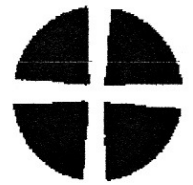


The Avenue Methodist Church



The Living Well Centre
at The Avenue
Methodist Church

Wincham Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 4PL

The Methodist Church
of Great Britain

Love, Serve,
Go & Grow

Newsletter



FEBRUARY and MARCH 2018

MINISTER'S LETTER

A New Year and lots of new things naturally start, such things as the diary, calendar, new term, resolutions – the list of new things goes on (and some of you may even have kept your resolutions so far, though with one estimate being that we keep resolutions for around 4-8 days, perhaps not).

New things are happening all around us, very shortly we'll see the signs of spring and the beautiful joys of creation, though with it comes the continual up-keep of the garden. After summer, it took me 30 seconds to come to terms with not having to 'do' the garden, but I'm reminded that with the pleasure of seeing new flowers, shrubs and trees, there is also the responsibility of maintaining my little patch, and I'm not looking forward to that, but it has to be done, so hey, I should just get on with it.

The same can be said in lots of areas of our lives, we want the benefits, but with the minimum of work. Sadly, we all know that a lot of hard work takes place behind the scenes before the joys can be experienced. We don't always know what's going on, but the results spring forth and remind us that something was going on and we can now benefit accordingly. The little flowers that pop their heads above the mucky, hard soil every year to herald spring are a great example of this.

The same is true of any organisation, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to which we all later on receive the benefits. Take the church as an example, lots of you do so much quiet work where we see the results, but like the flower we don't always know what went on beforehand. Every day the church is filled with people coming and going, which needs wardens, stewards, catering, cleaning, decorating, maintaining, greeting – the list goes on.

I therefore want to start the year by saying **thank you** to everyone who works in whatever way in order for The Avenue church to offer **a place of welcome to everyone, whoever they are or wherever they are on their journey through life.** Without your work, the church would not be able to continue to do what it seeks to do – so thank you.

As I look in my garden and see one season going and another coming, I'm aware that I take for granted everything going on out of sight and tell myself that this year, having considered buying a spade, fork, shears and anything else I might need as I venture out there I will actually do some gardening and you'll hopefully be able to see the results!

So, thank you too, for those considering doing some new work for the church. As you think on what it might be, be assured that the list of things to do is greater than the list of people doing the things!

A bit like God's love really, no matter what's going on in our lives, he still loves us – thank you God.

Take for granted
Richard

NICK'S NEWSLETTER

I hope that you all had a lovely Christmas, and that you are looking forward to 2018.

Christmas Nativity service

On the 17th Dec, we had a special all age dress-up nativity service, it was really good to see all the effort everyone went to, even if the costume had been forgotten people were still willing to dress up and be a shepherd or a wise man or even an angel.

Speaking to some adults after the service it was remarked that it was good for us all to be together and for the kids to see adults dress up and take part.

A special thank you to our Narrator Audrey who directed us into place.

Christingle Service

Christmas is a time that we feel we must rush around to get things ready and to set up the perfect Christmas, that pressure is stirred up by shops and TV.

The Church needs to be a place where people can come and connect with Jesus at all times throughout the year but during Christmas we are reminded that Jesus was born for all, we invited people to join us over Christmas for our services.

The Christingle service was a particular highlight for me personally, getting things together for the day and making sure all your last-minute plans are in place, people can come to spend some time focus on Jesus and hear that God loves them.

We made up 135 oranges, 35 more than last year hoping that all the oranges would be given out, they were all given out. We had 151 people attend.

Towards the end of the service we stood in a big circle around the church and lit one Christingle from the one top candle and passed the light around until all the candles were lit. That moment was peaceful and quiet, I remember looking at one child's face focused on his candle light and thinking to myself the light of Jesus is an attractive and tangible thing, it shines in the darkness and is for all people.

May this year be a time that God's light can shine through us helping others to be attracted by the light.

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. Blessings, Nick

Dates for your Diary

13th Feb Pancake day celebration (time to be confirmed) look out for posters!

31st July -4th August Holiday club

HOSPITAL ADVENTURE

Shelia Beckett

First of all thank you so much for your prayers, cards, flowers and gifts following my accident. Also the church flowers for my birthday. The folk who visited me and the lifts for Don – many thanks.

It was Sunday afternoon on 24th Sept 2017, I was riding my bicycle along Manor Avenue when suddenly, before you could say Jack Robinson, I found myself on the floor having been hit by a taxi. It was obvious that I had broken my ankle by the peculiar shape of the foot. Wythenshawe hospital were not accepting any ambulances so we had to go to MRI.

The foot was manipulated (under sedation) and I was duly despatched to the Trauma unit. Breakfast, lunch and dinner plus tea and coffee in bed, what luxury!! Plus clean sheets every day. Of course the down side was bed pans, bed baths, commodes and bed sores!!

Eventually the operation was carried out on 2nd October. I came round wearing an enormous boot. Should I weight bear or should I not, that was the question. There was conflicting answers as the operation notes said both!! Oh what fun!

I was transferred to Trafford General Ward 6 for rehab on the evening of the 9th October but on arrival was told there was no bed for me. "What" I cried, "no bed" A cup of tea cheered me up and miraculously a bed was found for me on the Geriatric ward. Two days later I moved to a single room on Ward 6. Weight bearing was decided upon and I spent the days, boot on, boot off, boot on, boot off, elevation of the leg and eventually after a number of days, some physiotherapy.

A friend sent me a book called "Hungry for Jesus" which sustained me through many sleepless nights. Eventually I was discharged home on 19th October 2017.

I met lots of lovely caring people and I am so grateful for the skill of all those involved in my surgery and after care in hospital and at home

THANK YOU

Dear Friends from The Avenue Methodist Church

It seems that we are constantly sending you thank you letters, and this is because you constantly bless us and humble us with your sacrificial giving. Thank you again for the amazing Christmas gifts which we had the immense pleasure in giving out. We were overwhelmed by the number of beautiful things that you collected for us to bless those who have very little. Thank you for allowing us to show God's love and compassion towards those we minister to. We know that God will continue to bless you all for your kindness and love. We pray for a prosperous New Year and for much fruit for your labour in the Lord

Much love and thanks

Steve and Irene Brown

City Centre Ministries Manchester

NATIVITY

What an incredible sight on the morning of 17th Dec at 10am at the Avenue.

The church was full of angels, shepherds, kings, stars, the list goes on. As people arrived they went into the dressing room and re appeared as shepherds, or angels etc. Some people who did not have their own costume were invited to join in by wearing a crown that had been lovingly prepared at Breakfast church a couple of weeks earlier.

So the scene was set and led by Nick and Dee the service began with a narrator to take us through the story, even the donkey put in an appearance. Mary and Joseph were key players from Breakfast church and all members of the congregation were invited up to the front as their characters appeared in the Christmas story.

The story was interspersed with songs and carols. Several photographs were taken and these then appeared the following week on the large screens at The Christingle service.

The **Christingle service** was another wonderful occasion held on Christmas Eve and the sight of 150 adults and children standing around the perimeter of the church with their lit Christingles was very moving. Both services were followed by tea, coffee, shortbreads and mince pies.

Nativity

It was a great joy to me personally to see both the Church families come together for the Breakfast Church Nativity performance.

Everyone was there at 10.00am - yes 10.00am! - dressed up as a Nativity character. There were kings in dressing gowns, shepherds with their towels and angels with white sheets. The Breakfast children were the professional actors but most of us 'extras' ended up at the front as part of the Nativity scene.

It was a joyous event enjoyed by all. Well done Nick and Dee for putting it together.

Christingle Service

On Christmas Eve in the afternoon Nick and Dee had organised a Christingle Service and had prepared 130 oranges with candle, ribbon and cocktail sticks with sweets.

We were amazed as crowds of families arrived for this service and then a bit concerned when we ran out of oranges. Yes, there were about 150 people at the service and we were lucky to have Helen and Colin's son-in-law playing the organ for the carols.

The high spot was towards the end of the service when we stood round the church and lit the candles on the oranges, as the light passed round the church it was magical.

Many of the congregation stayed for coffee/tea afterwards and there were so many comments about the

lovely service. Thank you again to Nick and Dee for all their work preparing for this service - a huge success.

Christmas displays

18 organisations that meet on our premises, produced posters depicting one of the letters of the word Christmas. So much thought and care went into them and they made a delightful display around the Church. They were much appreciated by all who saw them and many thanks go to all those who made a contribution

ALEXA, WHAT DAY IS IT TODAY?"

Barry Myers

Yes, you've guessed it, my north eastern grandchildren have received from Santa the latest technological gizmo, and you can't imagine how useful receiving the answer to the above question is to a man of my age. Amazon are the purveyors of "Echo", a cloud-based voice service which takes the form of an innocent looking small cylindrical loudspeaker which, if addressed politely, will attempt to answer any question you care to ask. (End of commercial.)

The woman's voice which responds to your questioning belongs to Alexa who, though disembodied, is the embodiment of courtesy and patience. Every so often, however, she is stumped for an answer and is revealed to be as fallible as any human.

After all, which of us is not occasionally (or in my case regularly) puzzled and left without an answer? It's the curse – no, sorry, blessing – of the Christian life that questions abound to which answers come there none, and that is where the Alpha Course and fellowship groups come in. I may not have the answer, but someone else may be able to lead the way to a possible answer which I can explore in more detail.

I couldn't resist asking Alexa what might be the meaning of life. Predictably her answer was "42".

WHAT IS TRUTH?

St John refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. Can we hold on to the idea of truth when we seem to have moved into a 'post-truth' and 'post-fact' society?

Dr Ann Conway-Jones, honorary research fellow at The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham, gives her answer to the above question in the current issue of "Roots" magazine:

When we think of truth, we tend to think of scientific truth. And there are times when the patient sifting of evidence, combined with rigorous analysis, is important. But scientific truth is not the only kind of truth. Love, beauty, compassion... these are not measurable and provable, but that doesn't make them untrue. The resurrection defies the laws of physics and biology. It cannot be established using the tools of historical investigation. It takes us into another dimension - the

dimension of the Spirit, who 'searches everything, even the depths of God' (1 Corinthians 2.10).

Since we live in a multicultural society, we are aware of other religious traditions. And we know how destructive it can be when one group tries to impose its truth. But the Spirit defies human zero-sum logic. It is not for us to demolish other people's faith. And those we disagree with may have something to teach us. The Spirit blows where it wills. For the work of the Spirit is not about establishing facts, but about giving us the courage to live with authenticity in an uncertain world.

EVENTS

March 10: Quiz. Tickets from Pauline Carter 0161-969-2766. Our annual Quiz night is to be held again this year and it always proves to be a very enjoyable evening of fellowship and fun. Half way through the quiz a hot supper is served followed by delicious trifles. Cold drinks are available throughout the evening. Numbers are limited so book your tickets early, they are priced at £11. There is no need to bring a team, but if you wish to, you are welcome to do so. There should be no more than 6 in a team

April 14: Scott Brothers Concert. Tickets £10. A very prestigious event for us here at the Avenue. Jonathan & Tom are very well known locally & they promise us a piano & organ spectacular. We will be able to watch as their hands do a sometimes ferociously fast ballet on the keyboard. Not to be missed.

May 11: Coffee morning

May: date tba: Clothing Collection

October 20: Fashion Show. Back by popular demand, the Colours Company will bring a huge selection of autumn wear. More details later.

"IN" OR "OUT"

Rev Dr John Taylor

(John began his ordained ministry as a probationer in the Sheffield, Carver Street, Circuit before coming to Partington in the Sale Circuit. He served as President of the Methodist Conference in Britain in 1997/ 1998)

Although the World Council of Churches has its roots in the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 it did not come into being effectively until after the Second World War in 1946. It is "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." This definition caused a great deal of discussion about who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Many groups who claim that they are Christians are in fact ruled out either because they do not confess Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and their Saviour, or they do not hold a trinitarian understanding of the Being of God, as for example, our doorstep friends, the Jehovah's Witnesses, do not.

At the same time, 70 years ago, with the intention of being inclusive, there was a great deal of talk about 'Anonymous Christians'. Stories were told about Jews or Muslims or even unbelievers, honest pagans, who had acted in a loving, Christ-like manner in a particular situation and who were therefore swept up by well-meaning folk under the Christian umbrella as being Christians without knowing it. I do not believe that it does any good to be imperialistic in this way. It does not take seriously the integrity of the people concerned, who have no desire to be 'claimed' in this way and who find sufficient justification in their own belief-system to validate their course of action. Jews are Jews; Muslims are Muslims; pagans are pagans. No one should be claimed as followers of Jesus Christ without their knowledge or consent.

Christians want to be as inclusive as possible, yes, but there are boundaries which determine whether we are Christian or not. The WCC definition sets boundaries within which the Methodist Church operates. However, we must begin any relationship with other human beings by accepting them as they are, by respecting their beliefs, and not treading wilfully on what they deem holy. My freedom of speech accepts limits which prevent it being straightforwardly offensive. It is as much a Christian's duty not to give offence as not to take it. What I say about others may be critical but it should not be cruel. If it is cruel, it will be destructive and it is likely that all possibility of communication and dialogue will be lost. Our best witness to the truth made known by God in Jesus Christ is to accept others as they are and to live as Jesus lived

VOCATION

Rev Dr John Taylor

Have you been called to what you do? If you are a doctor or nurse or an ordained minister or perhaps a teacher, what you do will readily be recognised as a vocation. There is undoubtedly something special about any work designated a calling. However, for many people talk of having a special call to do something is far too religious and not the kind of language they use. They do not dignify what they do by speaking of it as their calling. I want to suggest to you that to speak of having a vocation does not have to be wrapped up in pious phraseology. It is just as much a calling to see something that needs to be done, recognise that you have the gifts to do it and launch into it, whatever it is, and pursue it with vigour.

To be Christian vocation it will always be honest and uplifting. It will lead to loving action and express the care that Christ has for his creation. It does not have to be conspicuously dramatic. Yet it will contribute to the well-being of God's children and the home that he has given us on this planet. So, what are your gifts? And please, don't say you haven't got any! Everybody can pray; everyone can be welcoming and hospitable; everyone can be alongside someone who needs another physical presence. Can you recognise a need and see that you have the necessary gifts to meet it? So, what excuse have you got for sitting on your hands? And if you are really

daring, take on something that feels a bit too much for you. You may well be surprised. God will provide.

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Barry Myers reports on the **January** meeting of the Church Council

The meeting opened with a review, led by Nick and Dee, of the activities and worship provided through Breakfast Church over the last four years. This led to consideration of their proposal to offer a development which would seek to meet the needs of children, young people and adults for activities, worship and learning in a less formal setting than the current act of morning worship on Sunday. There would be age-appropriate content offered in separate settings in addition to shared activities among children and adults. The revised provision would be offered at a similarly early time as the current Breakfast Church and on the first and third Sundays of each month. It would be offered as an addition to the current morning worship which would continue at its present time of 10.45. There would be a warm welcome to all who currently worship with us, either at Breakfast Church or morning worship, to share. Breakfast would no longer be served, but there would be some light refreshment provided to conclude the morning's activities.

In those months which include five Sundays, the fifth would be used to offer a single act of worship in the morning for all to share in. The special Nativity service held last December was cited as an example of style and content. Thought would also be given to additional provision at times other than a Sunday for activities in the style of messy church, youth club and informal fellowship. The current Alpha Courses and home groups would be seen as an integral part of what would be on offer for all in terms of Christian fellowship. The Church Council received the proposals with enthusiasm and endorsed the idea of beginning such provision at an agreed time in mid-April. Nick and Dee concluded their presentation with verse 9 from chapter 1 of the Old Testament book of Joshua: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Amen to that!

This immensely encouraging qualitative review of our work was followed by several equally important quantitative assessments through examination of the financial accounts, statistics for mission and property matters. Each revealed our commitment to worshipping and serving the Lord. Our Treasurer, Morris, presented a detailed financial account of our work and expressed his gratitude for the continuing generosity of our congregation in their willingness to offer financial support for the work with children and young people. The statistics for mission revealed this work to be the main area of growth at present. It's all of a piece. Praise the Lord!

A WRITING COMPETITION ORGANISED BY METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN (MWiB), INSPIRED BY THE LIFE, WRITING AND WORK OF REVD JULIE HULME

HOW TO ENTER: *The competition is open to British residents, male and female, aged 16 or over, other than the organisers, judges and relatives of theirs. You may submit up to three entries. The closing date is midnight on Wednesday 25 April 2018. There will be a prize of £150 for the winner and £50 for the runner-up. The winner and runner-up will be announced on the evening of Friday 29 June 2018 at a fringe event of the Methodist Conference to be held in Nottingham. The competition judges are Hannah Belsham, Dr Liz Burroughs, Lynne Ling, Revd Jenny Pathmarajah, Jackie Smith and Sue Whalley. The organisers are Revd Anne Cash, Linda Crossley, Lynne Ling, Rita Rowe and Glenys Vere.*

ABOUT JULIE: Julie was a Methodist minister and a prolific writer. She was the last President of Women's Network in 2010-11, becoming the first Vice-President of MWiB in 2011-12. She explored forms of spirituality developing outside the Church, especially as these related to the building of confidence. Her main method of research was to pay close attention to her own responses, explore the ideas in relation to the Bible and express what she was discovering in writing and in art. She died of cancer in early 2014 in her mid-50s, leaving behind a rich legacy in the form of her writings; this material can be accessed on the website www.imaginingabundance.co.uk. Published by Methodist Women in Britain • MWiB, PO Box 9298, Loughborough LE11 9FY • www.mwib.org.uk

You are invited to submit a meditative or reflective piece of writing on the theme of 'At the Heart...' in prose or poetry. Entries must be no more than 500 words. Each must be an original piece of work, not previously published either in print or electronically

COMPETITION RULES: All entries, whether sent by email or by post, **MUST** be typed and sent as Word documents. Handwritten entries cannot be accepted. The **MAXIMUM** length is 500 words, longer entries cannot be accepted. Ideally entries should be sent as an email attachment to writingcompetition@mwib.org.uk including your name, address, telephone number and the title of the piece in the body of the email. **DO NOT** put your name or any identifying details on the entry. Email entries will be acknowledged by email. Alternatively, typed entries may be sent by post to Writing Competition, PO Box 9298, Loughborough LE11 9FY. Postal entries should include a separate cover sheet with your name, address, telephone number and the title of the piece. **DO NOT** put your name or any identifying details on the entry. If you require acknowledgement of a postal entry, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Copyright will remain the property of the writer, although it would be our intention to publish the material on the MWiB and Imagining Abundance websites. **THE JUDGES' DECISION IS FINAL**

THOUGHTS

If Plan A didn't work the alphabet has 25 other letters
There comes a time when you have to choose between
turning the page and closing the book.
Life is like an elevator. On the way up sometimes you
have to stop and let some people off
Spring is God's way of saying "One more time"

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Stephen Nicholson

Although the Thursday group is principally a walking group we offer a wide range of activities to suit all interests. We often visit local museums. Last year we visited the former homes of two very influential Manchester women, The Pankhurst centre, birthplace of the suffragette movement and the nearby Gaskell House, home of the famous novelist Elizabeth Gaskell. In contrast we also visited the Greater Manchester Police Museum. In the summer we usually have one or two full day outings when we travel further afield. Last year we had a day out at Chirk castle followed by a meal at a restaurant near Wrexham. This year we are planning a day out in Liverpool by rail.

For those who prefer more sedentary pleasures we have been on canal cruises including a buffet cruise round Salford Quays and a trip along the Llangollen canal. We recently held a film morning at church where we were entertained by James Walton's great variety of home movies. From time to time we go out for a meal. We usually have a Christmas lunch at a garden centre in early December which enables people to combine a meal with a spot of Christmas shopping. In 2017 we went to High Legh garden centre, in February we plan to revisit Turquoise restaurant in Cheadle where we enjoyed Turkish cuisine on two occasions last year. Of course if you do enjoy walking our walks range from gentle local walks of less than 2 miles to slightly longer walks of up to 4 miles with the occasional more strenuous walk in the hills.

The Thursday group is open to all. We usually meet at church at 9.45am on Thursdays. Details of events are given in the church notices and on the noticeboard

A BAPTISM HOTSPOT

In the last connexional year Stockton Circuit celebrated 100 Baptisms. Over half of these took place in Thornaby Methodist Church, where, on average 60 people attend every service. We have had the opportunity to welcome around 6,000 people of all ages to celebrations of the sacrament of Baptism in the circuit. What a God given opportunity to take seriously the Great Commission of Jesus.

Yet it does not always feel that way. We have felt overwhelmed, under-resourced, confused about what we believe and deeply unsettled by the variety of our responses. This year we have taken the opportunity to

explore as a circuit, both staff and churches, what a privilege and responsibility we have been given and how this can be used to nurture the growth of faith in all of us. Statistics show this large number of Baptisms has been a regular feature of Stockton circuit life over the last 15 years or more. Here in Stockton and in pockets across the Connexion there continue to be large numbers of families requesting infant Baptisms. Families and communities with and without formal church affiliations are publicly joining in the Baptism service. It has led us to ask why. When I arrived in the circuit a year or two ago there was a strange mix of opinions. While welcoming and enjoying the celebration of baptizing, our churches felt overtaken by the sheer numbers.

But as the year has progressed, with the help of the Revd Dr Martin Ramsden, we have begun to listen more to the families who come requesting Baptisms. We have been taking an interest in who they are, the faith they have and how that is expressed. It has become clear to us that the time to build relationships is between the request for a Baptism and when the service takes place. It is not about hoops to jump through, but simply about being interested in each other. This has led to some surprising results, including a baby shower for Jesus during Advent 2017 and a Quiet room for prayer and reflection now permanently offered at Thornaby.

In response to the conversations, the Baptism services themselves have begun to change. There is a time in which we remember the special people of faith that each family has. There is a recognition of the responsibility of everyone in the upbringing of a child- friends, family and local church. The use of media in the service has opened up space for reflection and has led to some families providing their own input at times.

Revd Peter Catford

The Avenue Methodist Church exists to worship God in a relevant way; deepen and strengthen our spiritual life; offer Christian salvation, fellowship and service within the wider community.

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Rev Richard Mottershead, Christine Ashton,
Stephen Carter, Ann Turnbull

Submission of contributions

Articles should not exceed the equivalent of two pages of A5 (approximately 800 words). Shorter articles are preferred. Ready typed or word processed pages are welcomed—they can be scanned to save re-typing. Computer files sent by email to the church as Microsoft Word documents (.DOC), or in text (.TXT) or rich text format (.RTF) are best if you have Internet access.

Unfortunately illustrations in the form of your own drawings or photographs cannot be used at present.

Please send to cashton.03@hotmail.co.uk

We extend a warm welcome to all who wish to worship God in this place. We are very pleased to welcome young children into worship. A small play area is available at the back of the church for use at any point if wished. Please ask any steward for information about facilities provided for young people, including the *Beginners* who meet every Sunday morning.

Family breakfast services at 9am on the first and the third Sunday in the month led by Nick and Dee

At breakfast church we offer an opportunity for people of all ages to reflect and respond, as we seek to hear from God and learn more about his love for us.

We are all on a journey so why not join us to Explore Together

WORSHIP IN Feb/Mar Please see the Plan

The deadline for submission of articles for the next issue of the Newsletter is 18th Mar