

SEASON OF WILDERNESS

May / June 2025

What is a wilderness? It is quite simply being in a place of isolation with nothing around. From the Bible we see the Israelites and Jesus in the desert with no food or water, nothing around but emptiness; much like how we can feel when we are far from God or go through our own seasons of wilderness.

Truly never alone

Seasons of wilderness can be different for each person, they can cause doubt, anxiety, feeling isolated and not knowing how to go on in life. I am sure most of us can relate and acknowledge a time where we have experienced or are currently experiencing the above. Wilderness, although it may sound scary, I believe God uses this to prune us and build our faith. It may feel like we are crushed, but God is with us, leading, guiding, and walking with us. Who better to refer to than Jesus himself, who spent 40 days in the desert with no water or food. This leads us to the season of Lent when we might work toward giving up something like chocolate or simply try to fast. When we fast or give up certain food in today's society we can reflect and understand how difficult it was for Jesus in the wilderness, but this season which may seem, so crushing is where God does His best work. Jesus fasted for 40 days but he was strengthened within, His Spirit was strong although his flesh was weak.

This is a message that God wants us to understand, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Through this we learn we are stronger than we think as God gave us His Spirit, living within so we are strong through and by Him. In a season of wilderness, we are quite truly never alone, God is with us. When we feel crushed and feel like we are breaking God reminds us to focus on Him and when we maintain our focus on Him, and we are able to walk and go through life.

Jesus crushes life's storms

I recently came across an interpretation of the story from Matthew 14: 22 – 33 where Jesus and Peter walked on water. As many know, this incredible story of the storm on the sea of Galilee, the disciples in the boat were terrified, Jesus slept

through the storm, and with one command Jesus calmed the storm. The interpretation further says Jesus not only walked on the water, but He walked on the storm.

I find this interpretation fascinating, because as we face storms we are reminded and must believe Our God not only walks on water, but He crushes the storm under his feet. This led me to refer back to Psalm 91:13 – "You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot." God is intricate throughout the Bible reminding us we have authority with Him and no wilderness or anything of this world has power, God crushes it under His feet, bringing us refuge. Throughout the Bible we are reminded to not be afraid, and God goes before us, He is with us and surrounds us always. The unfathomable realisation that God is always with us couldn't be truer.

Passing through the valley

This further suggests Psalm 23, one of the most renowned scriptures, I came across a Pastor and his explanation of Psalm 23:4 – "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." What an encouraging scripture it is, it references that as we face trials, seasons of wilderness and seasons feeling crushed, we are not alone, for God is within us and when we feel like we are crushed we must remember He walks on the storm and crushes it, nothing is greater than Jesus.

Moreover, going back to Psalm 23:4 - "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" the pastor emphasises the word "walked". We only walk through the valley, we do not stay there, quite simply telling us this is a passing season. We don't stay in the valley; the pastor further iterates "we don't camp in the valley." I find this incredible as seasons of wilderness seem overwhelming, we are only walking through, and we do not walk alone, God walks with us as our Shepherd. The Lord Is My Shepherd, God doesn't want us to remain in the wilderness and he doesn't leave us to walk in the valley alone, for He has a life ahead of us filled with hope, a future, and joy. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11.

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Life in Jesus

There is life with Jesus; after all, He is Life itself, and He cares for us immeasurably! During Lent may we understand God's Hand is Greater, He loves and cares for us, He died on the cross so we could have life. This always fascinates me. While reading my Bible in the book of Deuteronomy 12, verse 23 spoke to me. In this chapter, God is instructing the Israelites what food they can and cannot eat, God says in Deuteronomy 12:23 "but be sure you don't eat the blood, because the life is in the blood. Don't eat the life with the meat." God is detailed and commands to not eat the blood as there is life in it. God commanded don't eat the life with the meat, the meat referencing as our flesh. This spoke to me, when Jesus died on the cross for us, He shed His blood, but by His blood we gain a new life in Him, His resurrection is the embodiment of us dying to our flesh and our old self to be made a New Creation a New Life in Him.

Before the Word became flesh, the people of the Bible would make sacrifices through animals. It's as though God was telling us from the beginning, the Greatest sacrifice is yet to occur, the ultimate Blood to be shed. The Israelites used animals till the Lamb Himself died and rose again so we will have eternal life, and this is His Promise! This is such a profound way of God speaking to us and informing thousands of years prior. His Blood shed is the ultimate sacrifice,

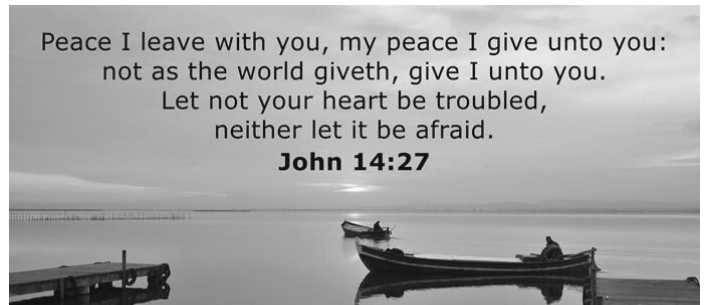
one we truly cannot fathom nor deserve, yet His Love is Greater than our understanding, He bore the cross so we can be a New Creation in Christ. He truly doesn't, hasn't and never will leave us alone in the seasons of wilderness.

Not only did He die for us and take our worries and burdens, but He also exemplified that He would never leave us, before He ascended to heaven Jesus promises His peace in John 14: 27 "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." This exemplifies His Provision, Protection and Presence and Peace is with us, Jesus is always beside us; and there is Life in and with Jesus. May we all grow in Faith in our own seasons of wilderness and know He is always within us; His Peace surpasses all understanding.

Shefali Misal, Grappenhall IM Church

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:
not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled,
neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27



Statement of Faith

We have been looking at the elements that make up the Independent Methodist Statement of Faith, to show how the statement is rooted in scripture and how it should impact on our Christian living. Having studied the statements concerning the Trinity, God the Father and God the Son, we now turn to:

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT - *We believe that God the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgement. He causes those who repent to be born anew and dwells within them, witnessing to their salvation and developing the fruit of a Godly life. He endows believers with gifts for the up building of the Church. He glorifies Jesus.*

It can be difficult to talk about God the Holy Spirit because, while we know what a 'father' is and what a 'son' is, in terms of our own experiences, however imperfect they might have been, we do not naturally understand what is meant by the 'Holy Spirit'. In older translations of the Bible, the term 'Holy Ghost' is often used, which conjures up pictures of a pale, transparent, wraith-like creature (or at least it does

**GOD
THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

with me), like something out of a horror movie. To further complicate things, the Holy Spirit is not concerned with glorifying himself, let alone explaining himself. His aim, as we see in the last bit of the IM Statement, is to glorify Jesus. Much of what we read in scripture and experience in our lives is the work of the Spirit, rather than the person of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is rather like the trainer of a great sportsman, encouraging, cajoling, empowering - but standing in the shadows, applauding, when that athlete reaches the podium and receives the gold medal, Premier League trophy or whatever. The Holy Spirit says, in effect, "It's all about you, Jesus - not about me, the Holy Spirit".

We saw previously that the Holy Spirit was present at the beginning of creation: Genesis 1:2 states that ... *the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*. We also saw that he was present throughout the Old Testament, such as when the Tabernacle was being constructed (Exodus 35:30-4); and also in the life of King David, when he pleads with God, after being challenged over his adultery with Bathsheba, not to take

his Holy Spirit from him (Psalm 51:11). In the story of Samson (Judges 13-16) we see instances where the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and also (after Delilah and the hair-cutting episode) when the Lord left him. The pattern in Old Testament times seemed to be that the Holy Spirit was given to people for specific purposes, and was then taken away. However, things were to change after Jesus' death and resurrection. At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples (John 14:15-7) that *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you"*. Jesus' promise meant that, going forward, the Holy Spirit would be given to all believers permanently.

So, returning to our Statement of Faith, what is the work of the Holy Spirit? Firstly, to convince (the NIV says 'convict') the world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-11). An alternative translation of v8, also given in the NIV, is 'expose the guilt of the world'. Now the world, and those in it, will react differently to having their guilt exposed. Some, like a number of world leaders in present-day conflicts, will deny that they are in the wrong or try to justify their actions. Others will acknowledge that what the Holy Spirit has revealed is true, and find ways to try and deal with it, such as running away from the situation, acts of penance, making restitution or compensation. However, there is only one way to deal with sin, because the sin that the Holy Spirit is convicting people of is the sin of unbelief. That way is to come to Jesus, admit that you are a sinner and believe that he is able and willing to forgive your sin and reconcile you to God. In John 3, we read of Nicodemus meeting with Jesus, when he was told that he needed to be 'born again' to see the Kingdom of God - born of water and the Spirit. Being born of water may mean 'baptism', although not everyone is able to be baptised - the penitent thief on the cross, for instance - and it may simply refer to the fact that, when we were in our mother's womb, we were surrounded by fluid. 'Breaking the waters', whether natural or induced, is a necessary precursor to childbirth - the first birth. Being born of the Spirit (the second birth) occurs when we respond to the Spirit's prompting, acknowledge our sinfulness and need of a saviour, and believe that Jesus died in our place.

There is more, though. The Holy Spirit does not just convict us of our sinfulness, bring us to belief and then go off to the next person. Jesus promised that he (the Holy Spirit) would be in us, our constant companion. His presence in us can be seen in a changed life, things that we used to do that no longer have their appeal, things that we never used to do that are now part of who we are. Paul wrote to the Galatians about the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-3) - *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. These may not all manifest themselves straight away - an impatient person may not become perfectly placid overnight - but

over time people will notice a difference in our lives.

Furthermore, the Spirit gives us gifts. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12: 1-11), and there are those who insist on seeing the gifts of the Spirit - in particular the gift of tongues - as evidence of new birth. However, not all of the Spirit's gifts are spectacular. Going back to Exodus, Bezalel was given the gift of making artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze - and a lot more besides - all kinds of artistic craftsmanship and the ability to teach others. At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to gifts of administration and the ability to help others. The Spirit's gifts may enhance our natural abilities or enable us to do something we were never able to before - that's up to him, because as v.11 says, *all these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines*. So don't get jealous of the ability to interpret Ecclesiastes 3 in painting (*Connexion*, July/August 2023), the imagination to create the display at the 2024 Annual Meeting, or someone else's healing ministry. The Spirit gives gifts that are right for you, and they are given for building up the church, not for personal gratification. Paul wrote that *to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good* (1 Corinthians 12:7), and in the following chapter said that, *if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries ... but have not love, I am nothing*. The gifts of the Spirit have to be accompanied by the fruit of the Spirit.

I said earlier that the Holy Spirit brings glory to Jesus, and again we see this from Jesus' message to the disciples at the Last Supper. In John 15:26, Jesus said that *'... the Spirit of truth ... will testify about me'*, and a little further on (John 16:14) *'he will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you'*. However, there is no hierarchy in the Godhead, and if Jesus is glorified, then the Father is also. When replying to Philip's request to show them the Father, Jesus told him that *'...I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father'* (John 14:13). In his prayer to the Father, Jesus asked him to *'Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you'*. What a contrast between the three persons of the Godhead and Satan, otherwise known as Lucifer: Isaiah 14: 13-4 record that *'You (Lucifer) said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly ... I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High'*. I, I, I, I, I ... and that attitude has permeated through to fallen mankind. However, with God, there is no hierarchy, but harmony. The Spirit bringing glory to the Son, the Son giving glory to the Father and receiving glory from the Father. And, as we bear fruit, showing ourselves to be Jesus' disciples, this is also to the Father's glory (John 15:8).

(all scriptures taken from the New International Version)

Brian Rowney

Travelling the hard miles to Rome – diving deep into Paul’s most important letter, his masterpiece. Grappenhall’s journey on Paul’s letter to the Romans.

I must be totally honest that previously when my daily Bible Reading notes have pointed me towards the Book of Romans my response would be, ‘Oh no, not Paul again’, the man who I thought always used a hundred words when ten would have been enough. On reflection I may have done an injustice to both Paul and the Book of Romans and not really studied it in the way that I should, avoiding Romans for the safer ground of the Gospels or the Psalms or some other section of the Bible which gives a simpler message to understand.

There are no easy stories or simple applications in the Book of Romans, what Paul manages to do in a most profound way is to bring the whole story of God’s relationship with mankind together in this one short book. Reading and understanding the Book of Romans requires time and dedication and that is probably the reason why many avoid it by taking easier routes elsewhere in scripture.

Testimonies to Romans

Andrew Ollerton, the author of the Roman’s Course writes in his introduction of the accompanying book; “Over the years I’ve realised that many people want to take on Romans but feel intimidated by the complex theology, Jewish backstory and controversial teachings on Sexuality”. This view is shared by many distinguished and learned Christians. David F. Ford, Emeritus Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University writes, “St. Paul’s Romans is one of the most important books of the Bible, but not the easiest”. The Evangelist, the Rev Canon J. John comments, “Every Christian needs a grasp of Paul’s letter to the Romans. You will find no wiser guide to this earthshaking letter than this accessible and helpful book that navigates every difficulty with both ease and enthusiasm”. The notable contemporary theologian and prolific writer, Tom Wright describes Paul’s letter as his masterpiece.

Despite its difficulties, if we are prepared to take the hard route by committing ourselves to spending time tackling and studying it, Romans can provide great rewards. In the Roman’s Course, Andrew Ollerton draws parallels between the study of the book with that of climbing a mountain and associates the process of ascending and descending a mountain with his journey through the Book of Romans.

Something similar must have been in the mind of J. I. Packer in his book ‘Knowing God’ when he describes Paul’s Letter to Rome “as the high peak of scripture (and that) all roads in the Bible lead to Romans, and all the views afforded by the Bible are seen most clearly from Romans”.

A Whole Church Experience

The leaders of the fellowship at Grappenhall, the church having previously completed the ‘Bible

Course’ in early 2024, felt that the Roman’s Course was the ideal follow up. We however decided that we would link our weekday study to each preceding Sunday and that members of our Church Ministry Team of Sue McArthur, Diane Bennett and Rob Brooks would address the section of Romans and the subject to be studied on the Tuesday afternoon from the pulpit on the previous Sunday. It was felt that this would generate a unified learning experience for every member of our fellowship and not just those who were available midweek.

A further unifying factor was the writing of our own Roman’s Prayer which was used at the beginning of each service and study session. The Roman’s Course itself comprises weekly teaching videos presented by Andrew Ollerton himself either filmed in Rome or from a studio with a Roman backcloth. These videos are in two parts with suggested questions for discussion in the middle and the end of the sessions. There are also short testimony videos for each week that we did not use and an accompanying handbook that requires downloading and printing.

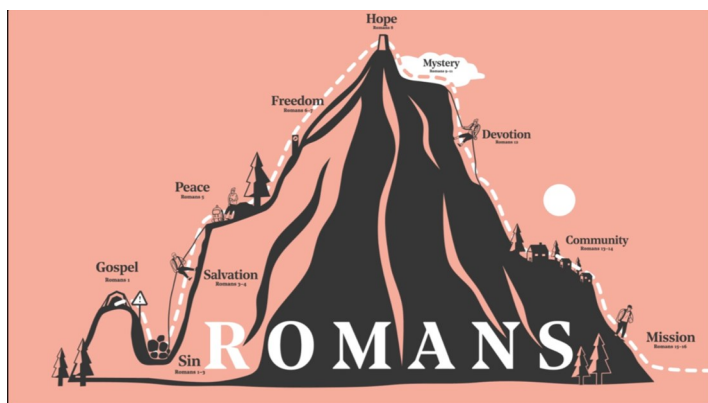
Understanding the complexity of Church in Rome

Why did Paul feel the need to write this letter which I can best describe as a theological essay? Andrew Ollerton explains the complex situation that existed between those belonging to the wider Christian community in Rome. The people that Paul wrote to included wealthy masters and uneducated slaves, Messianic Jews and ex-pagans, men and women, Europeans, Africans and those from Asia. They had cultural differences, but the important thing was they were all bound by Christ. Paul was at pains to stress that whatever their background was they should focus on the core themes of the Christian Gospel, the things he had outlined in the first part of his letter. His teaching on sin (chapters 1-2), atonement (3), justification by faith (4), freedom in Christ (5 – 7) and eternal hope (8).

In the latter part of his letter Paul teaches on secondary matters, things that are not key to the core Christian message or as Andrew Ollerton puts it, “disputable matters”. These include the future of Israel, views on predestination, the use of spiritual gifts or debates regarding pacifism and just wars.

Key Themes

Having eaten, drunk and slept Paul’s letter to the Romans for the better part of three months I now feel that I’m at a point where I now have a fuller understanding why Paul wrote this letter and why he said what he did. In short Paul gives a full written theological explanation of the relationship between God and mankind from the creation of this world to the creation of God’s new world. An account that passes through Abraham, the Covenants, the Laws right up to the time of Jesus Christ, God’s son



entering the world, an event that fundamentally changed the relationship between God and man, and one that Paul focuses on in detail. He then looks forward to the future for those who decided to follow Jesus, how their lives are changed, their new relationship with God the Father and their place in God's new world.

Along the way he explains and uses words such as sin, separation, sacrifice, redemption, salvation, righteousness, justification, peace, freedom, adoption and glorification. Each of these words describes a



stage, an event along the relationship journey between God and man where each is linked to the previous stage and the one that follows resulting in an unbroken chain. Romans from chapter 1 to chapter 16 is a complete theological account.

A Complete Message

How often have you heard a preacher deliver a sermon on just one of these links or themes or even a specific single verse in isolation and without reference to the fuller picture, the whole of the letter. When Pheobe literally read the letter to the various small church groups in Rome somewhere around 58 AD, she read it in full, from creation to the end time and this is the way we should read and understand it as one complete message. That is not to say that we shouldn't study one section of the letter but when we do we need to reference the whole of Paul's theological arguments.

Reflecting on our ten weeks of study, how can I summarise? For the fellowship as a whole it was a very positive experience. Eighteen members of our fellowship took part in the Tuesday afternoon sessions which is a high percentage of our active membership, and nobody dropped out with absences

only due to illness, holidays and other previous engagements.

The linking of the Sunday Service with the 90 minutes sessions on a Tuesday afternoon made it inclusive for everyone, we were all on the same road. It has certainly brought the fellowship at Grappenhall much closer together and given us a greater sense of the purpose that God has laid before us. For those of us who had the responsibility of preparing services and leading the sessions it resulted in a lot of hard work being required within short timescales, but it was also very rewarding. Even after exploring Romans for over three months there are areas that I personally will return to for further study.

Unity and Mission

By the end of Paul's letter to the Romans, two key themes emerge from Paul's teachings, unity amongst Christians, unity not uniformity and the ongoing need for mission. Mission which can only be achieved when we are truly walking in the light of Christ. As a group we concluded our final session by focusing on mission and our next steps as a church.

The Roman's Course is available from the Bible Society. Visit their website.

Recommended Reading

Romans – A Letter That Makes Sense of Life – Andrew Ollerton (Hodder & Stoughton)
Paul – A Biography – Tom Wright (SPCK)

Rob Brooks, Grappenhall IM

A Roman's Prayer

Righteous God, as we your church study Paul's letter to the Romans,
we pray that we will have the endurance to persevere and reach to its heights of understanding.

Understanding about the signs that surround us each day which make us aware of your creative powers, your greatness and your everlasting presence.



Understanding about how each and every one of us one us has failed to live to your standards, and an understanding that everyone of us needs your forgiveness.

Make us also aware of your righteousness, a quality beyond our understanding but for something we are eternally grateful.

Let us remind ourselves that, however great Rome was in terms of its power and size, you are infinitely greater. The creations of man come and go but yours is everlasting. Remind us also that whilst many roads led to Rome, only one road leads to you.

Through our study of Paul's letter to the Roman's, remind us also of our need as Christians for unity. That the bond that binds us together by the death and resurrection of your son, made possible by your righteousness and how that outweighs everything else in life. So Righteous God guide us away from division of any form, guide us as one people.

We ask these things in Jesus's name.

Amen.

In the Joy of the Lord

Trevor Milner Peacock **Aged 85 years – Lamberhead Green IM Church**

Trevor died on the 3rd of January in Benidorm, Spain, where he has gone for a short visit with his family. Taken ill, he was admitted to hospital where he later died.

He led an active life, proprietor, with his wife, Pat, at a local hostelry (The Shamrock, Standish) and Postmaster and Newsagent at a busy shop in Orrell, Wigan.

A life-long share holder and fan, Trevor enjoyed many happy hours following his beloved Wigan Athletic FC.

Well-known and respected, this was shown by a full church at his funeral at Lamberhead Green on Tuesday the 4th of March, followed by a committal at Wigan Crematorium. Both services were conducted by Mr. Norman Prescott.

He will be missed by many, especially his wife and loving family. A good man, living on in our memories.



Osborne William Hancock 21.10.1928 - 15.12.2024 **Thatto Heath**

On 21 January, the fellowship at Thatto Heath gathered with Osborne's family – Keith, Barry, Cathy and Lynne and their families to grieve but also to celebrate and give thanks to God for Osborne's life.

Osborne was a member of our fellowship, a dedicated Christian man. His gift for Music he used to the glory of God. He led the Church Choir, the Men's and Ladies choirs on special days for many years. He also sang solo and many duets with his wife Edie. He also led Carol Singing in the Community and in homes for the elderly in the area. Osborne preached at our Church on many occasions and was our Church President for 5 years. He worked on the Grocery Stall at our Christmas Fayre and the Refreshment Stall at our Annual Field Day.

Osborne always had a smile, strong handshake and hug. He could connect with people easily always making them welcome, he was an inspiration to many. Sadly, ill health prevented Osborne from attending Church but visits from our Pastoral Team kept us in touch. Osborne and his wife Edie visited many people who were sick or could no longer get to church.

We thank God for his faithfulness and his work to bring honour and glory to His Lord. He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Our prayers and support are with his loving family.

Phil Hagerty 1934-2024 **Astley Christian Fellowship**

Phil was our eldest church member. He joined us in 1997 but had previously worshipped at Roe Green and had been a Methodist Local Preacher for many years. He loved the church, the Word and all the members, helping each of us in a different way. He set up the Men's Breakfast 20 years ago which still thrives, allowing Ladies! He liked all events with food.

He was passionate about Local History and wrote books. He was involved in all activities in his local area [Walkden and Salford] often serving as the official photographer as he did for The Connexion. He collected books on Local History, Religion, Ancient History and South Africa [where his family had emigrated]

He started the 'Friends of Blackleach Country Park' and was a valued volunteer at the 2012 Manchester Commonwealth Games where they used his ability to speak several languages. He loved travelling both here and worldwide using these holidays for his collection of souvenirs to make files, photographic records and give talks. He had a lifelong love of Speedway marshalling and encouraging young riders. He did his National Service and only recently revealed that he had been a spy in the Royal Signals.

Two motorbike accidents and old age finally restricted his adventures. His Memorial Celebration and Birthday Party [the day after] that had already been planned on what would have been his 90th were amazing with many visitors taking part saying what Phil had meant to them. He will be very much missed.

Testimony

I was born and raised in Hetton le Hole. Went to Eppleton infants, juniors and seniors. None of my family or extended family were church goers other than for Christenings, weddings and funerals. I left school and became a professional footballer at the age of 15. I played most of my career abroad in South Africa and Ireland. I think Oscar Wilde was thinking about me when he wrote, "I can resist anything but temptation". In my twenties, I started drinking heavily, gambling, staying out all night, even though I was married, I became violent and even got mixed up with the Mafia. When I stopped playing football aged 32, I found myself living in Murton with my little family.

Within a couple of years, someone by the name of Billy Graham came to speak at Roker Park. My wife Norma, who was a Christian, was in the choir. I agreed to take her through to Roker Park in time for the choir practice each night, then pick her up at an agreed time after the service. In between dropping and picking her up, I would head for a pub and have a few pints. Then on the last night, a Saturday night, we had a row. I'd said this was my big drinking night at the club, so perhaps she could miss one night. We had words, she ran upstairs, and I headed off to the big club.

Halfway up the street, I turned back and said OK, we'll do what we've done all week. That was no good, the choir practice had already started. So off I went again and again, halfway up the street, I could picture Norma crying on the bed. So, why? I have no idea, but I went back and said, "ok, I'll take you and stay with you through the service. Little did I know back then, but

when I pictured Norma crying, she was really praying. So, we stood in the clock stand, I didn't want to be there. I didn't sing the songs, just wanted to be propping up the bar. Then this American with a flat cap started speaking. I don't know how many people were there, maybe 20,000, but I thought he was speaking directly to me. He told me that God loved me so much that He allowed His son Jesus to die for me. And Jesus, even though He knew what I'd done in my life, loved me enough to die for me. WOW! Then he told me all my sins could be forgiven. So, when he stopped giving his message, he said If this has meant anything to you, please come forward. I ran onto the pitch and was saved that night.

So, on the way home, Norma was jumping up and down I the car with happiness. Then I remember saying to her, hold on, we've got a problem here. I can't go out tomorrow night and get drunk, then ask God to forgive me, then go out the next night and get drunk, then ask for forgiveness and so on. Gods going to get sick of me asking. Norma said God will handle this in His own way. I never touched a drop of alcohol for more than 10 months. God had completely taken away the desire. I was baptised a couple of years later at Bethany Church.

I can honestly say I am a completely different person from the one who ran onto the pitch at Roker Park. I am a child of God now. Halleluiah.

George Luke, Hetton-le-Hole

Northwood Group Update

As folks will know, I was asked by Connexional Committee in May 2022 to look at Northwood Christian Centre with a view to establishing a Christian Mission there. After sharing the prospect with Susan, we went to prayer.

Since then, the Lord has graciously exceeded our expectations in every way and the work has been blessed these past three years.

Since last summer, at which time some people formed a separate group, we have grown again. This has been significant for us in that, Ebenezer Christian Fellowship is still a hub for Gospel ministry but, we are now a much larger group of committed Christians from around the Northwest. Meaning that, the scope and range of our ministry has a wider sphere of activity, is even more fluid than previously and that the number of our associates is larger also. Of necessity,

that now displaces our physical focus from Northwood to more than one other location.

Therefore, I must formerly notify the churches to the effect that, Ebenezer Christian Fellowship will no longer be meeting at Northwood. Our last meeting took place on Easter Sunday. We wish to thank all who have supported us in prayer and been behind us during this last three years. No doubt as we continue to evangelise from town to town, our previous experiences at Northwood will often be remembered with a sense of gratitude and affection.

Yours in Christ (for Ebenezer Christian Fellowship)

Roger Stone

Church Corner

'I made you wonderful'



This was the theme of the World Day of Prayer held on Friday 7th March and was based on the words of Psalm 139. The worship service invited us to recognise that God created each one of us with great attention and loving care. We are all unique and special and should cherish all aspects of who we are.

Roman Road IM Church hosted the service this year for the Failsworth churches, and we were pleased to welcome many old and new friends from the other Fellowships in Failsworth.



Flowers are an integral part of Cook Islands identity, symbolising love, friendship and respect. As people arrived at the service, they were invited to take a flower and wear it behind their ear or in their hair.

This year's service was prepared by the women of the Cook Islands and during the service 3 Christian women's stories were shared telling of their struggle during Covid-19, of their culture being devalued and of the improvements in obstetric health care.



We learnt Māori – 'kia orana' is a phrase that Cook Islanders use to greet each other. This means than just hello – it means may you live long and may you live well. May you shine like the sun and may you dance with the waves.

We also learnt 2 new songs Wonderfully made and God who knows us – both specially composed for the 2025 service by Cook Islander, Ruru Maeva.

The beautiful displays were put together by the World Day of Prayer co-ordinator for Failsworth. As the coconut tree is referred to as the 'tree of life' in the Cook Islands, after the service we enjoyed some appropriately themed cakes with the coconut and lime cake going down particularly well!

Elizabeth Barron, Roman Road

New Members at Hetton

Two years ago a new couple started attending our Church in Hetton-le-Hole and soon settled into church life having been Christians for a number of years. Having lived in Hetton for some years they sought a new church following the Covid years and so it was in February 2023 that George and Norma Luke first came to Church one Sunday Morning and settled into the back row.

They quickly settled into Church Life and in late 2024 they were accepted into membership and in February 2025 they were received into membership one Sunday morning. Both George and Norma are great assets to church life and are regular attenders at the Sunday Morning and Evening Services, the Prayer Meeting and the Bible Study. As well as this Norma has settled into the weekly Women's Auxiliary where she takes her turn at leading the meeting alongside others.

We thank God for George and Norma and pray that they will be encouraged and blessed as much as the church is by their fellowship and friendship.

Shaun Newton, Hetton-le-Hole



New Members at Thatto

On Sunday 2 March Zoe Bradley and her Auntie, Sue Bradley, who have both worshipped with us for many years now, became members of our fellowship. Our President Dot Williams led our Rededication Service and welcomed them both.

Fay Williams, Thatto Heath



Reaching out with variety

With a wide range of activities Mount Zion Church, Cliviger, is reaching many in the village area and even nearby Burnley and surrounding districts.

The weekly Little Stars, for parents and toddlers has a regular attendance of 30-plus babies and toddlers with as many parents or carers. Our volunteers are on hand to engage and offer friendship. The popular Lego Café creates a great space for parents (including a number of fathers) and youngsters to create and spend time together in a warm and inviting environment. And the monthly Games Night provides plenty of activities for all ages from table tennis to chess.

A Swap a book or jigsaw puzzle morning held for the first time before Christmas was very well received. It was a great opportunity to build on relationships made at other village activities. After lots of requests for a repeat activity it was held again in April with the addition of children's books and puzzles.



For the elderly and those suffering from dementia a monthly Musical Memories session has attracted a regular attendance – with most enjoying singing along.

We are looking forward to offering a study series on Christianity Explored soon and hope and pray that our outreach work will be the platform to encourage involvement.

Cliff Richard impersonator, Will Chandler of “Cliff As If”, will be providing an evening's entertainment in his inimitable style at Mount Zion in the summer and as he performs many of Cliff's top songs and shares his testimony. It will be a great opportunity to “let his light shine”, to Cliff Richard enthusiasts. He will also provide an attraction for Dads the following day when he takes part in the Sunday morning service.

The ladies were not be forgotten on Mothering Sunday with gifts of flowers and the following month held a well-attended Ladies' Supper with crafts.

We would appreciate our fellow Connexion churches pray-ers for God to speak to those we are engaging with. In keeping with the Church motto for the year – ‘Let your light shine’ - we have seen several people make a commitment or re-commitment to the Lord with three new members so far this year.

David Hall, Cliviger



Church Support Page

Over the last number of months, I've had the privilege of spending some time with the church at TIMC Tyldesley as they ran the 'Hope Explored' course, and also Bethel New Life Centre in Crosby where I have been supporting them with their 'Alpha' course. It has been great to see both churches having a heart to connect people with God.

There are so many courses, and materials that we can use in our churches, and it can be difficult to know what is the right one for our individual circumstances and situations. With that in mind, church support have at the resource centre, one copy of a number of the courses, that churches can borrow to look at before deciding what they want to purchase.



As pictured, we have the Christianity Explored which takes 7 sessions exploring the Christian faith. It uses Mark's gospel and explores Who Jesus is; Why Jesus came; and What difference this can make to us.

Hope Explored – Being just 3 sessions long it is not asking anyone to make a big-time commitment. Based on Luke's gospel, over the three weeks it looks at Hope, Peace, and Purpose. I believe these topics really connect with people in our communities. Where do they find Hope? How can they have Peace? What is their purpose?

Life Explored – Run over 7 sessions, this course gives the opportunity to look at the search for fulfilment, and how God can meet that need, and how Jesus offers life in all it's fullness.

Discipleship Explored – This course is designed for Christians who are wanting to discover a new way of living, and to grow in faith. It is 8 sessions long and is based on the book of Philipians.

Epic Explorers – This is aimed at ages 4-11 and is 5 sessions long. It bases itself on Mark's gospel, and involves an adventure of games, craft, songs, as well as earning more about God. The children can also have a scratch pad and a log book to use on the journey.

CY Christianity explored is a course designed for 11-14 year olds. It looks at what Christians believe and what Christianity is all about. Based on Mark's gospel it contains 7 sessions plus a day / weekend away. It involves topics and discussions, as well as games and activities which have been designed to emphasise the topic of the session. You can also download free extra materials to use.

Soul- is for older teenagers (14+) and bases itself in Mark's gospel. It looks at the big questions of life and what Christianity is all about. This course is interactive and comes with an option of extra resources to help make the course as relevant to your group as possible. It is based on 7 sessions plus a day / weekend away.

Another alternative is Alpha, which we have an up-to-date copy of. The Alpha Course is designed to explain the fundamentals of Christianity, and so looks at questions such as Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus die? How can I have faith? Why and how do I pray? Why and how should I read the Bible? How does God guide us?

Church Support Contacts

Lisa Green

cs.worker

@imchurches.org.uk
07889 473590

Joy Higham

csnw.worker

@imchurches.org.uk
07803 601064



Connexion

The magazine of the family of Independent Methodist Churches

The last day for articles to be submitted for the July / August issue of the Connexion magazine is Friday 13th June.

Please could all articles be sent either directly to the Resource Centre via post, or by email to magazine@imchurches.org.uk (please note the new email address).

Just a quick reminder that ideally all photographs need to be digital. Do ensure that safeguarding principles are followed by asking permission for the publication of any

photographs and for the articles where people are named and/or can be identified.

Thank you for all the articles – please keep them coming!



Who is the Holy Spirit? Etc. This course has 15 sessions, which are usually run over 11 weeks plus a day / weekend away.

All the courses are designed for people to come together to discuss the subject of the week. Everyone should be made to feel welcome and free to express their views without judgement. These courses are resources that enable us to invite those we know to hear more about the God we love, and to ask their questions and express their doubts in a safe environment.

As church support, we are here to serve you, and so whether or not your church chooses to use one of these courses or not is entirely your choice. What we do pray is that we all have a heart for evangelism and making the gospel accessible to those around us.

Blessings

Joy Higham, Church Support Worker



Photo of Alpha Group at Bethel New Life Centre, Crosby.

Testimony

As a child, my parents sent me to Sunday School. They weren't Christians then, but it gave my sisters and me an excellent grounding in Jesus and bible stories. When I was five, my oldest sister, Mary, was saved. she started telling her brothers and sisters (there were five of us) about the love of Jesus. After a short time, my older brother was saved. He eventually became a Baptist minister. He retired from his last position at Deeside in Aberdeen a few years ago. Then my two other sisters and my brother were saved.

Now, I thought that because I believed Jesus loved me, I was a Christian, even though I knew they were different. They had something that I didn't have. Their whole lives included Jesus. So, I felt different to them and often criticised them.

When I was 19, I married George and moved to South Africa, where George played professional football. Everything seemed good in those first few years. Eventually, Gavin and Clare came along. We ended up living in Johannesburg. I took the children to Rouxville Baptist Church near where we lived. I joined the fellowship. One of the questions I always had about the crucifixion was why God turned away from Jesus on the cross. Good Friday morning, 1975, it all became clear to me.

The pastor, John Broom, spoke about the cross, and it was then I realised Jesus carried my sin on that cross, and that's what held Him there, and therefore His Father, our Holy God, couldn't look on my sin. That morning, I confessed I was a sinner, and I asked Jesus to come into my heart.

When I survey the wondrous cross, it was the final hymn that day and even though I had sung it many times before, now there was a complete understanding. I joined a baptism class but never got baptised in South Africa. However, many years later, after Mission England, when my son, daughter and husband were saved, I was baptised at Bethany Church with my daughter Clare and my niece Joanne.

Life has had lots of ups and downs, sadness and joy, trials and tribulations, but my merciful, gracious, loving Saviour has been with me on all these journeys and carried me through. He has never forsaken me and has always forgiven me when I confess my sins. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me. Everyone needs a personal relationship with Jesus.

Noma Luke, Hetton-le-Hole

Christian Aid News

80th Anniversary Special Service at Westminster Abbey

Join us at Westminster Abbey to mark 80 years of Christian Aid. Take a moment to reflect with us, give thanks and renew our commitment to justice and hope.



On Thursday 12 June 2025 there will be a Service of Thanksgiving and Reflection to mark 80 years of Christian Aid. The service will be held at Westminster Abbey.

We are invited to ... Take a moment to reflect, give thanks and renew the commitment to justice and hope.

There is an opportunity to attend this service, so if anyone is interested, please request registration information by sending an e-mail to the contact details below.

A PDF format presentation is available tracing the journey from the embryonic organisation established in the 1943-1945 timeframe which was part of The British Council Of Churches, through to independence as Christian Aid in the 1980s, and exploring the Independent Methodist denomination's involvement in that. If you wish to get a copy and an associated video, please contact Geoff Matthews, who is also willing to visit your church and talk more about Christian Aid.

It should also not be forgotten that the annual Christian Aid Week is upon us.

All churches who will be organising or contributing to various Christian Aid Week events and activities are encouraged to send a short report so we can all share and celebrate together how IM Churches are responding to the challenge of the following verses of scripture ...

Matthew 25v37-40 : "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

For further information please contact me.

11-17 May 2025

Christian Aid Week

Will you help fund vital tools and training, so farmers
can support their community to escape hunger?

Geoffrey S
Matthews
Christian Aid
Representative

07568 589569

christianaid.representative@imchurches.org.uk

Trump and the Battle of Wigan Lane

It is perhaps curious that, last Autumn just as voters were going to the polls to decide the next President of the United States, I received a number of messages on my phone urging me to pray that Mr. Trump would not succeed. Meanwhile, many of the churches in the United States were fervently praying that he would. Just by looking at a map showing those States loyal to the Republicans, it can be seen that the Bible belt (as it is known), supported the government of Donald Trump.

Personally, I don't believe the average American gave two hoots for the man but they were tired of the woke society that had made its way into the United States. Perhaps the Democrats didn't see that coming? My aim is simply to point out that whilst we may believe we have the discernment of those closest to what God may have in mind, there is also one who perceives things from an entirely different perspective (Isaiah.55:8; Mark.8:33). Much closer to home but, a lesson taken from history is given to us from the English Civil Wars of 1642-1651.

One of the last but very significant battles to be fought on 25th August 1651, was the battle of Wigan Lane. People who know the area may be astonished to discover that any such conflict ever took place in a location better known for its industrial heritage, rugby and football. Yet the battle proved significant both for the ferocity with which it was fought and for the number of leading Royalist officers who were killed there.

The Royalist cavalry forces were gathered in Wigan, preparing to ride south and join the king at Worcester to fight Cromwell's army. Meanwhile, Colonel Lilburne's cavalry had gathered just north of Standish also intending to journey to Worcester, to support Cromwell. Lilburne took the initiative to cut the Royalist's off and approached the town by Wigan Lane only to meet the enemy coming from the town, led by the Earl of Derby. The first clash took place at Mab's Cross, just where Standishgate joins Wigan Lane.

At that time, the road was just a dirt track with only a few cottages round about and a number of hedgerows. Initially, the Parliamentarians were pushed back as far as Leyland Mill Lane which, is close to where the Cherry Gardens are now. Yet Lilburne had prepared a trap so that Derby's cavalry were met by a volley from musketry hidden in the hedges. The Parliamentarians were reinforced and began to gain the advantage. The outcome resulted in significant loss of life and a victory for the Parliamentarians.

The Earl of Derby was wounded but escaped with a force of only 30 horsemen. However, among those leading officers killed, was Sir Thomas Tyldesley. Tyldesley's standard bearer Alexander Rigby, erected

a monument to him which still stands, just near the junction of Wigan Lane and Swinley Road marking the spot where Tyldesley fell. There is also a small monument at Mab's Cross just near the Primary School.

An interesting document has survived in the first draft of a letter sent from the Earl of Derby to the king. Whilst it is not known if the thoughts expressed were kept or, if the letter was actually sent, his words reflect an insight well beyond the critical need of the situation as it then was. Without going as far as to quote, his words express something which may have eluded the notice of subsequent historians.

Which was, as the elections of the time in Wigan show. That the majority of folks in Wigan had no say in the running of the country but, nevertheless wanted to take part. Either by relationship with those empowered to vote or by being enfranchised themselves. The Earl of Derby realised this even when those in positions higher than himself did not. Therefore, what was the war about? Religion? Whether or not to have King or Parliament? Or, was it to try and secure democratic representation for a class of people to whom it was previously denied? Readers may decide it was the sum of all its parts, depending upon the perspective taken? Whatever the real reasons were, the prevailing perspective at the time was that, the adherents of each cause believed it was worth fighting for. Both believing that they had God on their side.

Political conflicts are fought with spin and media co-operation. A military conflict is about muscle and metal. Though the outcome of either rarely conforms to cherished expectations. What then, are our expectations for the Independent Methodist Churches? There may well be many different perceptions as to the future of the Connexion? The Apostle Jude exhorted his readers to contend for the faith (Jude:3) but in order to contend effectively we must of necessity be confident of all that involves. Again, what is God's will for our churches? To wage an effective campaign requires of us that we are certain of His purpose. Yet if we live according to our own will then we cannot do what God wills. In that case we would only be involved in a conflict of contrary purposes. So at the last, there is one vital ingredient that we cannot do without. The first church grew both in stature and in the general milieu of the times but, they were of one mind and one spirit (Acts.1:14; 2:1; 4:32). Their expectations? To be filled with all the fulness and to live and worship in the Spirit (Ephesians.6:18; Philippians.3:3; Jude:20-21). The sheep can only ever be one in mind and spirit when the same shepherd is leading them in one direction.

Roger Stone, Kirkhall Lane

CANINE COMFORT

Viewers of our regional news programme, "Look North West", early in March would have been delighted by the celebration of the work of Shuna, a therapy dog at Derian House Children's Hospice in Chorley, Lancashire. After twelve years of canine comfort, the young patients, their grateful families and the Hospice staff said a fond farewell to Shuna, retiring from her valuable role, with a doggy party cake decorated with bone symbols.

The ladies of the Bethel Fellowship in Newtown, Wigan, had been introduced to Shuna, a German short-haired pointer, in December 2024. Linda Martlew, an approved therapy dog trainer and an active member at a local U.R.C. Church, gave a talk on her dog, Shuna, highlighting her gentle presence and ability to bring smiles to any tearful child, often distracting them from pain. Linda and Phil, her husband, described Shuna's ability to draw people to her, especially in Chorley market, whereas an unplanned fundraiser, she had raised over a thousand pounds over the years. Audrey Manifold, the plan secretary for the ladies' group, expressed their great satisfaction after the afternoon meeting, and Shuna offered her wagging approval.



David Moulson, Newtown

'Worthy the Lamb'

Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, was keen on church music. He played the lute himself and, from his journals entitled 'Table Talk', we can appreciate his clear view that "music is certainly the greatest of the divine gifts because it is the greatest enemy of the devil, with which many great torments of the soul can be driven away".

The one hundred and twenty five members of the congregation at Bethel's Good Friday evening service, listening to the augmented choir of twenty four and singing themselves with gusto, were fully aware of the power used against the 'old enemy'.

The cantata, featuring choir members from six Independent churches, was performed with true dedication to the Word. 'Worthy the Lamb' was the creation of the genuine and hardworking choir master, Kevan Booth, aided by his lovely wife, Vera. Together they had arranged standard Easter hymns, like 'This the Power of the Cross', and direct quotations from the Bible, to form a most suitable ending to Good Friday. Eileen Melling proved, once again, to be a most effective and eloquent narrator.



For Bethel Church itself, the event proved to be a very special experience, ending the day and following on from the morning Communion Service, lead by Pauline Smith, one of our ministers. Her presentation, inspired by her skills with I.T. and, undoubtedly by the Holy Spirit, was both a humbling and constructive reminder of Sacrifice.

The cantata's congregation was moved by the challenges of Good Friday, the commitment of the choir and the words of Christine Ormerod, minister and chair. She later joined with the church leadership to express delight at the collection taken for the local charity, Storehouse, of 2675.

Finally, Luther followed the Augustine tradition, claiming "to sing once is to pray twice". And, we all say Amen to that!

David Moulson, Newtown

TEST YOUR TESTAMENT

R S K D G Z W C N Y Y J P A U L Z H V P
 Q Y V A I R S A I J P W J D M P D W X T
 Q E A S C S I L K Z I P I Y N H N K C G
 W I Y U G J C S T R R A J G E A C W S I
 N S E I V J C I R X G F O P K R O C G G
 L N Z J I U H H P J I O A W R A N G I T
 N G E N E S I S U L E T X I K O N L F N
 Z G P Q S L A L I R E S U N T H E O M Q
 O A L N E T N S O R C S U X V H X R C G
 L G L F D K Y P T J R H H S P M I Y O F
 W O U V W G V X R V N L T Y Z E O D V N
 W I F P Z H X L O C L M L S O S N U E F
 H X Z R F R T X H L G O Q M V S G L N S
 N E V C U S J N A T Z S R N R I U N A X
 G E T A Q P H D W N L E F S T A M D N N
 K L O A L H K E E B G S K E G H S A T I
 B E I M M P F N A C C E T V Y Z Q E E L
 X R E D E E M E R V V G L Q I J D W Y X
 E S A L V A T I O N E K Y S Q D I M L A
 A J N M H B Q C K M Q N A D B O V S T Y

Angels
 Church
 Connexion
 Covenant
 Disciples
 Faith
 Genesis
 Glory
 Heaven
 Jesus
 Messiah
 Moses
 Paul
 Pharaoh
 Redeemer
 Salvation

L. and P. were greatly blessed when they were able to attend a conference for members of their sending organisation serving in North Africa. They were encouraged by the leaders to take time in seeking God's will for their future ministry. At this time it seems likely that they will remain in North Africa, but as yet they are not sure exactly where. Recently they were able to visit a traditional village where P. has worked in the past and were able to renew relationships there. The young family joining their team have found a flat and arrived in April. Pray that the Lord will lead them in their ministry. L. is continuing in her coaching work, both locally and with Christian workers online. Their support for local believers led them to host an isolated family over Easter. Pray too for their friends Alan and Katie who are hoping to be more involved in ministry.

Liz Greenhalgh is continuing in the various aspects of her work in Romania: her ministry with the children and teenagers in the church; the after-school programme for Roma children and her care for some of the needy women who come to the food kitchen. She would like to thank both the churches and individuals who have donated to help two of the ladies who were particularly in need of help. Liz would also ask us to pray for God's leading in her future service.

Daniel and Gail are now settled in their home and are trusting the Lord for His future provision. As member care providers for OMS they have been able to help other missionaries going through difficult times. They continue to pray for God's wisdom. Daniel is continuing to be much occupied in his role as assistant pastor. However OMS would like him to lead a short-term mission trip to Kenya in the summer which is still in the planning stages. Please pray for God's leadership and provision.

Connexional Addresses

Connexional President Roger Stone

president
@imchurches.org.uk

General Secretary

Brian Rowney

general.secretary
@imchurches.org.uk

Financial Administrator

Alan Britton

financial.officer
@imchurches.org.uk

Safeguarding Officer

Graham Edmondson

safeguarding.officer
@imchurches.org.uk

Business Department

Registered Office and Resource Centre

Fleet Street, Pemberton,
Wigan WN5 0DS
01942 223526
resource.centre
@imchurches.org.uk

Connexional Services Manager

Kathy Pringle

01942 223526
resource.centre
@imchurches.org.uk

Association Manager

Laura Pendlebury

01942 223526
association.manager
@imchurches.org.uk

All Officers' Addresses

can be found in the Directory
which is obtainable from the
Resource Centre.

All articles for the magazine
should be sent to the
Resource Centre postal
address or via email to
magazine@imchurches.org.uk

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Our Past President

DOROTHY KENDRICK

Dorothy was born in Oldham and is an only child. She attended a local Methodist Church from age 3 and became a member at 18. She undertook the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme (DofE) at school. For her voluntary service, Dorothy worked for 12 months with Oldham Family Service Unit, culminating in organising a weekend away. It was a major moment in Dorothy's life when she came to understand something of the lives of disadvantaged families within the borough and realised that simply feeling sorry was not enough, but practical help was needed. Dorothy's career choice was social work, but, advised against it; she applied to the Civil Service, resulting in her working several years as a Collector of Taxes during which time she married. She then left and worked 2 years as an assistant to a mill shop accountant before finishing on maternity leave. During those years, Dorothy continued in membership with the Methodists. She attended Christian Endeavour (CE) meetings, becoming a member and then secretary of Oldham CE Circuit, resulting in her visiting various CE societies, including Roman Road IMC.

Dorothy had a daughter and developed post-natal depression. She had a Christian Health Visitor who prayed with her. That became a changing point in Dorothy's life. She moved her membership to Roman Road IMC and whilst attending a local Maranatha meeting some months later, experienced a warm flow of God's Spirit upon her. With support from her Health Visitor and by God's grace, Dorothy recovered from the post-natal depression without medication. Her experiences helped her understanding of God's work in the Healing Ministry, and she became involved with the work of Ellel Grange Ministries, Lancaster.

Dorothy was invited by Roman Road to become a student Minister. Whilst agreeing to complete the education scheme, it was only in the final year that Dorothy clearly sensed God's calling to work for Him full-time as a Minister of the IM Connexion. Serving on the Oldham Circuit Committee, she encouraged churches to work together, and some innovative services and events were organised. Sadly, the other churches closed, resulting in Roman Road becoming a one church circuit.

When Connexion was having talks with the Baptist Union (BU) as part of the preparations for a covenant partnership, Dorothy was elected to be one of the 3 representatives from the NW to attend the BU council meetings. Passionate about unity within the Body of Christ, Dorothy is an active member of Failsworth Churches Unite and Oldham Churches Connected, with similar objectives of encouraging churches to work together and pray for one another.

Six years ago, Dorothy was asked to be President of the Connexion for 2 years. It was a time of strife within the Connexion, and the position was one which no one wanted to hold. 'A poisoned chalice' was how some people viewed it. Dorothy had never expected or sought such a position, and the question came as a complete shock. However, as she prayed and sought the Lord, confirmation came in differing ways. Finally, Dorothy accepted that this was the Lord's calling on her life and all that had preceded it had been a preparation for what lay ahead. Due to unforeseen circumstances, she was required to become acting President for a year and then serve a further 2 years in the role of President. The reason Dorothy chose to become part of the Independent Methodist (IM) Connexion was because she believes wholeheartedly in the Statements of Faith and Practice of the IM denomination. It allows individuals to grow and exercise their gifts and talents without undue legislation from a remote body.

A film shown probably about 40 years ago at Roman Road had a line in it, 'make my life worthwhile'. That phrase has stayed with Dorothy and is a frequent prayer on her lips. What the future holds is unknown. We just don't know what the days will bring. A sky dive at 50 years was totally unplanned and unexpected, as much as being received as President of the Connexion at 61. What we are called to do is trust and be obedient to God's Word. The rest is in God's hands.