

THE *Beckoner*

The Magazine
For Beckminster
Methodist Church

JUNE - JULY 2018

PRICELESS!



Sheepwalks Evening

Enville Estate, South Staffordshire

Photo by John Holt

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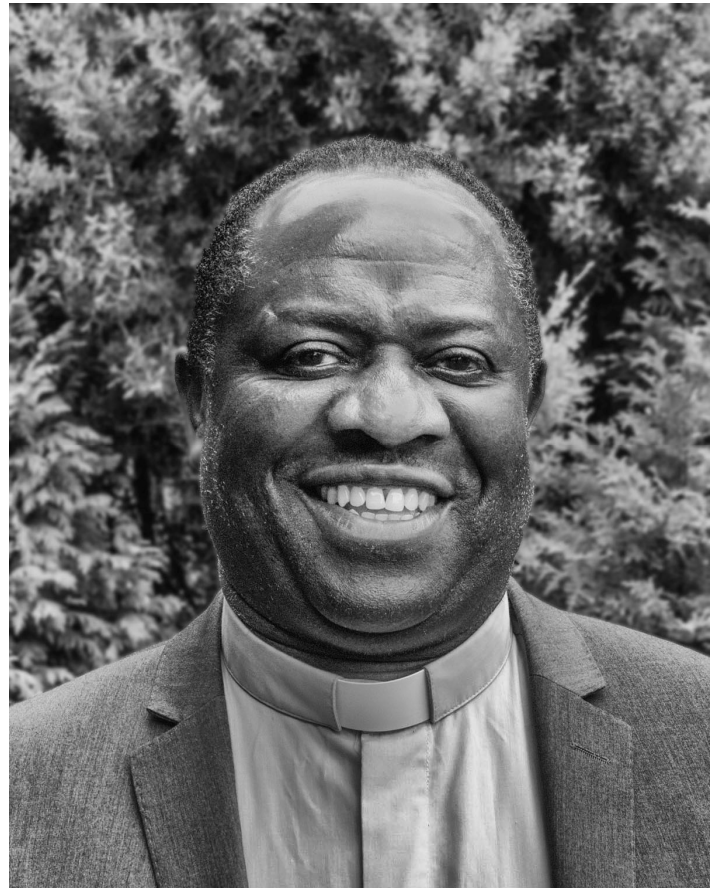
Dear Friends

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who promised us the Holy Spirit. This is indeed the season when we celebrate the giving and receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit; who came and opened closed doors and injected an amazing amount of courage which transformed the frightened band of Jesus' followers into bold and fearless witnesses. Those who had gone into hiding were no longer terrified to proclaim the Good News even though they knew that could cost them their lives.

I personally like the way the events in the life of Jesus led deeper to the mystery of God's being into which He calls us. His birth led to His growing up and to His ministry of healing, care and love and the proclamation of who God is. The nature of His ministry led to his arrest, crucifixion and death. His death led to His resurrection. His resurrection led to His sending of the Holy Spirit, who continues to be with us, to teach us, to advise us, to give us counsel and to guide towards God. In the early days of the church, Jesus' followers were called the followers of the Way. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how to follow the Way; how to follow Jesus; how to walk in his footprints. In other words, the Holy Spirit teaches us how to live and how to love.

The other thing we know the Holy Spirit did on the day of Pentecost was to dispense the gift of communication. Disciples were able to talk to God about others and to talk to others about God. On the day of Pentecost people heard God being praised in their own languages. Linguistic barriers were brought down and the good things God had done were shared; the good news was communicated. Through communication, the Holy Spirit renewed relationships between God and His people and among the people themselves. One could say that there was a clear difference between life before Pentecost and life after Pentecost.

Every year we are reminded that the Holy Spirit continues to be at work in the Church and in the world by doing what Jesus promised the Spirit would do: "He guides us into all the truth. He renews the face of the earth and He gives us His fruits."



In the event of what happened to the group of His disciples who, filled with the Holy Spirit, went from being confused about Jesus' death, afraid to speak and afraid of being arrested, to being bold announcers of salvation of Jesus, we hear our own calling to be as bold as they were in sharing the Good News of Jesus' love. As the Holy Spirit renewed their lives and their relationships, we are reminded that all this is available to us today too!

Let those who hear us get the praises of what God has done; let those who see us glimpse into something of God through how we live our own lives and the way in which we love those we meet. This is one of the ways people will know the Holy Spirit has come and dwells in us and among us. This is communication at its best. I think!

Your friend and Minister

Paul Nzacahayo

Steward's Musings

Well I'm certainly new to this section of the Beckoner. Many who have attended Beckminster over the years will remember, with fondness no doubt, the late Bill Booth who always prided himself as a Church Steward. On almost every occasion that he would bump into me he would ask when I was going to be one. Sadly Bill never got to see the day, and even though technically I am not exactly one but indeed serving on the Beckminster Leadership Team, that at least I am sure he would accept. This came about in a round and about sort of way as I was introduced as a representative of Sunday Club but as you know God moves in mysterious ways and the next thing I know is that I am on the Church Council. So sticking to my roots these following thoughts come about from my work at Beckminster.

As a child here in Sunday School many, many years ago I was often puzzled and confused over a picture on the wall in one of the rooms. On it was Jesus and a small group of children with the words "Suffer the little children to come unto me". Why did it use the word "suffer" and what did it mean? It is of course a well-known verse from the Bible but from the eyes and minds of a young child you could perhaps understand the perplexion. Having then progressed into teaching in Sunday School/Junior Church/Sunday Club you become accustomed to differing interpretations put to you by the children.

There is the old saying 'Never work with children and animals'. In a normal week I do both and believe you me they can teach us a great deal. It is possible for a dog to point humans to things that really matter in life, loyalty, courage, devotion, simplicity, joy. A dog has no use for material things, a stick will do fine. A dog judges others not by their colour, creed, or class, but who they are inside. Give a dog your heart and they will give you theirs.

Children also never cease to amaze, they can be mischievous, moody, full of beans, cheeky but when you need them to they rise to the occasion they can surpass all expectations and bring tears to your eyes.

Following the well received 2017 Christmas Nativity 'Monty the Mouse' and the special yet different Palm Sunday Service the children of Sunday Club are more and more inspired to become involved in Church Services and hopefully you will see this happen more and more.

This recent Easter offering was to highlight the typical sort of Sunday the children are used to, and what Messy Church do too. Sometimes we have some more active games but we kept those back (for now). What struck me most though that the young people integrated themselves on various tables with the adults without any prompt even though small tables had been set out for them (Adults adapted too as they took over these and made themselves headbands).

The purpose of such All Age Worship is to bring the Church together no matter how old we are and this surpassed expectation on the first attempt thanks to the many people who brought their individual skills to the table as an offering for all to join in.

Thanks should go to the children and their parents for providing extra time for final rehearsal to make these Services possible as it had snowed heavily on both penultimate Sundays resulting in severe traffic conditions. We are also indebted to the contributions of Barbara Cotton and Camilla Clarke for their research and bringing everything together to make the Sundays a success.

There will be other avenues to explore to fulfil this All Age worship initiative every so often and we would ask you to support the children on future occasions and share in their exuberance, we are blessed to have them and they need to be encouraged into Church Life. Sometimes we get set in our own ways but every day we learn new things no matter how old we are. I am a strong believer that the Church should embrace the young people as hopefully all or some could hold the key to the future of Beckminster.

Brian Timmis

Living Together

Last weekend we had a family celebration. Rachel and her husband Stuart were both fifty this year so we decided as my other daughter Ruth was also fifty and I was eighty, we would celebrate again. Ruth drove us to Devon, where Rachel lives. We stayed the night and then all of us set off to go to Cornwall. We explored Sennen, had lunch and then went on to Cape Cornwall and to Mousehole to our venue - a lovely cosy restaurant with rooms, all with sea views, for an overnight stay. We had a celebration dinner, lots of fun, luxuriously comfortable beds and marvellous breakfast, a mooch around Mousehole and then the long drive back home.

As you see, I did just what I was told and enjoyed it all and also contemplated the doings of my family. I thought how things had changed and evolved in our time as a family. There was our marriage, learning to live together, the birth of Ruth and Rachel and their growing up and how, without realising it, Roland and I as parents created the way the family developed. There was also both girls leaving home, developing their lives and careers, choosing their partners, the births of our grandchildren, Daniel and Eliza and thus, the family changing, growing and us all adapting again.

There was Roland's illness when we were in Luton and things changed significantly. For I was dependent on them and they supported us both, cared for us both and enabled, with help from church and friends, for us to recover, go back to work and then retire here in Wolverhampton.

When Roland died there was more adjustment for us all as we dealt with grief and change – and so it goes on. In it all we grew together and learned more of how to live together.

When we are all together, we seem to have developed a dynamic which works for us. We discovered each other's strength and weaknesses, learned to use the strengths and not exploit the weaknesses. It works, enables us to spend time together - but then go home and be ourselves.

This, I think, is how any group survives, adapts and grows. Each element contributes, discovers its

place, gives and receives, but then adapts to change again. All have to be accepted and valued. Life then proceeds on its path until something else disturbs the equilibrium and then all have to seek to incorporate and adjust. This is true of churches and nations and any other grouping. Often this is hard but it is also exciting. For it enables new thinking, new relationship and growth in our understanding of ourselves and others. It can also be painful. It can mean the breakdown in families, in communities, in nations. It can lead to war and violence, persecution and suffering.

In the world we are aware of much change and we are afraid and anxious. We are seeing movements of peoples, the growth of emigration and immigration through the destruction of communities. There are problems caused by austerity. There is unemployment, poverty and homelessness. We fear for the loss of values of our societies. We need to adapt and change. We need to be generous in our sharing with others. We have to try to understand those who are different. We need to be open and welcoming.

We have marked significant anniversaries that should cause us to pause for thought. Fifty years ago Martin Luther King was assassinated and twenty-five years ago Stephen Lawrence was murdered, signs of intolerance of difference. As a nation we are contemplating our mistreatment of the Windrush generation. Brexit is almost here and as a nation we are divided about that. How will it affect us, our livelihood, our relationship with Europe and outside of Europe?

In such anxieties we tend to lose our openness to others and build walls to protect ourselves. This only produces more separation. We need to open our minds and hearts and appreciate the differences that produce new hope and new life and appreciate the richness that comes with difference – provided we are open to learning and growing together!

Rev Glennys Bamford

EDDY SERGEANT



Eddy Sergeant was not brought up in the Methodist Church. Indeed his family was not connected to any church, yet the contribution that he made to the life of the church, through the whole of his adult life was immense.

His connection with church life did not begin until well into his teens, when, through various friends he became associated with Beckminster and joined Questors. By the time he became a University student at Nottingham however, his faith was such that he became President of the University Christian Association and when he returned to Wolverhampton, worshipping then at Newhampton Road, he was soon invited by Norman Bates to form a Youth Club there. This was Sequentors, beginning in the late 1950s.

By 1961, the club was so well established that it featured in a film for the BBC programme Youth Club Roundabout. This was made at the Wolverhampton Outdoor centre at Fairbourne. The proximity of the Outdoor Centre to Capel Curig and the mountains of mid and North Wales linked of course with Eddy's love of climbing and enabled him to introduce many young people to the joy of the mountains. And this was not confined to the mountains of Wales but stretched to the Scottish Highlands including of course his favourite island of Skye, and even as far afield as the Transylvanian mountains in Romania.

His commitment to young people in the church developed and broadened. He organised regular and special services, many dramatic productions and shared experiences in the Trinity Circuit, the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District and with MAYC at a national level. Many will remember 'A Man Dies'. Aspects of this work were recalled at the wonderful memorial service held at Beckminster on March 16th, attended by so many

of those whose lives were influenced by him and who had remained his friends.

Eddy became a Methodist Local Preacher in 1960 and his preaching continued throughout the rest of his life, so long as his health allowed. The respect in which he was held in that capacity was great and widespread. So much so that when the 500th anniversary of the foundation of the Wolverhampton Grammar School was celebrated with a Service in St Peter's Church, it was Eddy who was invited to preach the sermon.

His sermons reflected the deep thought which he gave to every aspect of the Christian Faith; never afraid to tackle the difficult areas of Christian Doctrine. He sometimes said that where some preachers finished was where he felt that he should begin. He read widely, to enable himself to keep in touch with current trends in theological thinking. However, this did not preclude his talent for humour and anecdote from being on display to keep his congregation awake! His dedication to the task of understanding the faith which he tried to share with others from the pulpit led in the 1990s to his studying for and obtaining a degree in theology as an external student of Westminster College Oxford.

Those of us who remember him so fondly, remember him as a man of many parts: cricketer, devoted to the game; traveller and raconteur, lover of nature the outdoors and mountaineer, engineer and businessman. But in all of these was his devotion to the Christian Faith and his desire to share that faith through the church.

David Smith

Wolverhampton Horticultural Society



The Wolverhampton Horticultural Society have been meeting at Beckminster for a number of years now on the second Wednesday of the month. Membership stands at around 70.

Speakers are invited to give presentations on a whole range of subjects from gardening to the wider environment. Topics this year include herbaceous perennials, alpines, vegetables, fruit and worms! Staff from Ashwood Nurseries are often invited and in January there was a talk on Canals and Wildlife.

The society holds two shows in the year. The main one is in September when the main hall is

filled with flowers, fruit, vegetables, arrangements and home cooking exhibits. There is a smaller evening show in April which gives a wonderful show of early spring colour.

Meetings begin at 7.00pm with refreshments followed by the talk at 7.30pm. New members are always welcome; there is an annual fee of £20 or a single charge of £4 per meeting.

Phil Healey





Day by Day

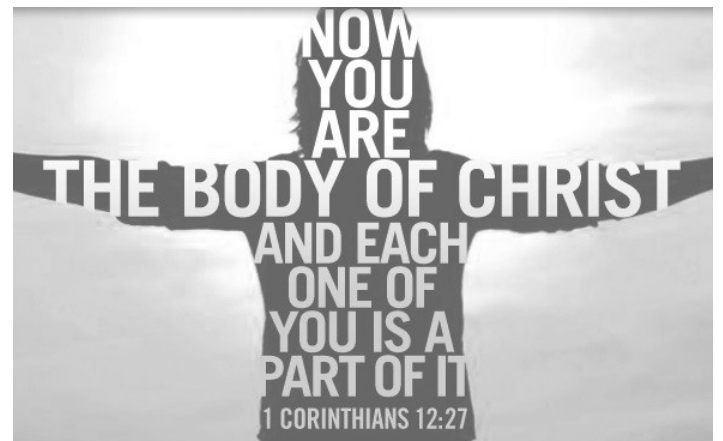
exploring the rhythm
of mission and discipleship

First light, first thought
Jesus, be with me;
I do not go into this day alone...

...Last light, last thought
Jesus, be with me;
I hold onto you
in the long reaches of the night.

"Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

Acts 2:46-47 (NRSV)





MEETING MARY MAGDALENE

The chances are that, if you ask anyone 'who was Mary Magdalene?', their response would be that she was a prostitute, who followed Jesus around, and wiped his feet with her hair after anointing them with expensive oils.

As Mary was an incredibly common name in the Middle East at that time, it has been recognised that Mary of Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and an unnamed "sinful woman", who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7: 36-50), were more than likely morphed in to the same person, probably during the Middle Ages. This is why the widespread belief that she was a repentant prostitute or promiscuous woman was perpetuated.

In 1969 she was disassociated with the other two women but, it would be as late as 2016, before Vatican formally identified Mary of Magdalene as "Apostle of the Apostles" and it is now believed that she was not a 'woman of ill repute.'

Mary, as her epithet implies, hailed from the fishing town of Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She and her family were hardworking fishing folk and, according to the

recent film released based on her life, she scandalized her community by still being single in her early 20's and choosing to leave and follow Jesus.

The film portrays Mary as a strong independent woman and she found a kindred spirit in the travelling preacher known as Jesus of Nazareth. She is recorded, in Luke 8: 2-3, along with other women, as supporting Jesus' ministry 'out of their resources', which suggests that she was relatively wealthy. The same passage also states that seven demons had been driven out of her, a statement which is repeated in St Mark's gospel.

There is a tradition in the Eastern Orthodox Church that, because Mary of Magdalene was so chaste and virtuous, the devil thought she was the one who had borne the Christ child and so sent seven demons to trouble her. Demons were thought to be the cause of physical and psychological illness and as seven was seen as a symbolic number in the Jewish tradition, Mary was treated as many times to 'complete' the treatment. Either that or the first six were deemed unsuccessful! She must have suffered deep emotional and/or psychological trauma for the exorcism to be deemed necessary and,

consequently, her devotion to Jesus for his healing of her was very strong.

The gospel writers normally relished giving dramatic descriptions of the driving out of demons by Jesus but little script is given to Mary's healing which suggests that it was either done in private or was of little consequence to them.

Mary's decision to get up, leave and follow Jesus was not only disapproved by her family and neighbours but it didn't go down well with the disciples either, especially Peter, who were not happy to have a woman join their group.

Interestingly though, she is mentioned in the four gospels more times than most of the apostles! There is no doubt that Mary was devoted to Jesus and loved him but it is highly unlikely that the love she had for him was romantic or sexual. There is no evidence whatsoever that she married Jesus.

The Church and most scholars agree that, had Jesus and Mary married and had a family, it would have almost certainly been included in at least one or all of the main Gospels. After all, most of his family are mentioned; his mother

and father, his four brothers and at least two sisters.

Mary was, however, certainly at the Crucifixion and burial of Jesus. She and other women are said to have watched the former from a distance. Of course we are all familiar with the Easter story of how Mary found the gravestone had been rolled away and that she believed Jesus to be the gardener when he first appeared to her that morning. It was only when he simply spoke her name that she recognised who stood before her. Her elation when she ran to inform Peter, and then the other remaining disciples, must have been immense.

Mary is venerated in many religions and her feast day is 22 July . She is also a patron saint in several countries and also to various professions including hairdressers, glove makers, and pharmacists. She is also the patron saint of women.

Mary of Magdalene has been much maligned throughout history, portrayed as a 'sinful woman' and even a prostitute, but all she is really guilty of is following her heart and following Jesus. As are we all.

Hazel Graham



Molineux House

Most local drivers must pass this building on the Wolverhampton ring road hundreds of times every year. It has had a very chequered history and for over thirty years, certainly since we first came to live here, has stood rather derelict, a sorry site and major eyesore in the city centre.

Even Prince Charles remarked on this some years ago when he saw the building from across the road on an official visit to the Civic Centre. Today, after extensive refurbishment and some rebuilding, Molineux House stands proud as home to the City's Archives. Many think it was called after the Molineux football club but this was not the case. Its history goes back much further.

John Molineux, born 1675, first settled in Wolverhampton in the early years of the 18th century and he and his wife, Mary, produced five sons and three daughters. He became an ironmonger, supplying manufacturers with raw materials then selling the finished goods. His business flourished as he first sold Black Country hardware in Dublin, returning to Wolverhampton as an ironmaster.

John established his workplace in Horseley Fields and had two houses with adjoining workshops. His fifth son, Benjamin, also became an ironmonger and ran his uncle's warehouse in Dublin, where he stored and sold goods such as locks, hinges, tools for saddlers and even Birmingham-manufactured steel toys. In those days, trade between Britain and the West Indies had increased considerably and so Benjamin exported to that region and, at the same time, imported Jamaican rum.

In 1775, he opened a warehouse to store this and also became a banker. His investments included local canals and he made many astute moves as a money-lender, so becoming one of the most successful business persons in the area.

Another of their children, Thomas, also became a successful businessman and, in 1751, built himself a large house in Dudley Street. Earlier, he had married Margaret Gisborne in 1732 and



they had twelve children though many died in infancy. The family residence in Tup Street, known as Molineux House, came into their possession in 1744 after the death of the original owner, John Rotton, who owed Benjamin Molineux £700. The beneficiaries of his will agreed to sell the property to the Molineux family in an effort to pay off Rotton's rather large debts.

The original property was possibly built circa 1720 but extended by the Molineux family, adding a fine rear garden. Work had been completed on the house by 1750.

Benjamin and his wife Elizabeth had one son, George, and two daughters, Sarah and Mary. He was also responsible for donating to the building fund for St. John's Parish Church, which opened in 1760. Gradually it became noticeable that his home had become too small and so Benjamin added both a north and south wing to the property. Son George eventually

succeeded his father's business and also became a banker, a magistrate and also High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1791. He was also a partner in the family banking business of Hordern, Molineux and Company, along with James Hordern (hence, the family from which the name of 'Hordern Road' originates!).

George was also a shareholder in the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* and *Staffordshire Advertiser* newspapers. He also provided most of the finance for the building of the Wyrley and Essington canal, which was built to convey coal from the Cannock coalfields to Wolverhampton. George Molineux died at home at Molineux House on 22 September 1820 and was buried at St. Andrew's Parish Church, Ryton (about four miles west of Albrighton, Shropshire).

The Molineux family finally severed its connection with the House in the late 1850s and, by that time, rather like many other large houses in and around the Black Country, the surrounding area had completely changed due to industrialisation. The lovely aspect across to St. Peter's had been transformed by smokey chimneys, terraced houses and factories, blotting out the former clear vistas. Charles Edward Molineux, born at Ryton Rectory, became the last family member to own the house. He put the property up for sale in 1856 when he moved to Kilsall, near Cosford.

Afterwards, the new owner transformed the grounds into a pleasure park and used it for fetes, galas, exhibitions and sporting activities such as professional bicycle racing and occasionally football. It was from this period that the house was used as a hotel. The pleasure park was closed in 1889 when Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club made the grounds their home, but the Molineux Hotel continued to operate until 1979. It was from this time on that the building started to deteriorate and gradually became empty, continuing to fall into disrepair for the next thirty years or so.

However, there would eventually be 'light at the end of the tunnel' when the City Central Library, which had previously collected and preserved certain privately-owned records and local authority documents, decided to catalogue these or make them available for public view. It was in July 1978 that Wolverhampton Borough Archives was established under the supervision of a professional archivist.

At the time, documentation and records were stored in small strong rooms in the library's basement. In 1982 a search room was made available to enable members of the public to be able to access records.

In 1996, the archives service merged with the Local Studies Library, and the new service moved to a building on Snow Hill (above the now demolished Netto supermarket!) The service operated from here for just over ten years as the then proposed former Summer Row development meant the service was given notice as the lease was expiring.

At the same time, the Council had started to refurbish the former Molineux Hotel building after stalemate for the past 30 years. A state-of-the-art extension was built on the side incorporating the strong room racking with appropriate environmental controls and fire suppression. The newly-refurbished building was opened to the public in March 2009. It now stands proudly overlooking the ring road and the City Archives has gone from strength to strength. As well as having an active Friends group it has a successful programme of regular events, including a Local History Fair, and external validation through Accreditation from the National Archives. The year 2018 marks 40 years since the creation of the city's archive service!

In itself, the building looks superb both from the exterior and interior aspects and can certainly hold its own in relation to some other local stately homes or buildings not too far away. It is just the place to visit if you are interested in tracing family history, military history, church and chapel records and the many aspects of local history which has a growing fascination for many people interested in the past life of the Wolverhampton and environs. I'm sure John Molineux would have approved and been justly proud!

Keith Cheetham

BECKMINSTERAMA

Open Way



See Church notices for future meetings

June 14 Engelberg 7.00pm

Open Way recommences in September

Contact Hilda Evans Tel: 421777

Monday Focus

Everyone is welcome to join us at Monday Focus at 8pm on Mondays in the Beckminster Coffee Bar.

June 4 AGM

Monday Focus recommences in September

Contacts: Ann Holt Tel: 650812
Margaret Nicklin Tel: 742537

Emmaus Group

Meet Thursdays at 7.45 pm. All welcome
Contact: Janet Anderson Tel: 337404

June 28 222 Jeffcock Road
Summer Coffee Morning
10.30 am to 12 noon

July 19 32 Church Hill

MESSY CHURCH

Monthly — Fridays
3.30 - 5.45 pm. Fun for all the family

Next Messy Church Friday 8 June
13 July

Contact Wendy Ashwood Tel: 831637

Crèche and Sunday Club

Whilst the crèche allows parents of very young children to worship together, Sunday Club explore the Christian faith in exciting ways.

This is a typical week in the life of Beckminster Methodist Church.

- All groups meet at the church unless otherwise stated
- New members are always welcome at any group

Sunday

10.30am Crèche and Junior Church
10.30am Morning Worship
6.30pm Evening Worship

Monday

9.30 - 12.30pm Art Group
2.00 - 4.00pm Art Group
6.15pm Brownies
8.00pm Monday Focus

Tuesday

9.45am The Toddler Group
1.30pm Art Group
4.15pm Dinky Divas 'N' Dudes
8.00pm Open Way

Wednesday

11.30am Luncheon Club
5.45pm Rainbows
6.30pm 'Soaring Spirits'
7.30pm Horticultural Society (monthly)
7.30pm Happy Feet Dance Group

Thursday

9.45am The Toddler Group
2 - 4.00pm Take a Break
7.45pm Emmaus Group
7 - 9.00pm St. John's Ambulance

Friday

10.30 am LWTC Diabetes Prevention Group (monthly)
3.30pm Monthly Messy Church
7-9.00pm Gateway Group

Saturday

10.15am—2.30pm Fusco Academy of Dance

Communion Services

The sharing of bread and wine takes place on four Sundays a month, either during the morning or evening worship or as an early Sunday morning service at 9.00am on first and third Sundays. Everyone is welcome.

BECKMINSTERAMA

Girls Uniformed Organisations

Rainbows 5 – 7 yrs
Wednesdays 5.45pm
Brownies 7-10 yrs
Mondays 6.15pm

Various activities according to age – include crafts, cooking, badge work, swimming, service to others, pack holidays, hikes and camps.

Contact: Julie Tonks
Tel: 01952 461006



Luncheon Club

Wednesdays 11.30am – 3.00pm

25 housebound people and helpers meet for coffee, lunch and tea. A short entertainment and epilogue. An opportunity to meet people, chat etc to relieve loneliness. A caring service provided by volunteers (who are always needed)

Contact: Tess Davies Tel: 07786 098614

Boys Uniformed Organisations

Beavers 6 – 8 years Thursday 6.15 – 7.15 pm

Cubs 8 – 10 years Monday 6.30 – 8.00 pm

Scouts 10 – 14 years Wednesday 7.00 – 9.00 pm

All groups meet at Scout HQ in Skidmore Avenue, for badge work, crafts, games, various activities and service. Camps.

Contact: Sheila White Tel: 332134

Take a Break

Thursdays weekly during term times
2.00 – 4.00pm

Indoor bowling. For people wanting to meet new friends and try something different. All welcome.

Contact: David Jones
Tel: 762408



Toddlers

Tuesdays and Thursdays,
9.45 – 11.15 am.

Approx. 40 Toddlers with Mums, Dads, carers or grandparents meet for mutual support whilst toddlers play.

Contacts:

Barbara Bennett Tel: 341877 (Tuesdays)

Camilla Clarke Tel: 07391 718084



Please hand articles, news and views to:

Keith Cheetham (Editor)(762894)
Email: jkeithcheetham@gmail.com
Alan Causer (753679)
Jean Gilbride (338944)
Hazel Graham (764036)

CHURCH OFFICE

Secretary — Sue Lorimer
Tel: 344910 (Office)
761322 (Home)
info@beckminsterchurch.co.uk
Room bookings

MINISTER

Rev Paul Nzacahayo
Tel: 344910
info@beckminsterchurch.co.uk

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORKER

Camilla Clarke
07391 718084
c.clarke_beckminster@outlook.com

PASTORAL WORKER FOR THE ELDERLY

Tess Davies
07786 098614
tess.beckminster@yahoo.com

Church Events

Thursday 28th June

Summer Coffee Morning
10.30 am to 12 noon
Beckminster Coffee Bar

All invited to come and enjoy scones, strawberries, shortbread and good company.

In aid of 'All We Can'

(Event organised by the Emmaus Group)

Persecution in the Twenty First Century

It is a startling fact that over 200 million Christians experience persecution in some form or other in fifty countries of the world. Indeed a recent report revealed that in the preceding 12 month period over 3000 suffered the ultimate penalty and were killed for their faith. Moreover the position is worsening as the latest yearly figures show a rise in almost all categories. This situation is revealed in the annual Watch List published by Open Doors, a charity which you may possibly have never heard of but which is devoted to monitoring the degree and severity persecution of Christians throughout the globe and offering support where possible to those affected

It was founded over 60 years ago by a minister in a Protestant evangelical church following a visit behind the Iron Curtain where he found remnant Protestant churches in need of Bibles and other Christian literature. As a result he began smuggling into Eastern Europe suitcases full of such material, marking the beginnings of the charity. His book, "God's Smuggler," telling of this work, became a best seller. Brother Andrew, as he is known, is now in his eighties and lives in the Netherlands, still travelling and ministering to persecuted Christians.

The charity defines persecution as "any hostility

experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ". It can take many forms, ranging from violence, including physical assault, murder, rape, kidnapping and forcible evictions, to the bombing or setting fire to church buildings. These are the actions that hit the headlines but there are less obvious but more insidious forms of persecution that affect many more believers. They may consist of governmental or social pressures to conform, failure to do so resulting in the loss of livelihood, the family home, school or university places, and similar restrictions. In the long run these may prove more effective, and therefore more dangerous, measures.

There are many reasons for persecution. It may be religious nationalism, the attempt to conquer the nation for one's religion, as in the case of some Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist countries. In others it may have ethnic roots, as when efforts are made to maintain old tribal based beliefs. Communist countries are well known for their attempts to bring the churches under some form of state control and there are instances of secular intolerance of any form of religion. Persecution can also occur in some countries regarded as Christian where one denomination seeks to oppress others.



Open Doors

Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

Most of the countries featuring in the Watch List lie in a belt running west to east from North Africa, through the Middle East to Asia, and including some of the Pacific Islands. Each country is given a “score” calculated on frequency and nature of violence towards Christians and the degree of pressure applied to them in the pursuit of their church, national and family life. While these scores may be arbitrary they give some indication of the severity of persecution in each of the countries. Top of the list is North Korea, an unenviable position it has held continuously for the past 16 years, where professing to be a Christian is virtually to commit suicide.

In many of the countries the Christian population is relatively tiny and therefore very vulnerable but even where it is more numerous, as in India where nearly 64 million call themselves Christian, the dominant religion makes life unpleasant for them. It is well known that Muslim fundamentalism is on the rise. It is more surprising to learn that both Hinduism and Buddhism have their fundamentalist wings which in recent years have stepped up pressure on other faiths to conform to their beliefs. An almost unique situation exists in Kuwait where 80% of the population are recognised as Christian but the official religion is of course Islam. Two strange anomalies are Mexico and Colombia, where the vast majority of the population are Christian, but are regarded as subject to persecution through a combination of government corruption and criminality, often drug-related.

The report outlines four main strategies for those faced with persecution.

1. “Dive and Survive”

Keep your faith a secret to all but your immediate family and friends.

2. Register and Submit.

In some cases such as China and Russia it



is possible to register a church but which, however, will be subject to conditions imposed by the state.

3. Flee and Live.

Move elsewhere, in most cases to a more sympathetic country.

4. Stay and die.

The main trends identified in the report are the rise of radical Islam in Africa, the spread of Hindu and Buddhist nationalism in Asia and the increasing use of gender based violence against women in the form of rape, abduction and forced marriage. Christians are also caught in the crossfire of the Sunni and Shia conflict in the Middle East.. There is some good news in that the situation in Tanzania has improved and in Iraq and Syria some Christians have been able to return to their homes where areas have been recaptured from militants.

Open Doors uses several methods to try and counter the effects of persecution in all its forms. It distributes Bibles and other Christian literature, trains Christians and church leaders, supports victims of violence and oppression and tries to bring hope by distributing monetary aid. Though originating in America it has a large British presence. Their efforts are dependent on financial support and donations to the cause are extremely welcome. Full details of the organisation can be found on their website www.opendoorsuk.org

Alan Causer

"WE ARE NOT AFRAID BUT STRONG AND HOPEFUL. WE KNOW HE WILL COME AGAIN. THAT IS WHY THERE IS SO MUCH PAIN AND SUFFERING. THAT IS WHY THERE IS PERSECUTION. HE IS COMING BACK AND THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM NEED HIM IN THEIR LIVES. FOR NOW, WE – HIS FOLLOWERS – NEED TO LIVE WITH THANKFUL, PRAYERFUL HEARTS."

Afghan Brother

How Beautiful!

This was the title of this year's Methodist Women in Britain conference held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, last March, which was led by the Rev. Linda Williams. The quote came from the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 52, Verse 7 – "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

The session took us on the journey Jesus made in his ministry through to His Resurrection, using the paintings of Seiger Koder to illustrate each one with the emphasis on feet. The sessions took us on the following journey:

Walking together with Jesus – an interesting exercise we did and which you also might like to do too:

Draw round your foot and write inside the significant people in your life!

Jesus walking on the water – the disciples invited Jesus into the boat and we need to invite him to join us on our own journey.

Jesus stopping at the well and asking for water from the Samaritan woman – leading to her life being transformed.

Jesus having His feet anointed in Bethany.

Jesus washing the feet of his disciples – teaching us humility and service.

Jesus walking to Calvary.

Jesus walking with friends on the road and inviting Him to stay with them. They then recognised Him.

At the end of the sessions we were each given a bag containing items for our journey through Lent and onwards. The contents were: A painting of the Last Supper; a photograph of a tree; a stone; a small packet of wheat grains; a candle; and a paper cut-out heart.

Where are we on our own journey? Wherever we are – remember "Jesus is with us!"

My time at Swanwick felt like an oasis giving time to concentrate on God, time to be with friends, good food, comfortable accommodation – and time just to be. – Thank you.

Christine Pearson



THINGS THAT NIGGLE US!

As we all go about our daily lives from day to day we constantly come across either people or things which annoy us. Most times there is very little we can do about it other than 'look-on'. The Editorial team have listed just a few things and there is undoubtedly a long epistle of what niggles individual people. We have therefore listed a few of these so do let us have your own list and see how it might compare with others?

LOTTERY TICKETS & SCRATCH CARDS – the annoying thing in any supermarket or newsagents is having to wait behind someone buying these when all you want is to buy one commodity such as a newspaper (one woman was recently seen handing over £70 for tickets – the proverb 'A fool and their money are soon parted' sprang to mind!)

MOBILE PHONES/SMART PHONES – people who walk straight across zebra crossings talking into a mobile phone without looking either left or right before stepping into the road!

People on public transport who speak loudly on their phones so that everyone can hear them.

People on long train journeys who insist on talking their way throughout the journey. This can be very frustrating after spending a long and busy day in somewhere such as London and then getting someone sit by you who insists on constantly chatting to their friends or relatives (Oh, what trivia many of them talk about!)

MOTORISTS – Car drivers who 'tail you' (drive very close to the rear of your vehicle) in attempt to make you drive faster in a 30 mph road restriction. This is very common along most of the main routes into the city centre from approaching roads.

Drivers who insist on leaving their windows open whilst playing heavy rock music blasting out on their car radio.

People who park their cars across other people's drives – especially at school times. Bring on the school holidays!

Aggressive drivers.

Sat Nav directions which are out of date.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT – when older children or young adults refrain from offering a seat to either an infirm/older person or mother with child.

Passengers waiting for public transport who try and jump the queue.

SHOPPING – People who don't say 'thank you' when you hold a door open for them to walk through!

People may think it's old fashioned these days but some gentlemen still believe in letting a lady pass first if there is only room for one person at a time (doors, escalators, lifts etc.). Whatever happened to 'old world courtesy?'

Shopkeepers who don't acknowledge you when you wish them 'Good morning' etc.

PUBLIC TOILETS – When toilet rolls have not been replaced!

THEATRE/CINEMA/CONCERT HALL – Sitting behind someone tall when a smaller person has to keep 'dodging heads' to obtain a good view of the action.

GENERAL – people who will only speak to you when they want something from you? Even a smile goes part way to being civil.

Neighbours who insist on making a noise and allowing dogs to bark in their gardens at unsociable hours.

Various Sources



"Cruising down the River" – on a Saturday afternoon!

For some weeks members at Beckminster had been looking forward to an annual church outing to Shrewsbury and, after a few days of rain and mist, Saturday 5 May proved to be the start of a very sunny day, the beginning of the Bank Holiday. 36 people travelled by rail or car to this county town of Shropshire – the highlight of which was to be a sail on the motor vessel *Sabrina* scheduled for 11.00am. However, when we all arrived – calamity! We were informed the boat's gear box had broken down and needed repairing! This threw one or two people into a bit of a panic – especially the organiser – and after some discussion with the captain of the vessel, we decided to re-convene at the quayside at 1.00pm in the hope the problem might by then have been sorted. The boat trip we were hoping to go on was a 45-minute cruise along the River Severn from the Victoria Quay by the Welsh Bridge travelling around the great loop (meander of the river) which more or less encompasses the town centre with its many historic buildings. The trip goes as far as the English Bridge and then returns to Victoria Quay.

After this delay we all agreed to start out to various places on foot within the town. Some went off to have lunch in one of the many restaurants or cafes, others went to do some shopping or visit St. Chad's Church, overlooking The Quarry Park and The Dingle as they sweep down to the riverside. The present St. Chads, built 1792, replaced the original Offa church, originally founded in 780 AD, which collapsed in 1788 when the clock struck. (This was after ignoring the warnings of Thomas Telford, the then County Surveyor, on its structural condition.) It is a large and an unusual circular building with unique circular nave and Charles Darwin, the town's famous son, was baptised here on 15 November 1809. Afterwards, we ventured into the adjacent burial ground to see the gravestone of *Ebenezer Scrooge*, a left-over prop from the 1984 film of *A Christmas Carol*, starring George C. Scott. Lower in The Dingle flowers were in full bloom in the garden

originally designed by famous gardener, Percy Thrower, who was once a park keeper in this area of the river bank.

Like others, our small group went into the town and had luncheon at the Old Music Hall in the ancient Square, which houses the local museum and Art Gallery, tourist information and a café/bar. It was then back to Victoria Quay, where we were delighted to discover the boat had had its gear box repaired. We then all boarded the boat *Sabrina*. (This lady was known as the goddess of the Severn and not be confused with a certain well-endowed pin-up girl and TV star of the 1950s!). We were shown onto the top deck, where crockery had already been set out on the various tables for providing us with refreshments during the sail. The sun was shining brightly and everyone was in a good mood as we finally we set off from alongside Welsh Bridge. A rather quirky fact is that the Welsh Bridge and English Bridge sit on opposite sides of the town. They were both built in the 18th century. The eagle-eyed would also notice that the English Bridge has seven arches and the Welsh has five – an arch for each letter in their name! The boat glided into the centre of the river but with a nice gentle breeze blowing to help us keep reasonably cool as we started to view the various sites en route.

On the left hand bank we first saw The Quarry, The Dingle, the home of Percy Thrower and, close by, St. Chad's from a more distant angle. Soon we were passing the imposing Shrewsbury High School. Beyond was a section of the ancient town wall with its historic tower and then the Roman Catholic Cathedral was pointed out. Nearer the river was the Old Friary building, one of the oldest in the town. There was then a commanding panorama of the various church steeples in the town centre as we caught sight in the distance of the English Bridge. On board was a commentator who described the various sites as we approached them, which was most informative for everyone. On reaching the English Bridge, to our left was

in the distance a section of Shrewsbury Castle. To the right, the solid tower of red sandstone of Shrewsbury Abbey. Both the Abbey and Castle were built by Roger de Montgomery just after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The Abbey was also the setting to another famous monk, Ellis Peters' eponymous but fictional detective, Brother Cadfael.

Our boat then turned for the return journey. Although there was less of interest to see on the opposite bank, The Pengwern Boat Club and Shrewsbury School Boat Club both came into view. Behind it was Shrewsbury School itself, standing high in an imposing location. It was originally founded by Edward VI in 1552 but the present campus dates from 1882. Former pupils have included Charles Darwin, Sir Philip Sidney, author Nevil Shute, politician Michael Heseltine and writer, Michael Palin. There were also some well-placed waterside pubs along this stretch of the river, especially popular on a sunny day like we were enjoying. However, all too soon we were heading back to Victoria Quay, where we were to disembark. The trip had been most memorable and enjoyable for us all. Thanks were given to the crew and captain of the boat as we departed in different directions to see more of the beautiful and historic town. Some preferred to visit the shops and indoor market. Others preferred to explore more of town's interesting quirky backstreets. (However, ladies were warned to avoid going up Grope Lane as it was once frequented by 'naughty ladies of the night'. Perhaps better to go and see No. 1 Fish Street, where John Wesley once preached in 1761.)

A small group of us went to see St. Mary's Church. It not only has the highest spire in the town but near the west door is a stone tablet denoting that in 1739, a local steeplejack, Robert Cadman, tried to fly over "Sabrina's Stream" (River Severn) from the tower and died in the attempt! However, undoubtedly the most-treasured prize at St. Mary's is the world-famous 14th century Jesse stained glass window which traces Christ's family tree all the way back to Jesse of Bethlehem, the father of King David. We gazed at this window in awe and wonderment as we recalled the wonderful experience we had all enjoyed in this most historic of Shropshire towns. Bring on next year's outing!



Keith Cheetham

“It Sticks Out Half a Mile”

Following my article on UK piers the above heading takes me seamlessly to another Society of which I am a member.

“It Sticks Out Half A Mile” referred to a neglected seaside pier in the fictional town of Frambourne on Sea. It was a BBC Radio comedy first broadcast in November 1983 which ran for 13 episodes. It had been part written by Michael Knowles, better known as Captain Ashwood from “It Ain’t Half Hot Mum.” But if I tell you that the storyline involved a recently retired gent trying to get a loan from a newly promoted bank manager and that their “role reversal” names were Mainwaring and Wilson you’ll soon see where this is leading. Yes, I have to admit to being a member of the Dad’s Army Appreciation Society.

This spin-off radio comedy may well have developed further but Arthur Lowe sadly died

(aged 66) after the recording of the pilot for “It Sticks Out Half a Mile.” But Arthur’s widow Joan Cooper, who occasionally appeared in Dad’s Army as Private Godfrey’s Sister Dolly, insisted the programme should go ahead and Bill Pertwee (warden Hodges) was brought in to replace the great man. Ian Lavender (by now a fictional 22 year old and not such a “stupid boy”) was cast as Hodges partner to try and persuade his “Uncle Arthur” to give them the loan. Ian Lavender was in fact 37 years old at the time of playing this part! Regrettably John Le Mesurier died shortly after the first episode was broadcast. And that more or less signalled the end for this show.

The Home Guard platoon in Dad’s Army was of course made up of many fine character actors who found themselves surprised to be such household names so late in life. As John Laurie (Private Fraser) put it, rather tongue in cheek,



"I've played every major Shakespearian role and am considered the finest speaker of verse in the country but I end up becoming famous doing this rubbish!" The oldest member of the platoon was Arnold Ridley (Godfrey) who was 72 when the first episode went out. An established playwright, his works included the Ghost Train which ran for over 600 performances in the West End. Quite unlike his Dad's Army character he saw active military service and, despite being wounded in the First World War, still enlisted in 1939 and was sent to France with the rank of major. In 1982 he was awarded an OBE for services to the theatre.

As a member of the Society I have watched the number of surviving cast members dwindle over the years and today all who remain are Ian Lavender (Private Pike) and Frank Williams (the vicar). It was fitting that both should be given cameos in the 2016 Dad's Army film. Frank is now 86 and current president of the Society. He still performs in public, often at question and answer sessions.

So what does the Society actually do I hear you ask? Fortunately the writing talents of Jimmy Perry and David Croft extended to other popular sit-coms of the time, for example It Ain't Half Hot Mum, You Rang M'Lord and Hi Di Hi and this has led to an extended family of comedy actors being part of the Dad's Army get-togethers. As well as receiving my aptly named "Permission To Speak Sir" quarterly magazine, the highlight of the year for members is the annual away weekend which is always attended by some of the surviving stars of Croft and Perry shows.

The venue for this event never changes because the spiritual home of Dad's Army is forever Thetford in Norfolk. The annual location filming was carried out in Thetford Forest and surrounding areas and the cast would be billeted at the Bell Hotel in the town centre. Nearby the Bressington Steam Museum is home to a Dad's Army Collection which includes a re-creation of the church hall and vicar's office as well as Jones butcher's shop together with some of the vehicles used in the filming. Pride of place on a bench by the river in Thetford itself is a most lifelike statue of Captain Mainwaring unveiled by Bill Pertwee in 2010 and by whom many people have had their photograph taken!



But it was not Thetford that was chosen for the location filming for the 2016 Dad's Army film. Instead Bridlington doubled as Walmington-on-Sea. Members of the Appreciation Society were invited to join in the filming of the crowd scenes but my potential weekend at Bridlington did not come about when due to budget issues members of the Society had to be restricted to those who could supply their own uniforms. After the film had been released, Bridlington quite liked the idea of being seen as the new Walmington but Thetford has since pulled rank on that idea!

As for the film itself it received mixed reviews amongst DA aficionados. Despite a star-studded cast it failed to re-create the gentle comedy of the original characters and, to be honest, needed a funnier script. Perry and Croft in other words. The wider media tended to award it three stars which felt like one more than it might otherwise have got had it not been for the respect reviewers had for the original.

Altogether there were 80 episodes of Dad's Army broadcast between 1968 and 1977 as well as three Christmas specials and a feature film. Fittingly, in the final ever Dad's Army episode Corporal Jones gets to marry Mrs Fox. At the height of the show's popularity there were appearances on the Royal Variety Show, a London stage production at the Shaftesbury Theatre, tea at Number 10 with Harold Wilson and even switching on the Blackpool illuminations.

And, of course, Dad's Army endures to this day (BBC2 viewing figures for Saturday night reruns are regularly around 2 million) - whatever John Laurie might have had to say about it!

Roger Clough

Discussions on Worship at the General Church Meeting 4 March 2018

The Secretary of Conference, the Reverend Canon Gareth Powell is encouraging the Church to revisit vital questions that reaffirm our calling. To tell all who use the church about its mission.

‘The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission’.

It does this through **Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism** ,

As part of the annual meeting (CAM) our Minister wanted us as church members to pursue a vision of what the Church, and Beckminster in particular, is for and where we are going.

The first topic of **Worship** was taken and the attending members were split into three groups. Each group was given a series of eight questions to select from prepared by Connexion. **WORSHIP** was defined as **‘The Church exists to increase the awareness of God’s presence and to celebrate God’s love’.**

Groups broadly focused on the question ‘What would help our worship to make sense to people who only come occasionally?’

Two other questions were touched on:-- Where and when do we feel the presence of God? How can these experiences enrich services of worship?

What helps us to express awe and wonder, thankfulness and praise and love towards God? How can we use resources from the worldwide church?

Suggestions and comments from the groups were:

Music

More familiarity with hymns from Singing the Faith with new hymns being led from the front. Suggestion of a learning session as part of a local arrangement service. New hymns to be sung more frequently and greater use of songs. Music should be appropriate. Organ is great but guitars and other instruments (including piano as currently) tend to appeal to others without a church background.

Some ideas inherent in **Together Church** were outlined particularly that the whole congregation decide on a new corpus of hymns and choruses and spend time learning the new together, and then request strongly that hymns sung when we are altogether be chosen from that group.

Greater use of the screen

How it could be made more obvious about what we believe in?

The creeds should be used more often as well as greater use of the liturgy in the worship book?

There was feeling from some that the spiritual side of worship was neglected—the whys and wherefore of who we are, with more guidance to visitors about our strong beliefs.

As the congregation is diverse then diversity in worship is important. What encourages one may not in others. We are there to worship God, not to be entertained or please ourselves.

Considerations:--

- Strive for stillness and the presence of God

- Silence and words channel our feelings.
- Consider and reflect worship from other countries.
- Congregation would like to feel it owns worship rather than have it imposed by a written order of service.

However we must ensure that we do not give the impression that we live in another world and that our services express values which are relevant to today and the issues that people face in their everyday life.

Could bible readings be presented in different styles or using different versions of the bible?

Problems with Baptismal parties who were often unfamiliar with procedures and patterns of worship. Suggestions were:

- More guidance from the minister about when to stand and sit—e.g. inviting the congregation to stand as the offertory is received.
- Baptismal parties are often disadvantaged by sitting at the front. If the screen is used instructions can be on there instead of the minister having to give instructions all the time.
- Reference should be made during the offertory prayer to the fact that some members pay through their bank accounts or some other way of explaining why some appear to put nothing into the offertory bags.
- A set of guidance notes for the baptismal parties IF there were to be a communion as part of the service

If children present that part of the service should be child friendly, though not the same as child centred. Some questioned as to whether the children should be seated throughout the congregation.

Christingle is a very popular service. Could elements of this be used at other times of the year?

Ensure regular members make a point of welcoming new visitors either before or after the service.

However there was a positive feeling that the church was welcoming and that there were a variety of formal and informal services. (How can we get it right every time?)

The time allocated at the CAM was of necessity short and we could hardly scratch the surface of the questions. Further time on a Sunday will be allocated for further discussion and decide on what our plans and targets for improving worship might be over the next year.

If members wish to contribute to the discussion before this, then please send your comments to Paul, myself or one of the stewards.

Janet Anderson

Don't forget!

copy deadline for Aug - Sept Issue

1 July 2018

The Lighter Side of Medicine

These new drugs are so powerful you have to be perfectly fit to take them.

David Frost

Early to rise and early to bed
Makes a man healthy and wealthy and dead

James Thurber

Whenever patients come to I,
I physics, bleeds and sweats 'em;
If after that they choose to die,
What's that to me! I lets 'em.

Thomas Erskine (1823)

Physicians of the Utmost Fame
Were called at once; but when they came
They answered as they took their Fees,
"There is no cure for this disease".

Hillaire Belloc

I just can't bear to run short of
Acetylmethyldimethyloxamidphenylhydrazine

James Agate (critic)

Hark! the herald angels sing!
Beechams Pills are just the thing
Two for a woman, one for a child...
Peace on earth and mercy mild!

Sir Thomas Beecham
(Advertising jingle written for his father's pill company but never used!)

Any man who goes to a psychiatrist should have his head examined.

Sam Goldwyn

As for consulting a dentist regularly, my punctuality practically amounted to a fetish. Every twelve years I would allow wild ponies to drag me to a reputable orthodontist

S J Perelman

I enjoy convalescence. It is the part that makes illness worth while.

Bernard Shaw

On the surgeon

You know he will never be quite satisfied
Till he's had a good poke around in your inside;
Taking funny bits out and looking around them,
Then stuffing them back, more or less where he found them.

Alan Causer

I have just heard about his illness; let's hope it's nothing trivial.

I S Cobb
(American humorist)

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like and do what you would rather not...

Mark Twain

After two days in hospital, I took a turn for the nurse

W C Fields



Any views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial team, Beckminster or the Methodist Church. All details published in this newsletter were accurate at the time of going to press.