith. Mary will be laid to rest in the cemetery at Parkham Chapel.

The Ladies Club held their annual Knit & Natter back in March, just before lockdown. They have now been able to collect in all the money which has amounted to £348.60 – this will be for the benefit of the North Devon Hospice. All the strips of knitting were sewn into a blanket and special thanks go to Hazel Wonnacott for doing all the sewing. Thanks to everyone who took part and those who sponsored.

ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET? That was the name a friend of mine gave to a blog she was writing whilst travelling around Europe for a year with a husband and two under-5's. No doubt both small children were asking the same question as they drove around from one country to another. And of course many of us too know we asked our parents the very same question! This is how I feel about our situation now. When the whole COVID-19 began there was talk that the Chapel could plan to be re-opening for Harvest in September. Now this looks very unlikely – certainly even if we could open for harvest, it wouldn't be the sort of harvest that we usually enjoy. This year no community celebration and thanksgiving for what we and others have grown or provided, no gathering for supper and no fun at the auction. No it seems likely that we are not nearly there yet. Perhaps Christmas? Maybe earlier?

Much of what will be able to do will be decided by others – Government and officials, the Methodist Church hierarchy, legislation & insurance and so on. It is difficult to know what we will be able to do – probably more about what we can't do! Yet life and seasons go on – the sun shines, it rains, the wind blows; the tide ebbs and flows, the moon and stars guide by night and the sun by day.

And Chapel is not the only group affected in the village – businesses, social groups, sports clubs, children's activities – all have many things to consider as they attempt to come to terms and deal with life during COVID-19. Some might say that we are all in the same boat, but perhaps it's better to say that whilst we may be in different boats, we are all on the same ocean. We are certainly being tossed by the waves, some very large, but one day we may find ourselves on a tranquil sea. Some of us may be in a little canoe, others on a fishing boat and others on a luxurious liner but the sea is the same for all of us. We travel the same ocean and if we are to reach safe passage, then pulling together, loving one another, bearing with and being patient with our families and friends, forgiving our foes and putting others first – these are ideals that Chapel, village and nation must strive for if we are to survive and thrive in these days.

BIDEFORD METHODIST CHURCH

A big thank you for everyone who supported the recent Gift Day Appeal and also those who have continued their weekly offering. The response has been much appreciated and the final total will be in excess of £1500.

NORTHAM METHODIST CHURCH

Action for Children

Marjorie Coulter from Northam is retiring after handling collection boxes for Action for Children for 45 years! That really is great work, Marjorie. There are 20 boxes to distribute to anyone who would care to keep one at home, to deposit small change into. Someone needs to collect them and send off the proceeds once a year. Any additional fund raising such as collection from carol

services or coffee mornings can be arranged - it is entirely up to whoever takes over. Is there anyone in Circuit who would like to volunteer? Marjorie would be pleased to hear from them at 01237 477 292.

METHODIST CONFERENCE 2020

Conference Business Digest - A report for local churches about the business of the 2020 Methodist Conference

The 2020 Methodist Conference was held online: Presbyteral Session 25-26 June; Representative Session 27 June – 1 July. - www.methodist.org.uk/conference2020

Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President - On Saturday 27th June the Revd Richard Teal was elected and inducted as the new President of the Methodist Conference. The President chose the final words of John Wesley as his theme for this year, 'The best of all is, God is with us' and spoke in his address of the orientation of the Church.

The Vice-President, Carolyn Lawrence, was also elected and inducted. Carolyn is part of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women and spoke of her love for the church flawed though it is in her address to the Conference.

Reception into Full Connexion - Due to the online nature of this year's Conference, presbyters and deacons were received into Full Connexion remotely, with each candidate making their promises individually. Twenty-one presbyters and four deacons were received into Full Connexion along with six presbyters by transfer and one presbyter by reinstatement. The ordinations have been postponed to a date to be determined; until then, those received and yet to be ordained will be known as 'Ordinands in Full Connexion'.

Ethical investment - The Conference received a report from the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), the body that advises the Central Finance Board on investment ethics. A Notice of Motion was presented to the Conference which requested that JACEI recommend to the CFB disinvestment before the 2021 Conference from all oil and gas companies which are not currently aligned with the Paris Agreement target of a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees. The Conference resolved to refer the request to the Methodist Council.
Inclusive Methodist Church

Inclusive Methodist Church - The Conference voted to bolster and increase the work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) throughout the Connexion, through the development of the Inclusive Methodist Church Strategy. The Conference agreed to thorough scrutiny of the implementation of the strategy, better collection and analysis of appropriate EDI statistics, and a transparent system for monitoring and reviewing stationing outcomes with regard to EDI concerns. It called on Methodists to engage in their own contexts, to confront and challenge all racism and other forms of unjust discrimination; and directed every Circuit to convene a forum for reflection, conversation and planning to ensure that such actions are carried out in each local context. It also voted to incorporate work already started to ensure people who are intersex or transgender are included in the life of the Church, into the Inclusive Church Strategy.

The Methodist Church's work on EDI can be found here:

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-forchurches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/

Oversight and Trusteeship - The Conference voted through the next steps of work around plans to simplify the oversight and trustee structure of the Methodist Church in Britain with the aim of providing greater support; enabling ministry, mission and broader strategic thinking; and

promoting better coordination. The Conference invited comments on the report from around the Connexion.

Representatives heard that the changes are necessary in order to ensure the Church can better comply with its obligations as a charity and direct its resources and focus its energies on the mission of the Church.

A raft of proposals for change to the current structure now go to the next stage of consideration including reviewing the number of Church Councils, a review of the size of the Conference and a wide-ranging review of the constitution and function of all connexional committees.

The Conference directed that a proposal is brought to the 2021 Conference to raise the minimum size for a Local Church, together with examples of creative ways in which one Church on multiple sites and/or federations of classes under a united Church Council can enable local missional communities to flourish. In the light of this, the Conference further directed all Circuit Meetings to review the number of Church Councils in the Circuit and encourages Church Councils to work together to determine the best way of working to achieve the minimum number of trustee bodies necessary to fulfil its calling. In considering the make up of the various trustee bodies, and in the light of the concerns related to equality and diversity issues, the Conference directed that Circuit Meetings and Church Councils should undertake Unconscious Bias related training.

Connexional finances and allowances - The Conference received the Statement of Connexional Finances for 2018/2019. It adopted the Connexional Central Services Budget for 2020/2021 but noted that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will necessitate a significant change in the figures presented. In the light of that, it directed the Methodist Council to review all activities currently planned for 2020/2021 to ensure that only necessary work goes ahead and to reduce expenditure to a minimum where possible. The Conference directed the Council to approve a revised budget for 2020/2021 as soon as is practicable.

The Methodist Church Fund assessment for 2020/2021 is budgeted at £13.8m, in line with a previous decision to restrict increases to 1% per annum.

Using the formula agreed by the Conference, the level of increase in the standard stipend will be 2.7% to £25,524

Statistics for Mission - The Conference was reminded that it met 200 years after the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1820 held in Liverpool, at which it recorded the first ever decrease of members in the British circuits and responded with a series of resolutions on pastoral work, known today as the Liverpool Minutes. It was in the light of that historical context that the Conference received the triennial statistical returns. They noted, as of 31 October 2019, a total membership of almost 170,000, and an average weekly attendance of just over 133,000.

'Methodism in Numbers 2020' can be read here:

www.methodist.org.uk/media/17152/methodism_in_numbers_2020.pdf

Evangelism and Growth Strategy - The Conference voted overwhelmingly to implement a new Church-wide strategy for Evangelism and Growth. God for All commits the Church theologically, culturally, and financially to deepen its mission to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, and inclusive Church and is the result of a year-long consultation across the Connexion involving thousands of conversations with leaders, practitioners, and ecumenical partners. In the context of declining membership numbers, God for All prioritises helping new people become disciples of Jesus, starting new churches, and raising up new lay and ordained leaders to join God in engaging diverse rural, urban, estate, and suburban communities across Britain. The strategy also

focuses significant energy and resources on developing the role of young evangelists, serving communities experiencing marginalisation, expanding the Church's digital presence, and helping Methodists live out their faith in everyday life.

God for All will launch in September with a focused Year of Prayer that will offer the Church's work to God.

3Generate - The Methodist Youth President, Thelma Commey presented the report of 3Generate, the Methodist Church's Children and Youth Assembly to the Conference and spoke of the decision to change the format of 3Generate for 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Plans for the 2020 event at the NEC in Birmingham were postponed with 3Generate moving to a new format focused on year-round, local engagement to be called 3Generate 365 and to be launched in September. The Conference commended the planning for 3Generate 365, which will launch in September 2020, as a means by which the voice of children and young people will be able to be heard at the 2021 Conference.

The 3Generate manifesto this year focuses on the life of the Church and the Church's position within the world. Among the challenges are to ensure that God is in the Church's conversations and to ensure that the Church is kind, helpful and respectful and working towards being inclusive and welcoming. The manifesto also calls for the Church to be better resourced to support people, particularly the young, who face mental health issues and for more churches to be eco-friendly with the Church challenging those in power on issues of climate change, poverty and peace. In particular, it urged every Church Council to include the 'Eco Church challenge' on its agenda during the next connexional year.

Methodist Homes (MHA) - The Methodist Conference received a report from Sam Monaghan, the Chief Executive of MHA. The Conference learned of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on MHA with more than 430 residents from its care-homes, three staff and a number of live-at-home clients having died as a result of the virus. Sam also shared the impact that the pandemic has had emotionally on staff and residents.

Occupancy rates at MHA care-homes have reduced from around 90% pre-Covid-19, to around 77% and could take up to two years to recover. Fundraising opportunities have also been reduced. These factors will see a reduction in income for MHA of an estimated £20million this year and the need for MHA to make £5million of savings.

Sam called upon the Methodist Church to support MHA, to pray and to call for testing, Personal Protective Equipment, funding and for those in later life not be marginalised.

Faith and Order matters - It was agreed to defer consideration of Ministry in the Methodist Church until the 2021 Conference. However, a report was brought concerning Changing Patterns of Ministry, which explored some of the aspects of ministry which had been identified as requiring further reflection. Most of the resolutions attached to this report were deferred, but the Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Authorisations Committee to review the criteria for authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper. The Conference directed further work on ensuring that there are clear processes for enabling presbyters to serve in particular contexts, and in preparing provisional guidance for those considering such appointments. A report will be brought to the 2021 Conference.

Receiving an interim report on exorcism and the need to ensure safe practice and robust systems of accountability in this area, the Conference directed the Council to oversee the process of producing guidelines for the authorisation, training and supervision of those seeking to engage in

deliverance ministry and to report to the 2021 Conference. It further directed that, for the interim, no member of the Methodist Church is authorised to participate in any act that might be interpreted as constituting exorcism of a person. Where a situation arises to which the existing guidelines apply, the Chair of District should be consulted to explore referral to another Church.

The Conference noted the Faith and Order Committee's work in the area of theology of online life, particularly in the present context. In response to a notice of motion, the Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee in the light of current experience of online worship to produce guidance on how appropriate participation in services of Holy Communion by those attending online might be encouraged. It also directed the Committee to undertake further reflection on Holy Communion and to bring a report and recommendations regarding 'online communion' to the 2021 Conference

Ministerial Covenant - The 2017 Conference had received a report on a proposed Ministerial Code of Conduct. Following consultation, it had been redrawn as a Ministerial Covenant with questions for reflection against which ministers can examine themselves with the help of a supervisor or mentor and questions for those working with ministers. The Conference commended it to the Connexion for study and response, asking for a further report in 2022.

Memorials - Memorials are messages from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. They play a vital part in enabling the Conference to hear and to respond to concerns from across the Connexion. This year the Conference considered and replied to 10 Memorials on topics including: Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Homes and the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust, internet banking, local preachers and worship leaders training support, ethical concerns with pension funds, listed buildings, global climate emergency, investment & Israel and Palestine.

The 2021/2022 President and Vice-President - The Conference designated the Revd Sonia Hicks to be President and Mrs Barbara Easton to be Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2021/2022.

Appointments - The Conference made a number of appointments and reappointments, including: The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler as Secretary of the Conference for a period of six years from 1 September 2020; the Revd Ruth M Gee as Assistant Secretary for the connexional year 2020/2021; Mrs Joanne Anderton as Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice.

The Revd Dawn Saunders as Chair for the Channel Islands District from 1 September 2020; the Revd Andrew de Ville as Chair for the Southampton District from 1 September 2020; the Revd Nigel Cowgill as Chair for the London District for a further period of four years from 1 September 2021; the Revd Julian Pursehouse as Chair for the East Anglia District for a further period of four years from 1 September 2020.

Future dates of the Conference - The Methodist Conference will meet in Birmingham from 24 June – 1 July 2021