

INSIGHT



HERTFORD METHODIST CHURCH QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

July-September 2021



As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame,
so the church is meant for mission, giving glory to God's name.
Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care,
we join hands across the nations, finding neighbours everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers; we are pilgrims on the way.
We are seekers; we are givers; we are vessels made of clay.
By our gentle loving actions, we would show that Christ is light.
In a humble, listening spirit, we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime is a sign of life renewed,
so may we be signs of oneness 'mid earth's peoples many hued.
As a rainbow lights the heavens when a storm is past and gone,
may our lives reflect the radiance of God's new and glorious dawn.

Ruth Duck

*This lovely but challenging hymn appears in 'Common Ground'
described as 'a songbook for all the churches'.
It is occasionally sung as an introit at Hertford.*


A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER

This week has been the beginning of the Annual Methodist Conference. One of the first matters is to induct the new President and Vice President for the coming year. This year our President is the Revd Sonia Hicks (and Barbara Easton as Vice President). She shared a wonderfully, powerful presidential address which outlined their theme for their presidential year. Revd Sonia Hicks spoke much about something that many of us have been bereft of for most, if not all, of the past 16 months or so, that of sharing around the Lord's Table. Their theme being 'God's table, an invitation for all'. She asks us 'What is our vision of God's table now?' I agree with her address so much on the matter of it being a fully inclusive table for all.

Whoever we are, whatever we have done or even are living today, Jesus invites us to *his* table. It is a table for saint and sinner alike. For me, perhaps even more so for sinner, for this is where we find grace, forgiveness and healing. I recall, when I was on training placement with a prison chaplain, how when it came to Holy Communion during our Sunday morning worship all were invited to receive. Whatever their reason for being 'inside' they were welcomed by Christ to receive from him all he offered. But what struck me most, and has stayed with me since, is how when the Minister arrived to the last man to receive he offered him the wine and when he has received the Minister handed him the 'cup' so that he in turn offered the 'cup' to the Minister. In that moment the one representing Christ was the prisoner. It has stayed with me as such an amazing symbol of being invited and welcome at Christ's table. I left that service, that prison, so humbled and it has shaped my understanding of Sharing at the Lord's Table ever since.

We come invited. We are *all* invited. We come perhaps very different to the person on our left or our right, but we come equally invited by Christ to receive all he longs to offer. Here is grace beyond imagining, here is love beyond measure. Here is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Sonia shares the Bible story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman. Someone who challenged the exclusion of the table.

Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, wrote 'The Dignity of Difference (How to avoid the clash of civilizations)'.


The Lord's table is perhaps the one most profound place where the dignity of difference can be held, supported and honoured. It is perhaps the one place where in difference we are united. For I believe strongly that difference and unity can, and are, mutually not only possible but crucial.

Let us be mindful that during his earthly ministry, Jesus invited to his table those whom society rejected. As he invited them, he loved them, offered his grace, revealed the ways of his Father's Kingdom, and showed them how to live according to God's justice and love.

I would encourage you to listen to Sonia's full address at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/president-and-vice-president-elected-and-inducted/>



Debbie

May we discover God's blessing, grace and love as we come to his table. And in return invite others to 'come and see'.

The message from the stewards of this church may sound familiar:



(Answer on 'What's on' page)

'Our services have now restarted and are at 10.30 every Sunday. Everyone is welcome to attend. Seating is socially distanced and masks should be worn. We look forward to welcoming you back to worship.'

But where is it?
You may be surprised...

HERTFORD AND WARE STREET PASTOR (HWSP) Update 2021

The pubs re-opened for outdoor activities only on Monday 17th May and HWSPs returned to the streets on Saturday 22nd May. However, our numbers had fallen to critical levels of only 4 volunteers. We rapidly completed the outstanding training of two young volunteers and a further two volunteers returned to the fold to bring the numbers up to 8.



Further outreach to individual churches has identified a further 3-4 volunteers who are being trained and should be available for active service by the end of July; which increases our numbers to 11/12. This is still on the low side but we are off the critical path! The age range of our volunteers spans 63 years, that is between 21 to 83-- our oldest SP, an 83-year old lady wanted passionately to return to the streets and as she is relatively fit, we supported her application. She was retrained and patrolled the streets for the first time on the bank holiday weekend.

Our future strategy is to try to have two patrols on any given night – obviously predicated by the number of available volunteers. This was successfully implemented for the first time on Saturday 29th May where we sent out two patrols of 3 SPs in the early evening (8:30-10:00); then a single patrol of 4 SPs for the rest of the evening (ca. 10:30-12:00). This allowed us to stand down our two elderly volunteers after patrolling for about 90 minutes. As such, we are seeking both younger volunteers to patrol into the “wee small hours” and elderly (or very busy) individuals who are passionate about Christian outreach onto the streets, but personal circumstances prevent them from patrolling after midnight. Our proposal is that this latter group would patrol from 8:30 to about 11:30 then come off patrol to be replaced by younger volunteers who are happy to take on the ‘late shift’.

This month we have patrolled on three successive Saturdays - 12, 19 and 26th. but this has only been possible by some individuals going out twice and in one case, one volunteer going out on all three nights. The ideal scenario is one patrol per person per month. Returning to the streets we have taken the opportunity to talk to as many people as possible, striking up conversations and then listening to the concerns of individuals.

Underage drinking and drunkenness are still ongoing problems – particularly in the later evening. The feedback we get is very positive: “you guys do an amazing job”, “fair play – you guys are fantastic”, “you helped me get home a few months ago when I was very drunk – there was no one else”. We are sowing seeds that others will harvest.

We have excellent relationships with the police and local councils. Chief Inspector Stuart Orton is one of our trustees. SPs continue to share ongoing issues with the police, for instance, the fact that the re-location of the taxi rank from Fore street to Railway Street isn’t working in the late evening, which is leading to increased tension on Fore Street as groups of individuals vie with each other to get the taxis – rather than queueing responsibly under the aegis of the Taxi Marshalls. This information is also shared with licensing. David Elder also sits on the Hertford at Night group chaired by Councillor Rosemary Bolton.

We plan to have a Commissioning Service at Hertford Baptist Church on Friday 1st October between 8:00 to 9:30 followed by tea and cake and witnessing in the town afterwards. The police, the mayors, local and district councillors have all been invited and the initial feedback has been very positive. The Mayor of Hertford (Councillor Bob Dearing) and the deputy Mayor of Ware (Councillor Rishi Fernando) have both accepted. Representatives of all churches in the area are cordially invited. Our aim is to fill the church – which with your support I believe we can.

From a financial perspective we are reasonably healthy. Our major outgoings are still training and uniforms and we anticipate spending in the region of £1000 this year to train and outfit new SPs.

Our prayer would be that church members would hear of our efforts and volunteer to help. We no longer have any clergy within the team.

We thank you for your continued support. Please pray for SPs and our town. If any clergy or lay members would like the chance to see the night-time economy in the “raw”, we would be happy to take them out as observers.

God Bless,
David Elder, on behalf of HWSPs

FAVOURITE HYMN - Barbara Hickerson

Asked to pick her favourite hymn, Barbara explained that she has always loved singing and has many favourites. When pressed she chose 'Make me a channel of your peace' (STF 707), pointing out that, although it's not the easiest to sing, its words are a powerful prayer.

The words of this hymn are often attributed to St Francis of Assisi but in fact they first appeared in published form in French in 1912. We sing them to music written in 1967 by Sebastian Temple 'in ballad and guitar' style. He was a South African who worked for the BBC in London and later converted to Roman Catholicism.

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Barbara was brought up in Alabama USA and up to the age of 12 attended a Baptist church led by a truly 'hellfire' preacher who threatened hell for anyone who, for example, went to a cinema on a Sunday. As Barbara's mother worked a 6-day week, it was the only day possible for a family outing and she often cried herself to sleep worrying about the punishment. Fortunately a move to a Presbyterian church later convinced her that God loved her and there was nothing she could do that would change that. She joined the youth choir there and has loved singing ever since.

Barbara and Norris Hickerson met while both studying at university in Tennessee, she as a nurse and he a civil engineer, and they were married shortly after. Sadly, while living in New Orleans, Norris was diagnosed with melanoma and lost one eye. He was a life-long Methodist but at one stage they lived next to a Congregational church where Barbara remembers the brave minister was a staunch advocate of civil rights.

After being awarded his PhD and several posts within the southern states, Norris was appointed professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic and so they emigrated with their four children, then aged 4 to 14. They lived happily in Hong Kong for 21 years and the children regarded it as 'home' until they themselves left to study in USA.

Barbara and Norris then moved on to Vietnam for a further 4 years before he retired, when they returned to USA to look after elderly relatives.

About ten years ago their daughter persuaded them to come to live in England to be near her, and that is when we first met the Hickersons at Hertford Methodist Church. They were surprised and delighted to find among our congregation Jean and Des Luscher who had been friends all those years before in Hong Kong!

Sadly Norris's eyesight and general health deteriorated further and, despite a brave struggle, he died in 2017.

Barbara continues to attend our services whenever she can and looks forward to being able to sing hymns again when COVID restrictions allow.

Jackie Lawn

BICYCLE PILGRIMAGE – Lowestoft to St David's, by Revd Gill Hulme, superintendent minister, Bishop's Stortford circuit.

The Via Beata is a new pilgrim route running across the widest part of the country from Lowestoft to St David's. Conceived as a millennium project, wood carver Steve Edrington and his wife Gill have been trying to place prayer way stations every ten miles along this route. (In Steve's workshop that I visited on my sabbatical a couple of years ago I met a couple of young people who had come out of drugs rehab and were learning woodcarving as part of the project).

I knew I couldn't visit all the way stations - it would take too long and it is designed as a walking route, but when our fund-raising team were thinking of ways to get cash for our Church Redevelopment project, I opened my big mouth and volunteered myself for a C2C bike ride. The sensible way would have been West to East, but the logistics of getting my bike on a train at the right time to get to Haverfordwest (the nearest large station to St David's) defeated me, and I opted to start on the bit of the Via Beata I knew, and go Lowestoft to St David's. So 5.55am on **Thursday** 3rd October 2019 saw me on the early Cambridge train wondering why I had scheduled a Circuit meeting the night before! Getting out of Lowestoft was awkward, but I made reasonable time via Bungay, passing close by to Belsey Bridge where there is a way station, on route to lunch in Wymondham and my first



bed for the night, staying with Revd Betty Trinder in Dereham. (Yes I know it's off route but I wanted to save some money on B&B and it was lovely to have a catch up with my good friend Betty), and it was a relatively easy day of 51 miles.

Friday should have been longer but still flat and I'd hoped with an early 7.30 am start to have time to visit Ely cathedral on route to Huntingdon. However, the tail end of hurricane Lorenzo was charging across the Fens as I was battling into head winds and rain. At one point my google cycle maps took me a couple of miles down quite a good farm track to deposit me on a bridleway which ran along a dyke with very deep waterways on either side. I got off and pushed for at least a mile, it seemed the safest option. Road closures meant that I had a late lunch in Ely with no time to visit the Cathedral, before pressing on to reach my Air B&B at 7 pm as darkness was falling. A tough 76 miles, but a lovely welcome from the couple who were renting out their room.

I knew **Saturday** was going to be hard as it was destined to be my longest mileage day (planned 80 miles). The first part was lovely and I had a second breakfast near Graffham Water. Things started to go wrong around Higham Ferrers with my sat nav trying to take me on the A45 but the slip road was closed so I then diverted via Wellingborough, which wouldn't have been too bad if the new bridge on the new housing estate had been completed, so I had to back track and had an extra 6 miles put on my route. Now, in a car that isn't too bad, but when you are on a bike, it is. I finally made Stratford-on-Avon YHA as it was going dark, really grateful for a shower and their café. A total of 86 miles and a bit saddle sore!

I had planned an easier day for **Sunday**, to get to Hereford to stay with Deacon Angie Allport, a friend who has just taken up post there. This was the first really hilly bit (over the Malvern Hills) and it was at this point that I realised my 'granny gears' weren't working. I had a full bike service the week before, but I think the new cables had stretched – and only my middle bracket was working properly. There are some steep climbs – and I ended up pushing quite a bit. I did reach Hereford in reasonable time, so could enjoy a soak in a bath before a lovely meal with Angie. Again I did a few miles more than I intended, but this time only 58 miles.

On **Monday** I had a shorter day planned but went first of all to Halfords in Hereford where they sorted out my gearing – I reckoned I would need it for Wales, and I did. Getting to Hay-on-Wye was OK, and I had a

leisurely lunch there, thinking that I was over half way. However the head wind on the A470 was really strong, so I followed a National Cycle route away from the main A 40 which took me on a pretty detour up into the Brecons! The result was that I was too late to visit little Brecon Cathedral but I met a lovely couple who ran a beautiful Air B&B and clocked up 52 miles.

I decided on the **Tuesday** to stick to the main A40 to reduce my mileage, (64 miles cycled) but the gusty showers and heavy rain didn't make it the most pleasant of journeys. I did however reach Carmarthen in reasonable time and decided to lighten my load by posting some of my dirty washing home to Graham!

Wednesday On the advice of a lovely guy in an independent bike shop in Carmarthen I didn't take the dual carriageway A40 out of the town but went on the National Cycle route 4 - guess what - it was very pretty, and very, very hilly, so I re-joined the A40 and made reasonable time to Haverfordwest despite the weather. I'd been told that the route via Bethlehem was a good one, but decided I didn't want the extra six miles. After having lunch and picking up my tickets for the return train journey I plodded on to St David's. Google maps again took me the pretty route (which should have been shorter), along the coast road, 16% hills with winds gusting 20-30 miles an hour. I pushed a lot. I nearly gave up and if I had seen a taxi that could have taken my bike I think I would have. It definitely was the toughest part of my journey and the most frightening. I relied on the prayers of my friends and somehow plodded on. Guess what – I was too late to go inside St David's Cathedral, and I hope to visit again some day (by car!). The Youth Hostel was 3 miles north, and very remote, but joy of joys I had been upgraded to a single room and there was a bath as well as a shower! 58 very tough miles – but I had made it!

Thursday saw me homeward bound, (a different route to Haverfordwest, longer at 21 miles, but oh so much easier) and I saw a wonderful sunrise over St David's. Then the train to Paddington, with an interesting cycle across London dodging tourists on Boris bikes and cycle couriers (the traffic is no problem in comparison) to finally make it home at 7.30pm tired but happy, having cycled a total of 458 miles. My wonderful husband, who was worried sick about this enterprise but tried to not to let it show on the phone, had made a comforting bowl of soup and bought roses, fizz and chocolates. He's a star!

Thank you to all who have texted encouragement, prayed, sponsored me and held me in God's light. It was for me, a prayer journey, a time of acknowledging blessing on the Via Beata giving thanks for those who have blessed me, as well as raising money. I think the total pledged is around £4000 which is amazing. 20% of this will go to the charity Kickstart which runs from the church, helping people get back into work, and the rest to our redevelopment project to make all the church premises accessible for all and to install a Changing Places toilet for adults with special needs.

(Found on the Beds Essex & Herts Methodist Church website, and used with Gill's permission. More recently she has cycled from Bishop's Stortford to Blackpool and raised £3,500 for the Fund for Human Need. You can find out more about the Via Beata project and see photographs of the waystations at www.viabeata.co.uk)



JUST FOR FUN – A HYMN QUIZ

Find the first line of the hymn from the initial letters.

They can all be found in *Singing the Faith*

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. APTOEDD | 11. AGHSTS |
| 2. HGTWWIHH | 12. OGOHIAP |
| 3. BFB | 13. ACIBTISG |
| 4. RTLIK | 14. WYCAFM |
| 5. ATNOJ | 15. NTWAOG |
| 6. WPTFAS | 16. PTTHITH |
| 7. OWTLITBOH | 17. TDTGLIE |
| 8. FTBOTE | 18. LDALE |
| 9. TTITGWA | 19. BTMVOLOMH |
| 10. TLMSINW | 20. OJIHP |

Answers in the next edition of INSIGHT

WHERE ARE YOU NOW? - Tom and Mary Belshaw

(Tom and Mary used to worship with us in Hertford before moving to Winchester. Tom sent us an article about their teenage years in Muswell Hill and was persuaded to extend it for inclusion in this series.)

Mary and I have been reminded of how lucky we are that in our late teenage years and our early twenties we were involved in what was probably one of the liveliest Methodist churches in England. The church was "Muswell Hill Methodist Church and the North Bank Estate" in North London and is where Mary and I first met and later married. The church membership was over 450! We used to attend the evening service every Sunday which regularly had a congregation of 300. In those days the evening service was the big one, not the morning as it is now. We teenagers occupied the back rows of wooden pews, there were often up to 30 of us.

After the service we would cross the road to an amazing old Victorian house owned by the church for an evening meeting. The house was on the North Bank Estate, which consisted of this Victorian house, called North Bank, and enormous grounds. It was donated to the Methodist Church by H Guy Chester who was a philanthropic underwriter at Lloyd's in London and a member of the church. An amazing and generous man.

It is difficult to give an impression of the size of the estate and church in just words, we need a few numbers.... The house had 10 rooms including a larger garden room and a room used exclusively as a chapel, called the Oak Room. There was generally a short service every Sunday afternoon in the Oak Room and often we youngsters were involved, I guess that is where I heard a whisper of a call to preach. There was also a tennis club and beautiful flower beds and shrubbery. The gardens covered 12 acres originally and increased further after acquisition of adjacent land in the 1960's, on which a Methodist Hostel for young people was built. Mary and I attended the opening ceremony. The hostel known as Chester House has been through many changes since opening, but one thing that has remained consistent is how it has played an important role in many people's lives over the years. The church itself has now been knocked down and a new one built actually attached to North Bank house.

The church had a very strong Youth Group which was part of MAYC (Methodist Association of Youth Clubs). MAYC is a story in itself, it held a massive Annual Weekend in London with around 13,500 teenagers

descending on the capital, we all wore yellow and green scarves and made a great deal of noise walking to the Albert Hall and on the underground. Young people came to the weekends from all over the country and slept on the floor at North Bank and of course many other church floors in and around London, Hertford included. Weekend activities took place in the Albert and Festival Halls and involved displays and concerts. The main event was the Sunday Service in the Albert Hall. We filled the place twice for two services on the Sunday morning! It was a truly extraordinary time to be a teenager and Mary and I often talk about our memories of North Bank and wonder where do our current youngsters go to have an experience like we did?



After marrying at Muswell Hill Methodist church in 1963, we started our life together in West Finchley in North London. It was not all that far from Muswell Hill but I am afraid we soon lost touch with "church" as I am sure many young people do, and found more exciting things to do with our spare time. When we started a family we decided that we needed to find a house rather than a small flat, we drove north until the house prices dropped away from London values and we were able to afford to buy! We ended up in a lovely country town called Hertford. Still no church in our lives, we were far too busy with the new house and garden and of course the growing family.

One day we were shopping in the town and unexpectedly met a young couple we had been good friends with at Muswell Hill church. Many of you will remember David Noble and his wife Margaret. Unknown to us they had also moved to Hertford and discovered the delights of the Methodist Church and encouraged us to come along. We did and we stayed!

Also Jean and David Evans lived in our road and Jean invited Mary to go along to the Young Wives Group with her. We soon got to know a lot of young Mums and other families. Over some 25 years we became more and more involved in lots of areas of church life. Mary in the Mother and Toddler Group, Tom in the Junior Church and the Epworth Theatre Group.

The call to become a Local Preacher grew louder for me and I became a fully accredited preacher in 1988. I recall taking my last exam in the study at the manse, the then minister actually asked me if I would cheat if he

left me alone surrounded by all his books! He was a wonderful man but I still can't believe he said that. We made many close friendships over the years and indeed we are still in contact with very many of them.

Eventually, Tom's job meant that it was necessary to move home to Hampshire and we ended up in Winchester in 1993. We found a new church very quickly this time and have been similarly very involved here too. There was a shortage of preachers so my arrival was greatly appreciated, I am still an active preacher and lead a House Group. Mary was soon very busy in the Mother and Toddler group, pastoral visiting and Messy Church. We both became involved in the Coffee Bar (a bit like your Oasis) and the so called Hospitality Team which organises church lunches and funeral teas etc. I ended up as the circuit Local Preacher secretary and eventually the District one too. I think between us we have done every job in the church except Treasurer.....

We are very happy in Winchester, we have made new friends and of course although we are now a long way from our family, we are close to the coast and the New Forest and can take a walk in the nature reserve that starts at our back gate.

We still manage to visit Hertford fairly regularly but it is not always possible to get to the church.

We send our greetings to you all.

Tom and Mary Belshaw

Martin and I first met whilst living at Chester House Youth Hostel in the late 1960's and still have friends made when living there. It was a truly great place. We also have memories of Guy Chester, a great man.

Angela Hillary

*...and I still have my MAYC badge! **Trish Goldsmith***

Found in a Downham Market church magazine:

Pollution is getting completely out of control. I opened a tin of sardines today. They were all dead and covered in oil.

I ordered a chicken and an egg from Amazon today. I'll let you know....

WHAT'S ON

Don't forget our **CHURCH AWAYDAY** at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hoddesdon on **Saturday 23rd October** - 10am to 4pm on the theme of **FELLOWSHIP**. It will be in a slightly different format to previous years, if you have joined in before.

There will be opportunities to join in with organised activities or crafts if you wish, simply enjoy the grounds of High Leigh, or even to just see it as a time to chat and share with one another. The day will conclude with a short time of worship together.

It has been agreed that there will be no charge, but people are welcome to make donations towards the cost of the day. Numbers are limited due to the spaces we have been able to book, so to avoid disappointment please let Yvonne, Jackie or Gillian know that you would like to attend, or contact them if you would like more information.



...and that Methodist Church?

It's in Beach Road, **Hartford**, Connecticut. Hartford is the capital city of the U.S. state of Connecticut.

Revd. Samuel Stone, whose statue stands by the river at Old Cross, next to Hertford Theatre, was a 17th century Puritan Minister who, together with Thomas Hooker, established the American town of Hartford, Connecticut. He was born on 18th July 1602, the third son of John and Sarah Stone (nee Rogers), who lived in Fore Street, Hertford.

