

# Connexion

The magazine  
of the family of  
Independent  
Methodist  
Churches

Jan/Feb 2026

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# 2026

2026 is an important year for the Independent Methodist Connexion. Decisions will be made that affect the future of the denomination, including possibly a change of name but also, as we look at the structures appropriate to a group

with just over 1000 members, a change of focus. In several places, the view is held that we should concentrate our ministry on the elderly, on the grounds that they have less time to respond to Jesus if they have not already done so. Others think that we should concentrate on young people - after all, they have a potential lifetime of service if they become believers at an early age.

Neither view is entirely correct. Statistically, of course, the elderly have less life expectancy than the youngsters. However, Jesus did not deal with people as statistics but as individuals. When Isaac wanted to bless Esau, he told his elder son that he was "... an old man and did not know the day of [his] death" (Genesis 27:2). In practice, Isaac lived for many more years - Jacob, who obtained Esau's blessing by deception, then worked for his uncle Laban for 20 years (Genesis 31:38) and was still able to return to his father before Isaac's death (Genesis 35:27-29). Conversely, some young people die without reaching adulthood - victims of knife crime (the Southport murders, in particular, come to mind) and, equally sadly, those that commit suicide following bullying, whether physical or on line. I was reminded recently that people in the prime of life can be struck down by breast cancer or road accidents. Like Isaac, none of us know the day of our death and therefore, for those that have not placed their trust in Jesus, how long they have to respond to him.

So, what's the answer? I believe it's in the strapline that we've used in recent years: Christians in the community. Our ministry should be to the community that God has placed us in, whatever its make-up might be. Our giftings, experience or inclinations may mean that we are better able to minister to certain sections. However, does that mean we should ignore the others? Jesus rebuked his disciples for their attitude towards children (Luke 18: 15-

17) and there are several examples in the Gospels where he healed young people. However, he also had time for the elderly Pharisee Nicodemus (John 3:1-15), who then became a believer (John 7:50-51, John 20:39). What does this say to us?



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# Independent Methodist Churches Statement of Faith

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## The Bible

**We affirm that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.**

In earlier reflections on the Independent Methodist Statement of Faith, we have seen how each element is firmly rooted in Scripture. Here, however, we must address a more foundational question: why do we ascribe such authority to the Bible itself? What makes this book unique, and why can it be trusted as God's Word in the twenty-first century?

A straightforward answer is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." On its own, this passage provides sufficient justification for our statement of faith. Yet it is helpful to look more closely at how the Bible has come down to us, in order to strengthen our confidence that what we read today is authentic and reliable, rather than a text distorted by centuries of transmission.

### The Old Testament

The Old Testament is derived from what is known as the Masoretic Text, written in Hebrew and regarded by the Jewish people as their Scriptures. It contains 24 books; the Protestant Old Testament includes the same material, but arranged differently and counted as 39 books. This difference arises because certain books—such as Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles—are divided, while others, like Ezra and Nehemiah or the Minor Prophets, are grouped together in the Hebrew tradition.

Catholic and Orthodox traditions also in-

clude additional later writings, often referred to as the Deuterocanonical books or the Apocrypha, which are not part of the Hebrew Bible. The oldest complete Masoretic manuscript, the Leningrad Codex, dates from the early eleventh century AD, but earlier fragments exist, some from as early as the second century AD, and these agree remarkably closely with the later text. The Old Testament itself was written over a period of roughly a thousand years, from around 1400 to 400 BC.

### The New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament were written within a much shorter timeframe, almost certainly during the first century AD. They were composed in Koine (Common) Greek, and fragments survive from the second century AD. Thousands of manuscripts exist in Greek, Latin, and other ancient languages, and while minor variations occur—as is inevitable with hand-copied texts—there are no differences that affect Christian doctrine.

This consistency is significant. Until the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, every copy of Scripture had to be written by hand, allowing for the possibility of copying errors or misread handwriting. Despite this, the overall agreement between manuscripts is striking and reinforces confidence in the integrity of the text.

### Translation and Interpretation

The Bible we read today is a translation, primarily from Hebrew and Greek, with small portions in other languages such as Aramaic and Babylonian.





Translation inevitably presents challenges. Words do not always carry identical meanings across languages, and meanings can shift over time. For example, the commandment traditionally rendered as “You shall not kill” is more accurately translated “You shall not murder,” reflecting a prohibition against deliberate, unlawful killing rather than all taking of life.

Idioms present another difficulty. Expressions that were immediately understood in their original cultural context can become obscure centuries later. Some passages, such as Isaiah 28:10 and 28:13, may even reflect mockery or meaningless sounds rather than literal instructions. Translators must therefore exercise careful judgment to convey meaning rather than merely reproduce words.



For this reason, it is best to say that the Scriptures are inspired in their original form, while recognising that faithful modern translations are based as closely as possible on those original texts. Minor copying errors exist—for example, in numerical details—but none affect matters of doctrine. Good translations work directly from the earliest available manuscripts, rather than relying on layers of previous translations, where errors could accumulate.

### **Scripture as God’s Word**

Paul’s assertion that Scripture is “God-breathed” is reinforced elsewhere. Peter writes that the apostles did not follow “cleverly invented stories” but were eyewitnesses, and that prophecy did not originate in human will, but in people speaking from

God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Over time, many have attempted to discredit the Bible, yet again and again its historical claims have been confirmed. Archaeology has verified places, people, and events recorded in Scripture. The careful historical approach of writers such as Luke has been repeatedly vindicated. If the Bible proves trustworthy in matters that can be independently checked, it is reasonable to trust it also in matters of faith.

### **Authority for Faith and Conduct**

If we accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God, its authority follows naturally. Our understanding of God, salvation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the promise of eternal life is drawn from Scripture. The Bible also provides the standard by which we measure our conduct.

The term “canon” simply means a rule or standard by which something is judged. To say that Scripture is the supreme authority in matters of conduct is demanding. It means shaping our lives not by personal preference, social norms, or even legislation, but by God’s will as revealed in Scripture. This commitment may place believers at odds with prevailing culture or authority, and in some contexts it has carried a high cost.

Yet Scripture does not leave us unequipped. As Paul reminds Timothy, it prepares us for every good work—works that God has already prepared for us to do. Our calling, therefore, is to know God’s Word and to apply it faithfully in our daily lives, at all times.

This article is only a summary of the history of the Bible which has come down to us. Michael Pollard from our Mill Lane, Leigh church, has written a more comprehensive booklet entitled ‘The Bible’s Translation Journey’, to which readers are referred for more detailed information. Copies are available, price £5, from Michael at The Presbytery, 100 Richmond Drive, Higher Fold, Leigh WN7 2XW.

Brian Rowney



# Thorney Close

## Bethel Christian Fellowship

There are five churches named 'Bethel' in the Connexion. Four are in the north-west, and the newest is based at Thorndale Road, Thorney Close in Sunderland. Bethel Christian Fellowship began life in 1984 as a house church, led by Martin and June Bolt. It then hired various school halls before moving into their own building (which had previously been used as a mission) in the early 1990s. The fellowship joined the Connexion in 1992. The building has been progressively improved, with surplus funds at the end of each financial year being earmarked for the purpose.

Bethel Christian Fellowship has a busy programme of activities, beginning with Sunday worship service at 6.30 pm. Monday saw two Alpha courses, one in the morning and the other in the early evening. Both courses had just finished when I visited the fellowship in mid-November, but the



time slots remain available in case of future demand.

Tuesdays are particularly busy, with the Cameo Club taking place from 10.30 am to 3 pm. The church building houses the Sunderland Food Bank, which is open for the first two hours and is staffed by church members. Cameo began two years ago when churches were encouraged to open

their buildings as 'warm spaces', and has continued ever since. People are welcome to drop in for a chat or to participate in activities such as making jigsaws and crafts, with free refreshments and a lunch around 1 pm. After that, there is a time of music and meditation, which everyone is welcome to stay for. There is a Bible study and prayer meeting at 7 pm on Wednesdays, and a Toddler Group at 9.30 am on Thursdays.

### 'New' building

A couple of years ago, there was a possibility of buying the club next door to the church building, but this fell through. More recently, though, an Anglican church building came onto



the market, just around the corner from the Bethel fellowship. It was built in 1949, and was in good condition structurally. However, for some time, it had been rented out as a furniture workshop and showroom, and the internal church fittings had gone. An offer was made for the building, and it was purchased with Connexional assistance in late 2025. Unfortunately, the local vandals have smashed all the windows and a priority is to replace them with a more durable product.





One drawback with the existing building is the need to move furniture and equipment around to accommodate the various activities that take place during the week. The plan is to make the 'new building' into the fellowship's worship centre. Work has started to fit out the main hall, with the intention of holding services there from Easter 2026. Phase 2 of the plan will see the adjacent hall refurbished to accommodate the toddler group and, hopefully, a work with young people. The Cameo club, the foodbank and the weekly Bible study will remain in the existing building which (amongst other things) will be less expensive to heat in the winter.

The fellowship would welcome prayer for the following:

- The building being kept safe from vandalism
- The refurbishment works to go smoothly
- Extra finance to be available to develop the new building
- That the church will remain focussed on the real work of evangelism



## **Connexional Committee 25th October 2025 - Culcheth**

We were given a warm welcome to Culcheth. Graham Edmondson led a short time of worship, gave a brief history of the church, and shared how they are currently working in the community. The meeting was chaired by Shaun Newton in his capacity as General Secretary.

Following a brief discussion on meeting protocols, it was agreed that Circuit Reps be given the opportunity to comment on each report before the rest of the meeting. We also agreed the Code of Conduct, as mentioned in the General Secretary's report and that the Nolan Principles should be adopted, with the addition of a Spiritual Principle.

### **Enabling Group**

The first online Connexional Prayer Gathering successfully took place on 17th October, led by our President-elect, Lisa Green. Further meetings will be held the week prior to each Connexional Committee meeting: Friday 30th January 2026 7.30pm led by Pauline Smith Friday 8th May 2026 7.30pm led by Dorothy Kendrick. Following Mark Curtis's challenge at Annual Meeting, the General Secretary proposed the adoption of a Connexional Plan based on a number of 'realistic goals' as proposed by the various Officers and Committees. The aim is for churches to be able to see what committees are working on, and help with communication between committees, as work does overlap in places. It was agreed that this would be updated three times a year, before each Connexional Committee meeting.

### **General Secretary's Report**

There have been some changes to the work at the Resource Centre as Kathy Pringle recently left her post as Connexional Services Manager. Jobs are being shared at present to cover the various aspects of the role, and Brian Rowney has taken on the role of Editor of the magazine. The year 2025-26 is likely to be a year of transition as we seek to complete the merger of the Connexion (IMC) and the Association (IMAi). This is dependent on the Charity Commission granting an update to the objects and dissolution clause of the IMAi. Once this permission has been granted, the next steps will be taken towards the merger where the IMAi will carry out the work that was previously undertaken by the IMC. To coincide with the Call to Prayer for Peace in the Middle East in September, IMC co-signed a Statement of Churches in regard to the current conflict in the Middle East, as requested by Churches Together in England (CTE) and agreed by Connexional Committee. There have been comments about the votes at Annual Meeting for the election of officers, as the numbers of votes for and against each person were not announced. Annual Meeting agreed at the time that this was not necessary but, since then, comments have been made that this shows a lack of openness and transparency. This will be looked into further as we need to have a consistent approach. Connexional Committee approved the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for the AWE Academy, part of the Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals. It was also agreed that the General Secretary be the officer elected to the national AWE Leadership Group, and the Ministry Organiser and Education Organiser be the additional representatives to attend the Leadership Group.

### **Administration Group**

The role of Admin Officer is currently vacant with David Hughes acting as Chair with support from the full Admin Team. It was agreed that we purchase meeting equipment (Meeting Owl) to be kept at the Resource Centre for use at all Connexional Committee meetings. This can be used by all sub-committees that take place at the Resource Centre. New Microsoft licences have been recently purchased at a discounted rate, as the free licences that were previously used are no longer available. Admin had recommended that we give notice to Progeny and change our Human Resources provider to Bright HR, as they offer to cover Health and Safety in addition to their HR services. It was agreed that we look into this further before making any changes, as Dave Hughes was not at the meeting, so unable to answer some of the questions that came up. Chris Elsdon is now employed for three days a week as a Youth Advisor as part of the Church Support team with a specific role of supporting churches on Youth Work for Secondary School Age and above. He continues his work on the IM website and is assisting with formatting the magazine. There was good feedback about Annual Meeting 2025, and the final costs were £11,559.76. For Annual Meeting 2026, it was agreed that we have some kind of event on the Friday evening as the hotel is available. For Annual Meeting 2027, the recent survey showed that 10am Saturday to 4pm Sunday was the most popular choice, therefore, the dates of Annual Meeting 2027 will be Saturday 26th – Sunday 27th June 2027.



## **Church Support Group**

The group continues to support our churches in numerous ways. They recently visited Noble St, Bolton to attend their last official service and continue to support them in selling their building and looking forward to a new future. Marilyn met with Richard Saunders-Hindley to discuss AWE, to understand more fully how Church Support might work together with them in the future. Time has also been spent on interviewing and appointing our Youth Advisor, Chris Elsdon, who commenced his position on 1st September. The group are in discussion with Friars Green who are looking to create a heritage centre and are helping to advise them on next steps. A roadshow is planned at Thorney Close in the North East in November.

## **Ecumenical Officer Report**

The Presidents of Churches Together in England recently issued a joint statement calling for an end to the suffering caused by the war in Gaza. We were invited to endorse it and the General Secretary signed on our behalf. Bill Hampson brought to our attention a new Freedom of Speech act, which means no longer being able to promote a particular viewpoint. This may pose difficulties for theological colleges, and our Statement of Faith may come under scrutiny. The EA (Evangelical Alliance) is currently being looked at, and Bill has the Free Churches Group Secretary to keep us informed of any decisions made. Marilyn and Lisa attended the CTE Enabling Group on behalf of Bill.

## **Education Organisers Report**

We have two students commencing their third year of study, one starting the second year and one in the first year, all of whom attended the study weekend in October. This was led by Rev Paul Wheeler, Pastor of Stockton Heath Christian Fellowship, on the subject of the parables of Jesus. After a revision of the charges for the study weekend, it was agreed that spouses attending in support of a minister or student will be charged £50.00. The Commissioning Service of Carrie O'Nions took place on 20th September. The AWE Academy have so far had launch days, online training on the Kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel and a full in-person study day entitled 'Brave New World,' engaging well with contemporary culture. The Academy is developing under its banner of 'Thinking like Jesus, Becoming like Jesus, Living like Jesus, Serving like Jesus.' A grant of £300 was agreed, for a student completing the final year of an external course, having previously been funded for the first 2 years.

## **Finance Committee**

The committee is continuing to work on bringing the accountancy system in house so that by 2026, we will be doing our own accountancy procedures which will save us money and speed up the process. As Kathy was previously doing this work, David Hughes has taken this on for the time being. The trial has worked well, but some tweaks are still needed. The sale of Croxton church is still progressing and the purchase of St Peter's church on behalf of Bethel Ministries went ahead in September. A couple of grants were discussed in Alan's absence and will now go back to the Finance Committee to be dealt with.

## **Merger Team**

The team are still waiting for confirmation from the Charity Commission for the Objects and the Dis-solution clause to be amended as previously agreed. The Restructuring Group appointed at Annual meeting has now started work on the next stage.

## **Ministry Committee**

Support has been offered for Ministers needing help with their personal development profiles. Andrew Rigby's name has been removed from the list of accredited Ministers at his request due to personal circumstances. He is continuing to serve in his own church, and thanks was expressed for his service to the Connexion.

## **Northwood Centre**

A 12-month plan has been produced, and it was recommended that this be actioned to generate further interest and usage of Northwood, with progress formally reviewed in October 2026. As Alan Britton is currently trying to get a valuation on Northwood, it was agreed that a separate meeting will be held in January to discuss the future of Northwood, date to be advised. A booking system for Northwood, previously requested to be integrated into the website, is expected to be in operation soon.

## **Overseas Missions Report**

Following the encouraging time at Annual Meeting, and David Robinson's presentation on Mission, it was recommended that we change the name of the committee to the World Mission Committee. This was agreed by the meeting. It was also agreed that we look into supporting David and Mary Robinson as Missionaries if they meet the IMC requirements. A further recommendation was that L and P be funded as a couple, subject to P becoming a member at Bryn Church. Bryn have already agreed this, and P is going through the steps to membership. Gail Castro has now withdrawn as an IM Missionary as she is no longer working for the missionary society and has a new job elsewhere.

## **Safeguarding Report**

Due to a problem with the Connexional website, much of the Safeguarding information has been lost from the website. Graham has been working with Chris Elsdon to restore and also update the information, but this has been a difficult and time-consuming task. Safeguarding training was due to take place at Kent Street the week following Connexional Committee. Joy recently dealt with a safeguarding incident that has now been successfully resolved.

## **Restructuring Group Report**

The group has met so far on Zoom twice, but much work has been undertaken in between, particularly by Laura Pendlebury at the Resource Centre. A survey was sent to all churches seeking their input as to how the Connexion should best serve the Churches. The response so far has been encouraging in terms of the number of returns received, forty-one from sixty-two churches, with a wide range of answers. The areas which have been highlighted are:

- The need for Spiritual Leadership from both the pulpit and in the wider church. The number one priority if a church is to continue let alone thrive.
- Ministry and Education - following on from the above, it is seen as vital for the health of our churches that we provide the means either internally or through recognised distance learning providers for those called to the Ministry or just seeking to learn more about their Christian faith.
- The problem with Buildings - maintaining old, outdated ones and churches seeking new premises. Assisting churches to adjust to their current needs.
- Mission giving guidance, advice and support on the best fit for an individual church.
- Legal and Compliance - much wider than simply understanding Charity Commission rules and covers much more especially for those churches who manage buildings.
- Money - the organisation does not have a bottomless supply of money and what we have we must use wisely.
- Technology - For those fellowships with limited resources in spiritual leadership, this could be a means of filling the gap.
- Youth Work - some would say a no-brainer but how many of our churches are equipped to support ongoing youth work as many of our churches did half a century ago?
- 'SWOT' Teams (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) - there have been suggestions that we create such 'mission' teams to go into churches to revive them but those who have experience of them know that there must be much preparation in advance and long-term commitment afterwards.
- Resource Centre - the question had been asked do we need one and what purpose does it have today. Others believe it can be strengthened and become the central hub of the denomination.
- Identity - do we as a denomination have one anymore?

The group is currently considering the last point particularly and also considering what happens to those churches who do not wish to be part of a restructured and rebranded organisation.

It was lovely to have Brian and Sue Rowney join us at lunch time, giving an opportunity for us to thank Brian for the service he has given for many years as General Secretary. We prayed for Brian and Sue, for their ongoing service and Brian's improving health. The meeting closed with a short Communion service.

Alison Tipping, Medlock Valley Circuit Rep.



# New Move Meant New Church



Twenty-two years ago my wife and I moved from Oxfordshire to be near one of our daughters in retirement. We moved to Cliviger and decided to give the quaintly-named church near to our house a try. We have been at Mount Zion Independent Methodist Church ever since.

It took some getting used to, with no minister and different speakers each week but the welcome we received made up for that and we have been happy to remain. In fact, as former Baptists we were delighted when the church later became affiliated with the Baptist Union. After all, I had spent five years as features editor on the Baptist Times when it was a news-

paper and my wife, Janet, worked in the Home Mission department at Baptist headquarters for 13 years after it moved from London to Didcot. That same move took me from London to Wantage, an Oxfordshire market town, while I worked on the Baptist Times and then the Oxford Times.

A working journalist all my life - I am now 86 - I have been on newspapers in the Midlands, then London for almost 30 years, during which time I spent five years as press officer at The Bible Society launching the Good News Bible. In our move to Cliviger I spent my last 18 months working on the Bolton Evening News and the Bury Times as a sub editor.

The move to Mount Zion was not unusual for us. My early life was as a Methodist - my father and grandfather were lay preachers - but as a teenager I was converted in an Elim Pentecostal church, and even spent the first two years of life in London as a student in the Elim Bible College, then in Clapham. Despite pastoring a small East London church to help fund my final year as a student, I decided I was called to be a journalist and worked on local newspapers, a sports agency, and the Bible Society, while worshipping for some years in Elim Churches - including pastoring another church during an interregnum - and then moving to a Baptist Church. Denominations have never bothered me much, after all I have had an audience with one Pope and shaken hands with another, and at one time knew all of the denominational leaders personally.

I decided a long time ago that writing was my calling - although I have been preaching since I was a teenager and am now 86 and still preach occasionally. At Mount Zion we were immediately welcomed, made friends easily, and found the meetings enjoyable and helpful. My wife and I worked for some years with the Little Stars group - the pre-school children and their parents or carers, until Covid came and changed things. My writing has gained publicity for the church in local newspapers





and magazines - and worldwide including TV some years ago when a lady then 87, who died some years ago, was a popular volunteer in the Street Pastors organisation. My articles on the church are saved in a cuttings album which provides useful information to newcomers. They can also peruse a full-colour book which I prepared and had published on the occasion of the opening of an extension in 2018. The book is packed with pictures of the opening, the work of the church and its history. It was started in 1878 and has had a visible witness in the area for all those subsequent years.

# 100 Years Of Overseas Mission

I also wrote '100 Years Of Overseas Missions' for the Independent Methodist Churches which was published as a small booklet in 2005.

Mount Zion has members who have been at the church all their lives and attracts many Christians from the surrounding areas of Burnley and beyond. With about 50 members at present, a lively Sunday School; the Little Stars meeting weekly; the Monday

Club when visitors can pop in for a coffee and one of the many games available, or simply chat; a regular games night; Lego Church on occasions; a Musical Memories meeting for those suffering from dementia, and even a lively ukulele group which performs at many local occasions.

It is great to be part of such a lively, caring, fellowship. I can't recommend it enough.  
David Hall (Cliviger)







Liz Greenhalgh: Liz praises God for His many blessings on her ministry in Romania, both in large and small matters. The children's summer camp took place in lovely sunny weather and the 150 children participating responded well to the teaching from Hebrews 12 v. 1-2. They were determined to press on in the race of faith. There was an end of year celebration for the children who had



completed a year on the after-school programme, when each child was presented with a certificate. They also had an outing to the zoo in the summer holidays as a reward for all their hard work. Liz asks for prayer for this year's programme, as to which children will benefit most and also for enough helpers. The youth group at church

is now divided into two groups according to age which, it is hoped will be a benefit for all concerned. Lucia, the prisoner that Liz has been corresponding with has now been released and has moved in with her daughter and granddaughter. Liz is hoping to be able to visit her soon.

David and Mary Robinson: The Committee of NTC (Network of Thai Christians UK) had a two-day retreat mid-November, and these benefits were enjoyed during their stay at our home. The warmth of fellowship was very noticeable in their time together, with business sessions interspersed with times of worship, personal sharing, fun games, and enjoying home-made food (made by the members in our newly extended kitchen).



#### Prayer requests

- \* Pray that as committee members are trained in their various responsibilities, and do these more and more, they have the wisdom, patience and skill needed.
- \* Pray for a freshness and creativity in all NTC activities, so all group members will in unity rejoice in their walk with the Lord, and their service for Him.
- \* For carrying out the decisions of the Committee Retreat, in arranging next year's Camp and Fellowship weekends, and all other admin needs.
- \* For Hannah, Paul & Grace, and the four grandchildren, some facing health challenges at this time, that they may experience physical and spiritual renewal this Christmas.

Gail and Daniel Castro: 35 years ago, Gail wrote her first prayer letter from language school in Costa Rica, before heading to Colombia as a single missionary. Many years have passed since then. We, along with our daughters, have been to many places, lived many and varied experiences, and met many wonderful people who have left a mark on our lives. In every experience we have lived, we can say without a shadow of doubt, that God has proven faithful to us! As we look back, a cascade of memories come to our minds, and we cannot but thank our good God for His hand of guidance, provision and protection on our lives. We are amazed at God's faithfulness:

- calling Gail and sending her to Colombia.
- bringing us together as a family.
- gifting us with two amazing daughters.
- surrounding us with loving and supportive friends in many places.
- providing for all our needs through faithfully generous supporters.
- guiding and sustained us during our twelve years in Spain.
- providentially bringing us back to the UK and guiding us into continued ministry.



As we look forward, a new chapter is opening up for Gail. From December 2025 she will be starting work in a home for looked-after children. This job provides for our financial needs but still allows time for her to continue volunteering with Safe Families as well as supporting outreach activities at church (although to a lesser extent). For a number of reasons, our support base with OMS has been reducing and we see this new job as God's provision in meeting our present needs. Gail's passion for mission is not diminished on leaving One Mission Society and she will continue to look for opportunities to share Jesus in the workplace.

It now only leaves us to thank God for each one of you, our faithful support team. Some of you have been with us on this amazing journey for 35 years, others of you have joined our team along the way. We are ever so grateful for your financial and prayerful support, your letters of encouragement, birthday cards, Christmas cards, personal gifts for our girls and ourselves, personal visits while in Colombia and Spain. It has been an immense privilege to have you walking by our side during these more than 30 years. You truly have been a blessing to us and have enriched our lives in many ways! We want to encourage you to continue supporting the work of OMS, through supporting missionary families or compassion projects:

Would you consider supporting the ministry of Hope House in Colombia?

Would you consider supporting Colombian missionary Oscar Jimenez?

Please scan the QR codes to find more information.

We pray for God's continued blessing and guidance in your life as you continue to live for him.







# In the Joy of the Lord

Joyce Meredith 30th July 1930 - 24th October 2025 (Aged 95) (Grappenhall)

Joyce was the third of four children, originally residents of nearby Latchford before the family moved to Knutsford Road, Grappenhall and became part of the community whose epicentre was Grappenhall IM Church and its hall. In 1948, Joyce attended a dance held at the nearby Fir Grove Hotel. It was there that Joyce met Eric. Within just two years Eric and Joyce were married and went on to celebrate sixty-five years of marriage. Eric's career in the Fleet Air Arm took the young family firstly to Winchester, then Cornwall and finally Malta before their return to Warrington.

On their return, Joyce resumed her membership of the church fellowship at Grappenhall, not only being a regular worshipper but also part of the then Young Wives Group, later to become known as the Ladies Fellowship.

Joyce was consistently active within the fellowship, working in the kitchen or on other tasks, but she will best be remembered for two other roles. In 1991, she was the co-founder of the Church's Ladies keep-fit group and continued as leader until as recently as early 2024. She was forever organised, dedicated, and hardworking, which led to the activity being so successful. The hall was always full of mature and not-so-mature ladies and there was always a waiting list of ladies wishing to join.

The Church Garden was somewhere else where Joyce, with the assistance of Eric, demonstrated her commitment to the church. Often unseen by many, they worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that the garden was always both tidy and colourful. Joyce's work with flowers was not confined to the garden, but for many years she was one of the group of ladies who arranged flowers to decorate the church each Sunday.

Joyce was an active and supportive member at Grappenhall, and she will be sorely missed. Her funeral service took place at the church on November 13th and was conducted by Rob Brooks.

William Pryce Davies (Lamberhead Green),

Pryce died at home on 23 October, 2025 aged 86 years. He spent his working life in the building trade, never happier than when doing work on his own home or the home of friends.

He enjoyed Sundays at chapel, always ready to join in the after-service fellowship. He was a quiet, caring man, married to Helen for 49 years and you could say that they were inseparable.

Pryce had been ill for a number of years which curtailed his attending chapel, never in those years did he complain. A good man, who is missed by his friends and especially Helen.

The funeral on November 11 (Armistice Day) began with joining in the nation's silence as loved ones were remembered. The service was conducted by Norman Prescott before cremation at Wigan and subsequently the ashes being buried in the family grave at St. John's, Pemberton. A good man, not goodbye, Pryce, but au revoir.

MARION ANDERTON, (4th September 2025, aged 103) (Mount Zion, Pemberton),

On 23rd September, the funeral of Marion, our oldest member was held. She had remained a dedicated worker within the Church and Sunday School throughout her life until she was admitted to Lakeside Care Home a number of years ago.

ALICE TAYLOR, (15th September 2025, aged 90) (Mount Zion, Pemberton),

A "combined" Service of Thanksgiving took place on 3rd October, for the lives of Alice (and her husband, Ken, who passed away during the Covid-19 Epidemic and whose funeral service was subject to the restrictions in place at the time). Alice and Ken took an active part in the Fellowship and in running the Coffee Morning in its early days. They were responsible for raising funds for the "Teen Challenge" initiative.

BRIAN CROSTON, (21st September 2025, aged 89) (Mount Zion, Pemberton),

On Wednesday, 8th October 2025, the funeral for Brian was held. Brian, in a long life of service to our church at Mount Zion, had held many offices, including President, Treasurer, Member of Mixed and Men's Choirs and was involved in many Sunday School presentations.

It is difficult to come to terms with losses such as these. We thank God for their many talents shared in God's work and witness and ask God's continued support and blessing on all their families.

*Thank you & God bless*

## Service of thanks and recognition for Ken Irwin's sixty years of Ministry

Saturday the 11th October 2025 saw the little Independent Methodist Chapel in Cherry Lane, Lymm, packed to overflowing as family and friends of Connexional Minister Ken Irwin gathered to give thanks for his commitment and service for over sixty years.

It was back on Easter Sunday 1966, that Ken conducted his first service at the even smaller High Legh Independent Methodist Church (now the Northwood Centre) and he was to conclude his active preaching ministry at Lymm Church on Easter Sunday 2025. It was to commemorate and give thanks for this tremendous level of commitment that friends gathered from across the decades.



The service was led by Peter Gleave who was accompanied by the worship group from Appleton Church (AIM) who led the congregation in the singing of some of Ken's favourite hymns throughout the service. Following the resounding singing of the opening hymn, 'And can it be', Peter read two verses of scripture that Ken holds dear and have provided the foundation of his faith and ministry, Romans 1:16 and John 3:16.

Rob Brooks on behalf of the Warrington Circuit recalled the commitment Ken had given and the friendships he had made with churches and individuals right across the Connexion and beyond. He quoted extracts from personal letters written by people young and old for the help and guidance that Ken had provided on their journeys of faith.

Chris Goswami of Lymm Baptist Church and representing 'Lymm Churches Together' then spoke about the work and cooperation that Ken had done alongside the churches in the village since he had arrived at Cherry Lane in 1983. Dennis Roughley a fellow IM Minister from Thatto Heath, St. Helens, and a contemporary of Ken testified to the friendship and encouragement that he had received from Ken over many years.

Following further singing, Phil Lodge a member of the Sunday Night Fellowship at Friars' Green Church during the 1970's, recalled his memories as a young person of those meetings not only at the church but also at the home of Ken and Ann. This was followed by Colin Pownall, a fellow Christian worker of long standing gave a lengthy testimony to Ken all of which was fully justified.

There was an unoccupied reserved table at the front of the church and just as the service began some surprise guests walked in who had come all the way from Romania. Ionel and Anca along with their daughter Lia and the three little girls that they had adopted into their family, Andreea, Lavinia, and Camillia. As most readers will know, Ken has spent thirty years supporting Christians in Romania and the family had made the special journey as a mark of respect and appreciation for Ken's longstanding support. All three adults, with Lia translating for her parents recalled the work and support that Ken had done for them.

Dorothy Kendrick, on behalf of the Connexion then paid tribute for Ken's Commitment to the denomination firstly as Social Services Secretary and more recently serving as Connexional President. This was followed by a short address given by Peter Gleave.

In response Ken modestly said he had heard nothing but 'lies' all afternoon and didn't recognise the man that everyone was talking about. Everybody present would have disagreed with him as the full church provided more than adequate testimony to Ken's long and fruitful ministry.

The service closed with presentations from the Warrington Circuit, Cherry Lane and Friar's Green Churches followed by refreshments and an opportunity for many old acquaintances to be renewed. It had been an excellent afternoon of fellowship which made a fitting tribute to Ken, a true man of God.

Rob Brooks





# Church News

**Bethel , Newtown**, Wigan - 145th Anniversary Weekend.

When Mother Julian of Norwich, in the 14th century, said, "But all shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well", no doubt she was thinking of the promises of the book of Revelation. There is another nuance for Christian Fellowships, there is hope in the faithful and consistent gatherings, especially when celebrating work done and work planned by the living Spirit. The Bethel Anniversary weekend, coupled with Remembrance of the pain of World wars, proved to be an inspiration of love and warmth of mutual support. Bethel was opened in September 1880. David Parkinson of past glories and significant characters, with a power-point series of photos provided by members. He reminded us of "hidden messages", texts often covered by modernisation of the building, like, "We preach Christ crucified". David used 1 John 4: 1-21 to remind us of God's love, then and now. The photos drew comments and delighted responses: fashions on Walking Days, weekends away, the hockey and football teams and a Flower Festival in 1980, where a dismissive Grandad, misunderstanding the decorative effect of dried flowers, was heard to mutter, "Sithee, they're deed awready!" (Translation available ...). One photo, of the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations, was featured on Granada TV.

The second part of the evening featured our five musicians, who had chosen their favourite hymns, with the inevitable serial repetition of the same hymns! Each musician introduced their favourite with a reason for their choice. Garth Rigby coupled his choice with a moving description of a recent cruise ship visit to Lisbon and the appearance of the 'Christ the King' statue seen through the early morning mist.

On the Sunday, our visiting preacher, Joseph Elsdon, effectively and movingly led us into a combination of both the Anniversary and Remembrance Sunday. He read, Lamentations chapter 3: 22-33, reminding us of how great is God's faithfulness. We learnt about the hymn writer Thomas Chisholm, a simple man plagued by illness who wrote 1,200 poems in his life, many used for hymns especially 'Great is thy Faithfulness'. Sensitively, Joseph led us in grateful recognition of the fallen, the wounded and the mentally scarred by war, informing us that there has been British military deaths, through war, every year since World War 2, apart from 1968. Using his grandson's toy pirate telescope exclaiming "I can see someone with a new set of teeth at the back", he asked us to focus on the blessings and challenges of 145 years and to look upon the very bricks of our chapel as our own Ebenezers 'stones of help'. Yes, the Anniversary weekend was a triumph, a joy and a rich blessing. In fact, that old Grandad might well have said, "It wor gradely!" - David Moulson

On Remembrance Sunday, along with the rest of the nation, the congregation at **Risley IM Church** in the Warrington Circuit, remembered the fallen, friends and family of members of the congregation and the countless others who gave their lives. The children used the symbol of the poppy in a variety of ways to remember and be thankful for the sacrifice of those who went before us. The children meet on a regular basis for Bible Crafts and in their most recent meeting they made a wreath from some colour experiments created in their previous session. During the service the wreath and other symbols of remembrance that the children had made were laid at the altar rail, putting their beautiful creation front and centre in our service of Remembrance. James Tobiasen Friday 24th October saw twenty-five people from **Stockton Heath Christian Fellowship** heading to Grange-over-Sands for a weekend away at Thornleigh Christian Hotel. What a great time we had, the staff were so welcoming, the food was first rate and even the weather was kind to us most of the time. The weekend was led by Jonathan and Claire Bramwell, friends of ours from Hazel Grove Baptist Church. On the Friday evening after a lovely meal we shared our first session together as Jonathan and Claire led us in worship and then Jonathan gave us an overview of what he would be sharing over the weekend. On Saturday morning we all met together for breakfast before sharing worship together and looking into Luke's gospel. After a light lunch, there was free time, some of us had a walk along the promenade, some just had a rest in the comfortable lounge with a good book and pleasant company, some went further afield into Bowness, and the energetic among us went on a harder walk in the surrounding countryside. Suitably refreshed and working up our appetite for dinner, another great meal, we gathered together for a quiz and some games, lots of fun and laughter ensued. We were all glad the clocks went back that weekend so we could have an extra hour in bed that night. Sunday morning and another lovely breakfast before a time of worship and teaching, after the morning break we shared fellowship together and closed with a time of communion and prayer. Before leaving for home on Sunday afternoon we had roast dinner before goodbyes were said and everyone left for home knowing we had shared a special time of love and fellowship together. Barbara Hodgkinson

On Saturday 4 November the fellowship at **Thatto Heath** held a Service of Celebration, acknowledging the 50 years of service given by Dennis Roughley. They were joined by Lester Atherton and Graham O'nions. Lester brought a wonderful message on 'Faithfulness' based on the words contained in Psalm 23. Dennis' son and daughter read the two Bible Readings, his sister read a poem, and Denise Helsby spoke on behalf of the Fellowship. The fellowship at Thatto Heath thank God for Dennis and his wonderful ministry and service. Fay Williams

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Connexion Magazine  
ISSN 0141 - 4372  
Independent  
Methodist Churches



**Jon Hill**  
Padgate Worker

“ Well, what an interesting  
month this has been!

# YFC

When I first started around a year ago, I was stood in RS lessons (RE to the oldies like me), handing out green pens and rulers, generally assisting but for the most part just being a body in the room. Since then, my doors to opportunities in RS have swung open and I've been rushed off my feet!

In the space of three weeks I've delivered lessons on "A Christian Response to Atheism", "The Christian View of the Afterlife, and then "The Difference between Crime and Sin" - all fantastic opportunities to truly explain the core of the Christian faith in different ways and to give the gospel in raw, unapologetic form. The openness to my brazenly preaching in class is astounding! Both with staff and students I'm seeing minds being changed and hearts becoming open right in front of my eyes.

All of this while we've been planning and hosting the November Schools Tour, where over 4000 young people were engaged with the gospel, over 900 Bibles were distributed, and where dozens of young people came to a concert amidst the driving wind and pouring rain, with 25 responding to the gospel appeal.

What a time to be doing evangelism in the UK! The doors are swinging wide open, and the schools aren't just allowing the Kingdom in, they're valuing it! Keep praying for us; that our access will not just continue, but expand. Let's introduce every child in Warrington to the King of kings!

Keep the faith, help the young, stay awesome!

[The Connexion is sponsoring Jon's work via Risley church and Warrington Youth for Christ - Editor] - Jon Hill

### PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Please pray for the 900+ young people who received a Bible during mission week, that God would be with them as they read His Word.
2. Pray also for the 25 young people who responded to the gospel at Fuse, that they would know God's presence and receive support as they start their journey with Him.
3. Please pray for all of the upcoming opportunities to share the gospel over the Christmas period - for the many lessons and assemblies this month!

