

# THE connexion

ISSUE 37 SUMMER 2025

Inspiring stories from the Methodist Church



## SUMMER JOURNEYS

The **Methodist** Church 

# THE Connexion

Issue 37

Summer 2025

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It is summer, the season of long queues at airports, congestion on the motorways, and busy railway stations in holiday destinations. It can seem as though the whole world is on the move, and that theme of journeying links many of the pieces in this edition of *The Connexion*.

I am reminded of how much we in this generation of Methodists have to thank those who were prepared to travel in the days before airports, motorways or railway stations. In May this year, I preached at Raithby-by-Spilsby, the home of Robert Carr Brackenbury, so I was delighted to see the account of his pioneering work on the Channel Islands. I was also delighted to see Andrew Ashdown's reflections on our visit to Ghana where we gave thanks for the early Methodists who made the difficult journey to the Gold Coast and succumbed within months to disease.

Those who travel rely on host communities and the welcome and assistance of strangers. The Church's ministry of hospitality is seen in a number of ways in this issue. The cup of tea offered at Grace Place, the facilities offered by QVSR staff at Tilbury and the conversational ministry of the waterways chaplains, all say something about the love of Christ to people in need of refreshment or assistance.

As we celebrate our heritage sites, we remind ourselves that the Methodist Church has been on its own journey for nearly 300 years and that we (rather like Philip Richter with his camera in our final article) have captured memories on which we can look back with great thankfulness. What is true of the Church is true of each of us, and one way to give thanks for what we have received on life's journey is to put something back. That is what school governors do, and I commend the appeal for more Methodists to take up that role in their local schools. It can be a huge privilege to make even a small contribution to the learning of those who are setting out on life's journey.

Whether your travels are to new places or only local, I hope the articles in this magazine enrich your summer and that your encounters will be as blessed as those described here.

The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler  
Secretary of the Conference



# Highlights



## Renovated Welsh community centre now open

The Trinity Centre in Cardiff reopened last March after 18 months of refurbishment. The goals of remodelling the Centre were to create space for community engagement and put in place sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices. The Trinity Centre has a longstanding history of serving refugees, asylum seekers and people in need, and this refurbishment allows them to bring their support work to the next level. To learn more, visit: [trinitycentre.wales](https://trinitycentre.wales)

## Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) on tour

You can see MMAC artworks in two exhibitions in the latter part of this year, as well as works again being on show at 3Generate. A trail based on MMAC artworks, with creative, co-curated responses and an extensive supporting arts programme, *Everything is Connected*, will be presented across six venues for Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture, 5 September – 12 October 2025. Meanwhile, a ground-breaking co-curation project, focusing on the voices and opinions of members of the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group, culminates in the exhibition, *It Takes a Village*, at Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, 5 July 2025 – 1 February 2026. The Survivors have been central to reinterpreting for this exhibition, *Annunciation*, a watercolour in the MMAC by Eric Gill, sexual abuser. See: [methodist.org.uk/GillAnnunciation](https://methodist.org.uk/GillAnnunciation)

For more details: [methodist.org.uk/MMACTourDates](https://methodist.org.uk/MMACTourDates)

# Festival season is upon us



Celebrity spotting!

**For millions of us, summer means a day out at a rural show, a music festival, or a sporting event. And increasingly now local Methodist churches have a stand at these events, meeting visitors and offering God's love to all-comers.**

It's a sad fact that most people never set foot in our churches. It's not new, however, and in the 18th century, if people did not come to church, John Wesley was prepared to go them, preaching outdoors when necessary. On 2 April 1739, he wrote in his journal: "At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people."

For Wesley, travelling to where people gather was not a publicity stunt, but an essential act to share the gospel.

## GOSPEL AT FESTIVALS

Bryn Lauder is the Festival Events Coordinator for the Methodist Church and he sees his role as connecting with people wherever they gather, which increasingly these days is at rural and literary festivals or at music or sporting events.

He says: "The Methodist Church has been officially popping up at festivals for several years now. This year, as well as agricultural shows in many counties across the UK, we'll be heading to Solas, Comic Con, Edinburgh Fringe, Greenbelt and many more. The events we attend vary hugely, from the high-octane Grand Prix at Silverstone in July, where we run an inter-faith prayer space, to the more peaceful Cheltenham Literary Festival in October, where we encourage people to explore their faith and spirituality.



Watch the film about the Devon County Show at [methodist.org.uk/DevonCountyShow](http://methodist.org.uk/DevonCountyShow)





He says: "I understand evangelism as the Church going out to meet people where they are, sharing the gospel in the ways we act, speak and behave. In Wesley and Jesus, we have models of evangelism focused on reaching out to the general public, wherever they gather.

"But what really makes the Church's engagement with festivals so fruitful is the involvement of local congregations and circuits. The opportunity to be present at festivals local to them is a great opportunity to share the good news and it's an opportunity to explore what it means to be 'an evangelistic community', to step beyond the four walls of the church, and to welcome and engage with people.

"It is always beautiful to see the interactions we have with so many wonderful strangers at festivals and events. Sometimes in just a two-minute conversation, folks find a glimpse of the divine as they go about their day.

"Through attending festivals, the whole Methodist Church is rediscovering its calling to be a growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking movement. Pope Francis shortly before he was elected said 'I have the impression that Jesus is locked inside the church and that he is knocking because he wants to get out.' To be truly evangelistic, we must be prepared to cross the threshold into our communities, into the spaces where people gather."

**"How good it is to see a Christian presence at these events."**

## **PARTICIPATE AT FESTIVALS**

Could you pray for our work at festivals? You can do this in your own time of course, but if you would like to join others in praying for the work, contact Bryn Lauder at [lauderb@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:lauderb@methodistchurch.org.uk)

Could you volunteer? To see if there's a festival or event near you and to get advice and support, visit our festivals and events webpages and/or contact Bryn Lauder at [lauderb@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:lauderb@methodistchurch.org.uk)

[methodist.org.uk/AttendFestivalsAndEvents](http://methodist.org.uk/AttendFestivalsAndEvents)



## **DEVON COUNTY SHOW**

Bridget Down is a Methodist chaplain at the annual Devon County Show, which was held this year on 15-17 May, attracting 90,000 visitors. Last year she was asked to bless a sheep, after which it became the county champion. She jokes, "A few weeks later, at the Cornwall Show, news had got around and somebody came into the church tent asking if 'Bridget the sheep-blessor' was about!"

Bridget is also a farmer's wife and she understands the hardships and joys farmers go through. She says, "I understand what it means when they win that rosette after years of breeding and the sadness when they don't win. And farmers understand that however good they are, ultimately they are in the hands of God."

The Churches in Devon stand at the show is a base for the chaplaincy team and somewhere for people to explore their faith. The Revd Anna Flindell, a superintendent in North Devon, is one of its organisers. She says, "It's three days that my feet never thank me for, but people are pleased to see us because we stand for something in the farming community. People know we're ready to listen whatever the issue."

The stand is certainly appreciated by members of the public, such as Tracy Rockett, who was at the show with cows from her herd. She comments: "We sleep on camp beds alongside the cows and it can be hard work educating the public about cows and dairies, but it's nice to see Bridget's friendly face. We always have a laugh and a joke."

# Presidential global travels

In June 2025 the Revd Richard Andrew and Matt Forsyth were elected President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. Here they describe the privilege of visiting Zambia and Hong Kong.

## RICHARD IN ZAMBIA



In January I travelled as President Designate with my wife, Debbie, and Andrew Ashdown, Partnership Coordinator for Africa, to share in the 60th anniversary of the United Church in Zambia (UCZ), which is one of our Partner Churches.

It is an extraordinarily beautiful country and it was a privilege to preach at such a historic moment in the life of the UCZ and also to visit a number of projects, schools, hospitals and churches throughout Zambia. Sometimes life is a lot more precarious and fragile here, but people trust God for their daily bread. We had a profound experience of a Church that is alive and vibrant, which faces many challenges, but which faces them with boldness, ambition and confidence that God can do a lot with a little.

## THE UNITED CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

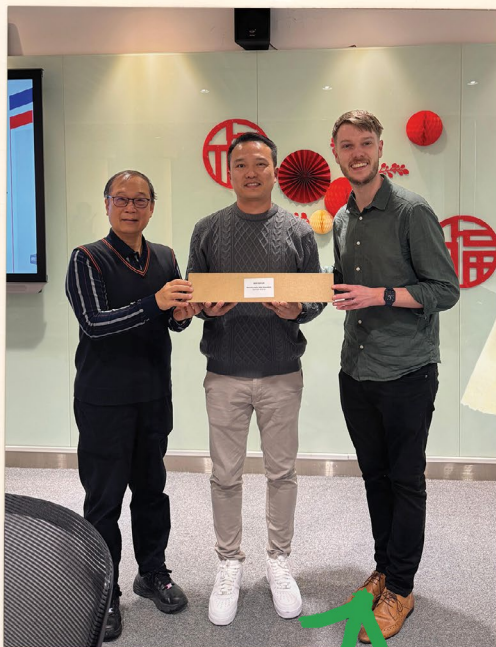
The Church was formed in 1965 and today it is the largest Protestant denomination in Zambia with around three million members. It has strong links with the Methodist Church in Britain: its first synod bishop was the Revd Dr Colin Morris, a former President of the Methodist Conference.

**“We had a profound experience of a Church that is alive and vibrant.”**

The country has been severely impacted by drought and crop failure and the Church has important ministries to address social justice. Among other things, it provides healthcare, education and community development and it runs four mission hospitals and seven clinics.



**"I was impressed with their bold, inclusive outreach and vibrant worship."**



## MATT IN HONG KONG

As part of my preparation for the Vice Presidency of the Methodist Conference 2025/2026, I travelled with my family to Hong Kong. I joined the Hong Kong Methodist Church's 50th anniversary celebrations, called 'Tracing Our Roots and Progressing with Gratitude'. It was a profound privilege to witness a Church honouring its heritage while stepping forward in faith.

Visiting the Methodist International Church especially inspired me. I was impressed with their bold, inclusive outreach and vibrant worship. Sharing this journey with my wife Amy and our girls brought an added depth, allowing us together to experience the warmth and hospitality of the global Methodist family.

Personally, it was a time of deep encouragement and reflection. For the wider Church, it strengthened vital global relationships. I return with renewed gratitude for our shared story and hope for the future.

## METHODIST CHURCH IN HONG KONG

The Methodist Church Hong Kong faces challenges but is committed to spreading the gospel and serving the community. It operates social service agencies, dental clinics and camp sites, as well as running schools and day nurseries. In addition to its established work in Cantonese and English, the church now also ministers to Mandarin speakers and Filipinos and Indonesians resident in Hong Kong. It also supports the Chinese-speaking ministry living in the UK.



We pray for the Methodist Church in Zambia on day 7 of every month and for Hong Kong on day 20.

Join us to pray through the year with the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

**[methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook](http://methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook)**

## ANYTIME GLOBAL SUNDAY

We are part of a global Methodist community and we invite you to create a 'world church' service at your local church to become more mindful of what we can all do to support Christians across the globe. There is no fixed date: you can choose when you want your 'Global Sunday' service.

For information and resources, go to **[methodist.org.uk/GlobalRelationshipsResources](http://methodist.org.uk/GlobalRelationshipsResources)**





# Holiday fun at Shirrell Heath

**drama, cooking and amazing Bible stories are just some of the activities youngsters at Shirrell Heath holiday club enjoy. Everyone benefits: the kids, their parents and the Church.**

There has been a Methodist holiday club in the Meon Valley, which is just north of Southampton, for well over 40 years and some of the helpers today are the children of the young people who first came to the club.

In the 1970s Ena Mears was a helper at Hedge End Methodist Church. Now, after a career in teaching, she is back as the main organiser for the holiday club at Shirrell Heath Methodist Church. She comments: "There were more stay-at-home mums in those days. There is still a need for clubs like this and parents still appreciate a little time without their children. These days children are probably more worldly wise than they used to be, but possibly also less independent. Back then, we would have the children for a whole day and take them on walks and

picnics. Now we have drama and crafts each morning. The children still respond in much the same way as they always have. They still get excited!"

**"We learned that Jesus can come back to life."**

## **WHAT HAPPENS AT HOLIDAY CLUB?**

The last holiday club was in April and the church was full with around 30 children. They were divided into age groups and participated in different activities. In the community room children aged seven to ten made craft animals and others were playing outside in the garden. In the church space, drama was taking place with the slightly older children rehearsing in their costumes ready to perform when their parents came to pick them up.

Tom Banks creates spectacular activities at the club. He built towers and seesaws out of huge cardboard pipes to show what people can achieve by working together. "They will remember this in ten years' time," he rightly said.



He went on to say: "The kids just love it. They are also amazed by how Jesus had such an impact on people's lives when they hear the stories for the first time. One kid came into the church, looked up at the cross and said, 'Oh, that's where Jesus died, didn't he?' And she's a little kid, just six or seven years old."

The Revd Phil Griffin is the Superintendent at Shirrell Heath Methodist Church and tries to ensure that Jesus remains at the centre of the club's fun. He said "The talks, crafts and drama help the children engage with the theme of the miracles that Jesus performed. We also get across the message that he still performs miracles today and that he will be doing miracles when he comes again."

He went on to say, "While the kids love holiday club, it is also useful for the grown-up volunteers. It helps them get more confident in talking about their faith. As adults we can get a bit scared talking about God but with kids asking questions, we have to give answers. They won't take fudged responses – they'll probe, they always ask why."

The club is also brilliant for the community as they can see that the church is active in the area."



**"My favourite is cooking because we get to make Rocky Road."**

## **HEROES (IN TRAINING) HOLIDAY CLUB**



Inspired to run a holiday club? Check out Heroes (in Training), a new five-day holiday club resource designed for children in school Years 1 to 6 that delves into what justice is and what it means to be justice-seeking. Visit [methodist.org.uk/HolidayClubs](http://methodist.org.uk/HolidayClubs) to learn more and download the resource.

## **SEAL OF APPROVAL**

The children who attend get a lot from being at the club. Carla is eight. She said, "I like coming to the club because it's really fun to do lots of activities. My favourite is cooking because we get to make Rocky Road."

George is ten and, for him, the Bible stories are the important element: "We learned that Jesus can come back to life and that he can do many miracles. It's amazing that he can do such impossible things."

Jess, a mother of one of the children approves of holiday clubs like this. She said: "I grew up going to church holiday clubs and was a leader in my teens. I still remember quite a few of the songs that we learned back in the day like 'My God is so big!' I am a Christian myself and this is a great way to learn about God and Jesus and everything that he's done for us. It's wonderful there's somewhere parents can drop their kids that's safe and secure."

Mark (Tizz) Tizzard is the Inter-generational Mission Enabler for the Southampton District. He said, "Holiday clubs represent wonderful opportunities to serve the local community, by creating fun, safe and creative experiences with a Jesus-centered approach. They also offer churches who don't have much week-by-week engagement with children or young people, a way to connect with families."







The port at Tilbury is vast, handling some 16 million tonnes of cargo each year. The QVSR Seafarers Centre is the base for the port's chaplains. It's a 24-hour facility with a small chapel and shop, games and wi-fi. Outside there is table tennis, a basketball court, and a pitch and putt course to keep guests busy.

**“Seafarers have a spirituality and a deep sense of the presence of God.”**

The ships' crews do not come ashore for long. The vessels coming into Tilbury docks discharge their cargo and leave so quickly that crews do not have time to travel to London, just 20 miles away. So the centre has brought London to them, creating a miniature 'London experience' with red telephone boxes for people to make phone calls in private. The wall is papered with pictures of London landmarks, there is a 'Queen Vic' bar and even police helmets to try on for photos.

Julie Hobby is the centre's manager. She says the décor is what crew members wanted to see. “We listened to the crews and when they are ashore understandably they want as little to do with ships as possible! Those we see are often quite young. While they are not well paid, they are proud of what they do, and many have studied at college for years to work on these ships.”

## CRUISE SHIPS

The port at Tilbury covers over 1,000 acres and it takes half an hour to walk from the Seafarer Centre to the pontoon on the Thames where the QVSR Crew Lounge for cruise ships is located, the only one of its kind in the world. Just a few yards from the gangway, there is a massive cruise ship. It's so vast that its hull seems just a white wall outside the Lounge's window. On some cruise ships there can be over 1,000 crew, many of whom are female, which is very different from the small, mostly male crews on the cargo ships.

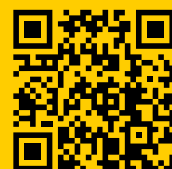
Karen volunteers at the Crew Lounge. She says: “We are friendly, welcoming faces for people a long way from home. Many crew are from India and the Philippines. We know which cruise ships are due in, and we have our regulars we see three or four times a year. Our red phone boxes give crew members somewhere private to call family. Many of those I meet are sending money home



## FIND OUT MORE

Tilbury is one of four Seafarer Centres run by QVSR. You can find out more about their work at [qvsr.org.uk](http://qvsr.org.uk)

Watch the film at [methodist.org.uk/QVSRFilm](http://methodist.org.uk/QVSRFilm)



to pay for education and healthcare for their loved ones. We can provide them with SIM cards and, if there are issues onboard, someone to talk to.”

**“Providing seafarers from around the world with a place of safety and rest.”**

Salvador is an electrician who works on one of the cruise ships. He says: “It's my first time here, but there's free coffee, free wi-fi and even free hats. I get about an hour's break so I won't have time to get to London. The hardest thing is being away from my family. But here we can have contact with them.”

Andrew Hudson is a chaplain at the port. He speaks about crew members such as Salvador. “I see God, in the people, in their stories. I see God in what they go through, how they cope, in friendship, love and care for each other. I see the support they have for each other. We're not going to take God on board, God is already there. Seafarers have a spirituality and a deep sense of the presence of God and we just share that with them. As Christians, part of our hospitality is to respond to a loving God who cares about us and calls us to care for others.”

# SUMMER CREATIVE JOY

**Looking for something different? Put these events from the Methodist Church in your calendar. We have exhibitions, concerts and live theatre to inspire, uplift and engage you.**

## ART IN NEWCASTLE

Shieldfield Art Works (SAW) is an arts project supported by the Methodist Church in Newcastle-upon-Tyne encouraging local people to engage in creative activities. They offer free oil-painting classes each week, called **'Painting For Fun'**, and their summer art exhibition opens on **2 August**, showcasing participants' work. It will feature a variety of subjects, including landscapes, expressive portraits, local scenes reflecting community spirit and beautiful botanical studies. Most pieces will be available for purchase, the proceeds supporting the ongoing creativity and community spirit that is fostered by SAW.

Participants' testimonials show that 'Painting For Fun' has a beneficial impact. One member of the group said, "I suffer from anxiety and depression and having somewhere calming to

come to be creative has had a positive uplifting effect on my mental health."

Although it is still a church, in 2010 the building was fashioned into a gallery and community space which can host exhibitions. Lydia Hiorns is the Arts Director of SAW. She says: "We work with the community to share their concerns and their arts, so we have had exhibitions about the housing crisis and sustainability, for instance."

Through art, SAW creates spaces where faith, creativity and community converge to nurture transformation. Season after season, they offer unique exhibitions focusing on socially relevant themes. They also run events, workshops and conferences.

Lydia adds: "Our values are hospitality, rest and the importance of art in helping us understand the world God made."

**"Faith, creativity  
and community  
converge to nurture  
transformation."**

SAW have a Craft Action group, which is concerned with social justice and how people can slowly but surely create sustainable change within their community. Finally, SAW also provides a space for theological reflections through its SAW Reflects group, which encourages discussions about the exhibitions and current events and promotes a culture of rest. Lydia says, "We believe in a God who rested and wants us to reflect on and understand the world better and deepen our understanding of God."

**'Painting For Fun' exhibition runs 2-30 August 2025 (closed on 9 August).** For more information see [saw-newcastle.org/painting-for-fun](http://saw-newcastle.org/painting-for-fun)



## DARTMOOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Nestled in the heart of Dartmoor National Park, Providence Methodist Chapel has had a permanent exhibition of Chris Chapman's photographs since June 2022. The collection pays homage to the region's rich rural heritage, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the beauty of Devon's countryside. Images capture the transformation of the landscape over decades, revealing the intricate interplay between nature and human endeavour. The chapel is a tranquil haven for all seeking a deeper connection with nature, history and spirituality, including those undertaking the 38-mile Archangel's Way pilgrimage.

Providence Methodist Chapel holds worship meetings every third Sunday of each month. It is also open from **noon to 6pm** on **12 July, 9 August, 13 September** and **11 October**. For more information, see [thedartmoorphotographs.com](http://thedartmoorphotographs.com)

## EXHIBITION

### Chris Chapman

The Dartmoor Photographs



## MUSIC IN BOSTON

Centenary Methodist Church is a beacon of community support in Boston, Lincolnshire, and also brings vibrant music to the heart of the town. It has an auditorium that can welcome over a thousand guests and its exceptional acoustics enhance all types of performance.

**"The National Methodist Youth Brass Band will light up Boston with their music."**

On Wednesdays between **4 June** and **27 August**, there is a series of evening concerts, including performances by Pat Campbell, The Salvation Army Band and ABBA Infinity. On two consecutive Saturdays (**9 and 16 August**) **The National Methodist Youth Brass Band** will light up Boston with their music and on **Saturday 27 September**, the talented **Kirton Brass Band** and the **Miller Magic Band** together will provide a remarkable event at Centenary. For information, visit [centenarymethodistchurchboston.org.uk/music](http://centenarymethodistchurchboston.org.uk/music)

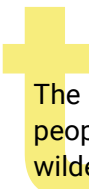
## ENSEMBLE '84 THEATRE

Theatre company Ensemble '84, which is based at the Methodist church in Horden, County Durham, is staging a performance **22-23 August** to celebrate Horden's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The company's name reflects the spirit of the miners' strikes in 1984, which had a profound impact on villages such as Horden. Its work focuses on the experiences of people and communities and this performance will take its inspiration from Horden's rich heritage and mining history. See [ensemble84.com](http://ensemble84.com)



# To be a pilgrim

Pilgrimage is more than walking, says the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, Past President of the Methodist Conference 2000/2001. It's about creating stillness and communication with God.



The Bible presents a story of a pilgrim people, sojourners encountering exile, wilderness and engagement with the companion God. Jesus spoke of himself, and his first followers spoke of him as “the way” (John 14:6). They were called followers of “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 22:4; 24:14), and they spoke of faith as seeking and preparing “your way” (Mark 1:2) of God, perhaps recalling scriptural themes (Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 23:3 and Isaiah 40:3-5). They also believed they were pilgrims together (1 Peter 2:11) going into eternity (Hebrews 13:14). Pilgrimage was in their belief and way of being.

So, what do we understand by pilgrimage today? Most frequently it is thought of as a walk or a journey to a special or sacred destination. Many people, whether of faith or not, find nourishment in this. But such an approach to pilgrimage may not work for everyone.

## SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

I am thankful for the privilege that I can walk. I walk a lot. In fact, a pair of my worn-out walking boots is on display alongside John Wesley's shoes in the Museum of Methodism next to John Wesley's House.

**“It's about creating deep listening and stillness within.”**

For me, pilgrimage is more than walking and is not an event to undertake lightly. It is a slow, unrushed, engaging, enduring process that is about identity, struggle, serenity, stillness and eternity. Pilgrimage is not something I ‘go on’. It's about attending to the state I am in. Pilgrimage is not a practice but a pathway. It's a ‘way’ to go and be. Pilgrimage for me is not a spiritual exercise, but a spirituality. I don't journey to God, but I believe God is with me. Along the way I am in a conversation with God, myself, others and nature around me.

Attending to God means, whether I am walking or not, pilgrimage is a conversation and communion. I am learning and growing in life and love, whether I'm alone, with one companion or more. It is a conversation, holy communion, in which the focus is more on listening and learning, than talking and teaching. It is about discovery and discernment, exploring points of hurt, hope and healing.

Pilgrimage is a personal dance into, and a glance into, my being. I experience my whole being in conversation. I hear myself thinking: “This is my body, this is my blood: beautiful, broken, blessed.”

In pilgrimage, without moving from my bed or seat, without standing, walking





"I pray as I walk."

or moving, I touch and pray in the inner sacred sites of my whole body, blood and being. I am conscious of my head and heart, face, eyes, ears, nose and tongue; my lungs, guts and organs. If necessary, I also visit places by looking at images or icons and photos, and in my imagination. The focus for me is not on movement, or a destination, it is not even about silence. It's about creating deep listening and stillness within.



## PRAYER AND PROTEST

As a walker, I undertake pilgrimage as a form of prayer and protest. My whole life is prayer. I pray as I walk. I build on the style of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King in bringing prayer and protest together particularly around matters of economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and selfish politics and religion.

I have walked from Sheffield to London to hand-deliver a letter to the Prime Minister, and from London to Oxford in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary, calling for an end to detention of 'asylum seekers'. In Wolverhampton, Belfast and Sheffield where I have lived, I have arranged with others what I call an Interfaith Pilgrimage of Prayer for Peace, walking along streets of contested space and struggle and conflict, reflecting togetherness.

I have worked with others to create a long-distance walk between Hull and York (the Wilberforce Way), Bristol and Tolpuddle (commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs), and I am currently working with others to create a new route between Sheffield and Hull via Epworth (the Equiano Way). I have taken groups on pilgrimage to Corrymeela, Iona and Taizé, and on a Sikh-Christian dialogue pilgrimage to Panjab.

The spirituality of pilgrimage is meaningful for me and is about delight as much as denial and distress. Pilgrimage can be demanding, draining and uncomfortable, especially when long distances are involved. Fatigue can threaten to be overwhelming. But it can also be restful and energising. Travel light.

## PILGRIM ROUTES

You can find more pilgrim routes on Inderjit's website: [inderjitbhogal.co.uk/walks](http://inderjitbhogal.co.uk/walks)



You can also listen to Inderjit walking the Wilberforce Way with Clare Balding on BBC Sounds [bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000fpbq](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000fpbq)



# Our Methodist Heritage

**Why not immerse yourself this summer in four sites evoking early Methodist history, which give context to the Wesleys' rich legacy and the beliefs that shape us.**

## **JOHN WESLEY'S NEW ROOM**

Wesley's 'New Room' is so called because it was the first purpose-built Methodist chapel. A hidden gem tucked away in the heart of Bristol's bustling streets, it is the oldest Methodist building in the world. It was built in 1739 and improved in 1748.

It attracts people keen to enjoy the peace and simplicity of the chapel, to view the thought-provoking displays on slavery and poverty and to see Wesley's Georgian living quarters. There is something for everyone: weekly worship; family activities during the holidays; musical events; a café; library; and a museum with interesting objects including the buckles from Wesley's shoes.

The museum charts early Methodism and the work and beliefs of John and his brother Charles, a prolific hymn writer. The siblings were passionate about social justice, providing food, medicine and education for the poor and openly opposing slavery.





## “Here the Wesley children received their rigorous education.”

But it is so much more than a museum. Education Officer Mandy Briggs explains “People can engage with the past, but also see how Wesley’s life and witness is still really important today.” Its most popular workshop ‘A tale of two statues’ contrasts Wesley’s abolitionist stance with that of the Bristol slave trader Edward Colston, whose statue was recently toppled into Bristol’s harbour, sparking controversy.

Wesley’s New Room is proud of its inclusivity. It holds annual Pride services and is registered for same-sex marriages. Mandy says “It’s great to be able to fling open the doors and say to everyone you are welcome, you are loved, you are accepted.”

As you exit the chapel, there is an imposing statue of Wesley on horseback. “It highlights the importance of a man who not only played a significant role in the history of Bristol, but is of national and international importance,” says volunteer guide, Paul Marshall.

John Wesley’s vision for the New Room was to be ‘a light in the city’ and that aim still holds today. Mandy says: “We want to carry on Wesley’s vision. We want to be a place of welcome, a place of hospitality, and we want to have our doors wide open for anybody who wants to visit.”

### YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

There are family activities and crafts at the New Room during the summer holidays and regular exhibitions and live music events. School visits are welcome. There are two other interesting sites nearby: one is the Charles Wesley House and Heritage Centre, his last family home in Bristol, at 4 Charles Street; and the other is Hanham Mount, a site five miles east of the New Room, where John Wesley preached outdoors.

[newroombristol.org.uk](http://newroombristol.org.uk)



### EPWORTH OLD RECTORY

Nestled in the gentle landscape of North Lincolnshire stands Epworth Old Rectory. It’s not merely a museum, but is a portal to the 18th century. The Queen Anne building, with its warm red brick and graceful symmetry, was once home to the remarkable Wesley family where John and Charles, architects of the Methodist movement, grew up with their siblings.

Built in 1709 and now a Grade I listed building, the rectory does not just display history: it breathes it. As you cross the threshold, the ancient floorboards creak beneath your feet, whispering stories of theological debates, family prayers and the infamous fire that nearly claimed young John’s life.

Ami Wagner is the Visits and Collections Manager at Epworth Old Rectory. She says, “Samuel Wesley was Rector here for almost 40 years. With his wife, Susanna, they had 10 surviving children and Susanna home-schooled them. She had 19 rules for raising children and was instrumental in shaping John and Charles’ lives and faith.”

In the family parlour, sunlight streams through leaded windows, illuminating period furnishings. Here the Wesley children received their rigorous education from their brilliant mother. Original artefacts – from delicate porcelain teacups to well-thumbed family Bibles with margin notes in faded ink – offer intimate glimpses into their daily lives.

Outside, John Wesley’s Physic Garden blooms with heritage plants. There are fragrant herbs, vibrant flowers and fruit trees that might have fed the Wesley family. The garden is a testament to John Wesley’s bestseller *Primitive Physic*, written in 1747.

Between **26 July and 30 August**, visitors can explore traditional techniques and enjoy Georgian-inspired crafts in the summer holiday crafting workshops. On **2-3 and 9-10 August**, the Community Archaeology dig will have visitors, guided by expert archaeologists, unearth artefacts hidden for centuries. Meanwhile, 'Games in the Garden' invites visitors to try their hand at the same pastimes that delighted 18th-century youngsters, with hopscotch, wooden hoops and more. [epwortholdrectory.org.uk/home/events](http://epwortholdrectory.org.uk/home/events)

## WESLEY'S CHAPEL AND MUSEUM

Wesley's Chapel in the heart of London is an elegant Georgian building known for its classical façade and harmonious proportions. Wesley himself described it as "perfectly neat, but not fine" when it opened its doors in 1778.

As the mother church of world Methodism, this Grade I listed chapel embodies history. When you step inside, the polished wooden pews seem to embody tales of spiritual awakening, passionate sermons and social reforms.

The museum and chapel hold 17,000 artefacts. Christian Dettlaff is the Museum's Curator. He explains: "The house and museum are the primary repositories of the Church's collected material culture; there are

many milestone objects which have shaped Methodism right from the beginning. Many objects are unique and relate directly to early Methodists and historical events."

Next to the chapel is John Wesley's house, where he lived for the last 13 years of his life. This well-preserved Georgian townhouse offers insights into his daily life, from his modest study where he wrote significant theological works to his prayer room with a worn kneeling board, reflecting his disciplined and devout nature.

The Museum of Methodism, located in the chapel's crypt, highlights treasures that trace Methodism's evolution from an 18th-century revival to a global denomination. Objects such as Wesley's travelling Communion set and his annotated Bible, offer tangible connections to this heritage. "Many issues of concern to John Wesley still resonate today" says Charlotte Hay-Campbell, the Learning and Community Engagement Officer. "Exploring our collections helps people to deepen their understanding of these issues and it is also a space for people to reflect on their beliefs."

## YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

This summer, the museum will have family activity mornings, including bug house-making. It also offers regular exhibitions, reenactments in Georgian attire, educational sessions on topics such as Georgian London and the abolition of slavery, and special activities for Wesley Day in May.





Wesley's Chapel hosts exhibitions, concerts and heritage days that showcase Methodist history. Knowledgeable guides share inspiring stories about social justice, education and personal transformation. [wesleyschapel.org.uk](http://wesleyschapel.org.uk)

## ENGLESEA BROOK CHAPEL AND MUSEUM

Located in the Cheshire countryside, Englesea Brook Chapel is a testament to the Primitive Methodist movement. It was called this because members wanted to return to the original pure form of Methodism as founded by John Wesley. This hidden gem offers a window into a movement that helped shape modern Britain's religious and social landscape.

The red-brick chapel was built in 1828 when this passionate breakaway Methodist group was flourishing. As you cross the threshold, the austere wooden benches and plain interior speak of the rousing hymns and fervent prayer meetings that defined this grassroots religious movement.

The soft light filtering through plain glass windows illuminates a space which is deliberately free from ornamentation, reflecting the Primitive Methodists' focus on simplicity and accessibility. The raised pulpit, from which lay preachers once delivered passionate sermons, remains the focal point.

In the adjacent museum, housed in the former caretaker's cottage, visitors discover the remarkable story of the Primitive Methodists, who were often called 'Ranters'

for their exuberant worship style. Original artefacts, including well-thumbed pocket Bibles, handwritten conversion testimonies and distinctive 'Sunday best' attire of members of the congregation, offer intimate glimpses into lives transformed by faith.

The museum proudly displays banners carried in temperance processions alongside journals which document Primitive Methodism's commitment to social reform, women's preaching and political enfranchisement. They espoused these long before they became mainstream causes.

Outside, the peaceful graveyard contains the resting places of notable Primitive Methodist figures, including Hugh Bourne, the movement's co-founder.



## ACTIVITIES

Englesea Brook hosts heritage workshops where visitors can experience traditional crafts, and lectures exploring the movement's lasting influence on British social history. The annual Hugh Bourne commemoration service draws Methodists from across Britain seeking connection with their spiritual roots. On **Sunday 10 August**, Learning Officer Elizabeth Morris will lead a 'messy church' heritage service and on **Saturday 16 August**, the workshop Crafty Ranters will provide visitors with an insight into traditional cottage crafts.

[engleseabrook.org.uk](http://engleseabrook.org.uk)

## HOW DO WE PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE?

The Methodist Church in Britain works hard to preserve its heritage and uses it as a tool for contemporary mission. Alongside the Heritage Officer and the Heritage Committee, the Connexional Property Support team provides specialist advice to trustees of historic properties, and to circuit and district officers who look after historic properties. They give advice on the conservation and adaptation of listed buildings and ecclesiastical buildings in conservation areas. Finance for historic properties partly comes from visitor activities, but also from circuits and from grants including the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

[methodist.org.uk/property/mission](http://methodist.org.uk/property/mission)



We pray for the Methodist Heritage sites on day 21 of every month.

Join us to pray through the year with the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

[methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook](http://methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook)

# Travelling differently: Ghana



**American novelist Henry Miller said, “One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.” UK Methodists visiting their Partner Church in Ghana would agree. Andrew Ashdown, Partnership Coordinator for Africa, reflects on the trip.**

As the Methodist Church in Britain, we commit to journeying with global Church Partners, building relationships and learning from each other. In this spirit, this year a group from the Methodist Churches in Britain and Ireland spent ten days with the Methodist Church in Ghana. The group included Cliff College students, Connexional Team staff and the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference.

The Methodist Church in Ghana faces similar challenges to the Church in Britain, including funding ministry and maintaining churches, as well as coping with their young people being drawn to more ‘exciting’ churches. Yet it is the fastest growing Methodist Church in Africa and its strategy to stir up Wesleyan zeal for evangelism, discipleship and holiness is succeeding at almost every level of the Church.

What did we expect? We wanted to learn from the Ghanaian Church in order to refine and inspire our own work in the UK. Secondly, we wanted to grow our faith and deepen our discipleship by encountering God in a new context.

**“We came across great vibrancy in the Ghanaian Church.”**

## OUR VISIT BEGINS

Our journey began in **Accra**, a cosmopolitan city where modern shops stand alongside bustling roadside stalls. In its midst stands 16-storey Wesley Towers, symbolising Methodism’s important place within the Ghanaian Christian landscape.

Throughout the visit, we engaged with both the past and present of Ghana and the Methodist Church. In Cape Coast we confronted a place steeped in both Methodist history and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Elmina and Cape Coast Castles, dating to the 15th and 16th centuries, were crucial slave forts occupied by the Portuguese, Dutch and British. From here, an estimated three





## INSPIRED TO TRAVEL DIFFERENTLY?

**Global Relationships offers programmes to help you encounter the World Church whether as an individual or as a group. Get in touch at [methodist.org.uk/for-churches/global-relationships](http://methodist.org.uk/for-churches/global-relationships)**



million people were transported to the 'new world'. Walking through the dark dungeons where thousands suffered was deeply moving.

Nearby, however, we visited the first Methodist church in Ghana, which stands as a beacon of hope. Beneath its pulpit, where Jonathan Hustler preached on Sunday morning, lie four of the first British missionaries to the Gold Coast.

We came across great vibrancy in the Ghanaian Church as we met Connexional staff, attended a youth service, and visited an impressive youth and media training centre. The worship during the trip was central to our experience. One Cliff College student reflected, "It was interesting to see classic hymns sung with so much energy, movement and joy. I loved the passion in worship."

## COOPERATION WITH ISLAM

Travelling around we appreciated the Ghanaian Church's greatest pastoral challenges, which are found in rural areas. We were hosted in Tamale, northern Ghana, by Bishop Lawrence Beka whose diocese covers a quarter of the country. Here, we witnessed the realities of rural life and were impressed by the deep reliance of Christian communities on their faith. Tamale is a region where Muslims and Christians co-exist and we received a warm welcome at the main mosque and met the Chief Imam of northern Ghana.

Throughout northern Ghana the Methodist Church seeks to offer hope through its social action. This deeply resonated with Jennie Lockett, a Methodist lay worker from the North West District, who reflected, "There is a strong sense of partnership in how local churches use

their resources, money and presbyters but there are also exciting partnerships between other denominations and faiths. It was amazing to see how much hard work has been put into those relationships." Jennie thought it would be something that could be emulated in the UK.

As the visit concluded, one group member shared "No one style of worship or single person can fully capture God's heart – everyone has gifts to offer." The group will continue to reflect on how the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church Ghana have granted them new ways of seeing things. They will consider how their new perspectives on welcome, worship, community and social justice can strengthen church communities in the UK and Ireland.

## HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN GHANA

The Methodist Church in Ghana was founded in 1835 in Cape Coast by Joseph Dunwell, one of nine missionaries sent by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Despite the early deaths of Dunwell and his fellow missionaries, they established several societies and the Wesley Methodist Girls' School. Their successors included Thomas Freeman, who expanded the Church's reach throughout West Africa, and the Grenadian missionary Henry Wharton. In 1961, the Methodist Church in Ghana gained autonomy and now has nearly a million members across 20 dioceses. It operates numerous educational and healthcare institutions, including over 2,700 primary schools, 30 secondary and tertiary schools, four colleges, a university and seven hospitals.

# Waterways chaplaincy

**P**Peacefully floating down a canal sounds idyllic. But life can be harsh for the 'boaters' who live 24/7 on narrowboats. Waterways chaplains are there to help.

The superhighways of the Industrial Revolution, canals, brought raw materials to the factories and mills, and took finished goods to market. Originally powered by horses, the canals fell into decline with the arrival of the railways in the 19th century. At its peak in the 1800s, the canal network covered 4,000 miles. Today, 2,000 miles remain, having been given a new lease of life as places of recreation and reflection.

In some parts, our canals are beautiful with abundant greenery and wildlife, in others, where there was once industrial pride, you may now find retail parks or decay. The contrast of these environments is matched by the contrast in those who use the canal. For many it is a place of peace and leisure, for holiday cruises, walking and fishing. For others, for those who feel dispossessed, it can be a place to hide away from judgement.

## WHO USES THE CANALS?

Rosie Bryant is one of a team of around 100 waterways chaplains who walk the nation's towpaths and chat with those they find there, be it out of pleasure or pain. She says: "You can look at those who live aboard a canal boat with its traditional paintwork and imagine how idyllic their lives must be away from the crowds and among the ducks. It can be a lovely, re-energising place of beauty.

"But for some, things can be different. There are vulnerable people on the canal. You will find people trying to escape aspects of their life, or who can't afford

housing after a life event such as a relationship split.

"The boats that you hire for a holiday can be very different from the sparse conditions on some 'live-aboards' with no running water or heat. Living on a boat is a romantic idea but the upkeep can be expensive. Without the golden ticket of a permanent mooring, you are constantly on the move, staying for just a night or two in one place. Not having a permanent address comes with all sorts of problems for work, banking and healthcare. There's a lot more paperwork and complications living on the water than you'd expect and, if you've not done your research, a rushed decision to get a boat can quickly become a shock.

"People on the water have a lot to think about, such as where do I get fresh water? Where can I empty my toilet? Where can I get coal and, particularly if the canal's frozen over and they can't move — how do I get it?"

## OFFERING HELP

On the canal towpath, there are young children with their parents fishing. There are joggers and dog walkers who Rosie chats to. They are here to enjoy the peace, away from the busy roads, which are hidden from view and can only be heard as a distant rumble. She also chats to those she finds on the towpaths who may be troubled. She says: "If someone is begging, I ask 'Have you eaten today and do you have somewhere to sleep?' Some may have been drinking but, as Christians, we don't judge. It's just a different lifestyle and even for them it is a peaceful place. I've never had any sort of trouble from any of them."

The support offered by the waterways chaplains can also be practical. When each waterways chaplain is commissioned, they are given a windlass so that they can open the lock gates for the boaters. Richard Alford is a URC minister and has been a chaplain on the canals for many years. He is now one of the trainers for the Waterways Chaplaincy

**"There are vulnerable people on the canal."**





Rosie Bryant,  
a waterways  
chaplain



“They need  
someone  
to minister,  
someone to  
care, and  
that’s us.”

team. He says “With 21 locks along this part of the canal, that’s a fair bit of hard work but it is a great chance to chat to people.

“Being asked for prayer happens more often than you would imagine and so we carry little Bibles and holding crosses with us to give away. I’ve even done two or three wedding blessings, the last one being in Coventry Canal Basin where they’d rigged up a wedding arch and put all the seats out with flowers and bows on the towpath. Sadly, I’ve also performed more than half a dozen funerals for boaters.

“For those who live and work along the canal, it is more than a lifestyle, it’s a community. And like all communities, they need someone to minister, someone to care, and that’s us.”

You can find out more at  
**[waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk](http://waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk)**

Watch the film  
about the Waterways  
Chaplains at  
**[methodist.org.uk/  
WaterwaysChaplaincy](http://methodist.org.uk/WaterwaysChaplaincy)**





# Jesus' love at Grace Place

**In the heart of South Shields on Tyneside, Grace Place, a free hospitality centre, has evolved from a temporary pop-up to become a vital community hub. It offers free food, warmth and companionship to anyone who walks in through its doors.**

A couple walk along the street, window-shopping. They notice a small café and peer through the window, watching people eating and drinking. Walking in, they are greeted by enthusiastic conversations, the aroma of tea and coffee and warm smiles. Welcome to Grace Place, a café like no other.

Grace Place is open three days a week, offering free hospitality to anyone who wishes to visit. Donations are welcome, but there is absolutely no expectation or pressure to pay for anything. The menu is simple – cheese rolls, cakes and beverages – and for many visitors, particularly those living in challenging circumstances, it may be their only meal of the day.

## CUPPA AND A CHAT

"We are showing the love of Jesus in the form of free hospitality to anyone and everyone who wants to come in and

**"Grace Place, a café like no other."**

have a cuppa. We've become community here. The people look out for each other as well as for us," explains Angela, one of the founding members. She is seated with a cosy white and red quilt over her knees created by another volunteer.

The clientele is a diverse cross-section of society. While the number of homeless individuals has decreased somewhat in recent years, Grace Place continues to serve young men with limited resources living in substandard bedsits.

Elderly individuals seeking companionship form a significant proportion of visitors, alongside people struggling with addictions and other mental health challenges. The local police even direct homeless people to Grace Place, knowing they will receive a warm welcome and essential support.

The operation relies heavily on approximately ten dedicated volunteers, some of whom have been involved from the beginning. "Volunteering at Grace Place requires more than simply serving refreshments. It demands a non-judgmental attitude and a willingness to accept people as they are," says Angela. To her right on the wall is displayed an array of heart-shaped pink post-its with kind and encouraging words.

What makes Grace Place truly special is its evolution into a genuine community. Visitors are regarded as guests and the team of volunteers aim to foster meaningful connections within its walls: couples have met, friendships have blossomed, and a sense of belonging has developed among people who might otherwise remain isolated.

Beyond offering refreshments, Grace Place has evolved into a community hub where various support services converge. A nurse conducts monthly clinics, the





Cultural Spring charity brings arts and crafts activities, and Oasis Housing uses the space to connect with homeless individuals in need of accommodation. These partnerships have expanded the reach and impact of Grace Place.

## EARLY DAYS

"About ten years ago, I had an idea that we might hire a shop for a week and present the love of Jesus to the people in South Shields," remembers Angela. What was initially planned as a week-long venture turned into a six-week commitment and, for five years, the project operated seasonally during Christmas and Easter.

The impact was immediate and profound. Yet, its temporary status created anxiety for the café's users. Angela says, "People would ask us, 'What are we going to do when you close?'" This prompted the team five years ago to plan a significant expansion. Grace Place secured a five-year lease on a shop premises with favourable rent terms, which allowed them to remain open all year-round.

Grace Place received crucial support from the Methodist Church which funded it for five years. The Church continues to cover two-thirds of its operating costs. Additional funding now comes from lottery grants and during the Covid-19 pandemic the local Council offered significant financial support.

Grace Place is registered as a Warm Space receiving practical assistance from the Council in the form of blankets, hot water bottles, and thermos flasks to distribute during cold spells.



**"We  
feel  
God's  
hand  
every  
day."**

## NEXT CHAPTER

With the current lease approaching its end in early 2026, Grace Place stands at a crossroads. While they hope to renew their tenancy, they are also considering purchasing their own premises. Angela comments:

"One of the things about this place is that we feel God's hand every day. The project has been blessed the whole time, so we are confident that we will find a way this time too."

As Grace Place looks toward its next chapter, its story offers a powerful reminder of how compassion, hospitality and community support can transform lives – one cup of tea, one conversation and one warm blanket at a time.



We pray for the Newcastle-upon-Tyne District – and Grace Place – on day 20 of every month.

Join us to pray through the year with the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

**[methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook](https://methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook)**

## SUPPORT GRACE PLACE

To find out more and to support Grace Place, go to **[bedemethodist.org.uk/churches/grace-place](https://bedemethodist.org.uk/churches/grace-place)**



# Come back to school!

**Would you like to help school children and give back to your community?**

**Join those who say being a school governor is the most satisfying role they have ever had.**

In 1748, John Wesley founded Kingswood School near Bristol. Education has been a core commitment for Methodists ever since and today almost 23,000 children in England and Wales attend 65 state-funded and 14 independent Methodist schools.

There is a problem, however: more people are needed to become school governors. This was highlighted by Lord Boateng and the then President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Helen Cameron, during a visit in May to Holly Hill Church School in Frankley, Birmingham.

Holly Hill is a faith school and part of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust. It has 183 children aged between three and seven.

During their visit, Lord Boateng and the Revd Cameron joined the children and their teachers at their morning hymn practice where Helen shared a blessing with the children. They then had a tour of the school and met some of the governors.

Methodist state schools deliver education based on the core principles of Methodism and provide a secure ethos for children to flourish. But Methodist foundation governors for schools are becoming much harder to find. Often serving in disadvantaged areas, head teachers and teams of governors drive the work of the school through their theologically rooted vision.

Labour politician Lord Boateng is a Methodist lay preacher and he used to be a school governor. He commented "Methodism, following the example of John Wesley, has a long and proud tradition of putting education at the heart





of its service to the community. Too few of us, however, are coming forward to serve as school governors. My days as a school governor in South London over 50 years ago were some of the most rewarding in my life. I strongly recommend service in this form to those seeking to get involved in their local communities in a practical and useful way."

## WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

School governors are there to set the overall direction of the school, help appoint the head teacher, approve the budget and hold the leadership to account. The role involves attending governor meetings and volunteering time and expertise to help the school. It's not essential to have expertise in education; governors are also needed who are knowledgeable in areas such as finance and buildings.

Prospective governors with business experience are especially welcome but so are those whose faith is calling them. The Revd Helen Cameron said, "The Methodist Church has a long tradition of educating young people. Many parents still appreciate the unique approach to education that faith schools can offer, grounded in biblical teaching and values. Having people of faith as governors of these schools is one way that we can maintain their unique personality."

Mark Carr is head teacher at Holly Hill. He says "I work closely with my governors to ensure that our school lives out our vision of 'Life in all its fullness'. The governors are a source of support with their wealth of knowledge. They provide a guiding hand, while holding me accountable for my responsibilities. I also know that I have a friendly voice at the end of a telephone who is always happy to listen and provide guidance, counsel and emotional support."

## REWARDING ROLE

Karen Handford is the Chair of Governors at Holly Hill. She comments, "The rewards of being a governor are many, having an active input to the success of the school being chief among them. There is a strong sense of belonging. Being one step removed from the day to day challenges faced in school helps me have a different perspective, which enables me to give support to the school leaders."

Cleopas Sibanda is also a governor at Holly Hill. She said: "I saw being a governor as a valuable way to offer support to my local community and make an impact on education to help shape the future of the school."

And this is an opportunity open across the country. Although there are vast areas of the country where there are no Methodist schools, there are voluntary aided and community schools crying out for governors, for whom Methodist people would be a wonderful gift.

Methodist schools are supported by the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST). Charlotte Taylor is its Head of Service. She commented, "Our Methodist governors, alongside our head teachers keep the light of our Methodist ethos shining brightly. They are dedicated and compassionate, ensuring our school communities thrive through excellent education and deep connections. I am so proud of the commitment of our governors in all our schools. By living out the vision of John Wesley, they secure Methodist education for all for many years to come."

## MORE INFORMATION

For information about God's call to work with schools, go to [methodist.org.uk/FlourishSchools](https://methodist.org.uk/FlourishSchools)

To find out about becoming a governor in your local Methodist school, please speak with your circuit superintendent or the MAST central team: [oolayinka@methodistschools.org.uk](mailto:oolayinka@methodistschools.org.uk)

To explore opportunities to serve as a governor in your local community, visit: [governorsforschools.org.uk](https://governorsforschools.org.uk)

# Channel Islands celebrations

As we celebrate 250 years of Methodism in the Channel Islands with a special service this year, we reflect on its beginnings.

The Revd Helen Cameron and Carolyn Godfrey on their visit to Jersey.



In the late 18th century Jersey was a major trading location with a thriving boat building industry and boats would sail from Jersey to the Canadian coast. In 1774 two fisherman from Jersey – Pierre Le Sueur and Jean Tentin – were converted to Methodism by the preacher Laurence Coughlan in Newfoundland, where they had gone to fish for cod.

The two men returned to Jersey, where churchgoers were becoming increasingly disconnected from the Anglican Church. In some parishes the clergy didn't turn up for services and those services that did take place were delivered in poorly understood English. (Many islanders spoke Jèrrais, a French dialect.) What began as a modest spiritual renewal soon grew into a transformative force. Methodism offered an alternative to Anglicanism, reshaping the religious landscape of the Channel Islands.

The first Society of Methodists was created shortly after Le Sueur and Tentin's return when soldiers stationed with the English-speaking regiment on Jersey joined the new converts and their families. Pierre Le Sueur bought a disused

Catholic chapel and Methodists started meeting there. However, local people treated the Methodists badly, so most meetings were in people's houses. These gatherings quickly drew attention – and resistance – from Anglican authorities and civil leaders.

## WESLEY VISITS

In 1783 John Wesley sent Robert Carr Brackenbury to Jersey as the first Methodist missionary to the Channel Islands. Brackenbury was pivotal in organising the early Methodist societies in Jersey. An early convert to Methodism was Jean de Quetteville, who became a preacher in Guernsey.

Wesley also travelled to the Channel Islands himself in 1787. He went first to Guernsey, where he preached and was received by the Governor before arriving in Jersey on 20 August 1787. He wrote: "About eleven we landed at St Helier's, and went straight to Mr Brackenbury's house. I preached in the evening to an exceeding serious congregation, on Mark iii, and almost as many were present at five in the morning; whom I exhorted to go on to perfection; which many of them, Mr Clarke informs me, are earnestly endeavouring to do."

**"Local people found in Wesleyan Methodism a voice, a vision."**



Wesley spent the next ten days preaching in various places in Jersey including in the Long Room of the United Club in St Helier. His lack of French was a problem so Robert Carr Brackenbury translated for him. Wesley's said: "I rode to [Le Marais] St Mary's... None at the house could speak English... Mr Brackenbury interpreted sentence by sentence; and God owned His word..."

He was warmly welcomed by people on Jersey and there was a rapid growth in Methodist membership after his visit, leading to more chapels and circuits across the island.

## METHODISM GROWS

Methodism did not spread unchallenged across the islands and persecution of Methodists was common with attacks on people and the vandalising of buildings. Some Methodists objected on grounds of conscience to undertaking militia drills on Sundays, which led to fines and prison sentences, until King George III intervened, supporting the right of Methodist islanders to have their beliefs respected.

In Jersey, the Methodists renovated an old Catholic church for their own use. They went on to build 42 chapels between 1790 and 1912 and split into French- and English-speaking circuits.



## Methodist Heritage

To further explore Methodist heritage in Jersey, visit **[methodistheritage.org.uk/visit/jersey-guernsey](https://methodistheritage.org.uk/visit/jersey-guernsey)** and **[methodistheritage.org.uk/visit/jean-de-quetteville](https://methodistheritage.org.uk/visit/jean-de-quetteville)**

## MODERN TIMES

In the 20th century the Methodist community in the Channel Islands was affected by the German invasion during the Second World War. Some were caught up in the deportation of civilians from Sark (vividly recalled in Nellie Le Feuvre's memoir *A Sark Teenager's Deportation*).

There were no winners during the war: some on the Channel Islands stayed in their homes, facing fear and privations, while others were evacuated to mainland Britain, where many were homesick and found themselves in financial hardship.

During the war, the islands' Methodist communities were allowed to continue worshipping, although buildings such as Sunday schools might be commandeered. Local chapel histories include harrowing and heart-warming accounts of life during this period and the Revd David Chapman has produced an excellent account in his book: *Chapel and Swastika*.

Today, the Methodist Church remains a vital part of Jersey's spiritual life and this year celebrations to mark the 250 years of Methodism included a special service in April attended by the President and Vice-President of 2024/2025.

The legacy of the early pioneers lives on in chapels, schools, community outreach, and in the Methodist Church's work with ecumenical partners. What began as a response to unhappiness with the Anglican Church grew into a movement of passionate faith and evangelism. Local people found in Wesleyan Methodism a voice, a vision and a spiritual home.

**"Methodism offered an alternative to Anglicanism, reshaping the religious landscape of the Channel islands."**



This painting by J.W Hatherell is available to view at the **Museum of Methodism**, 49 City Road, London.

# Seeing churches through a different lens

**Philip Richter's photography and faith actively inspire each other. Here he reflects on capturing the beauty of church life on camera.**

Why not take some pictures this summer in a church you're visiting or in one you know well? Your photography, whether with a conventional camera or smartphone, could capture some of the beauty, history, joy, holiness or sense of community that can be found in a church. Potentially, it can help you notice things you otherwise wouldn't see in greater spiritual depth.

Try simply immersing yourself in taking pictures. Don't worry about the time, just focus on enjoying finding pictures. You don't have to take brilliant photos, they are pictures that will help you re-experience the moment later. Photography is a great way of immersing yourself in the present moment and letting the past and future take care of themselves. That could enhance your well-being as well as help you see churches more deeply.

My faith is deepened by making and reflecting on photos. I hope you too might discover photography to be a real eye-opener, helping you notice the beauty of creation in new ways. May it help you to reflect on the world, your place within it, and what it means to be alive.

**"My faith is deepened by making and reflecting on photos."**

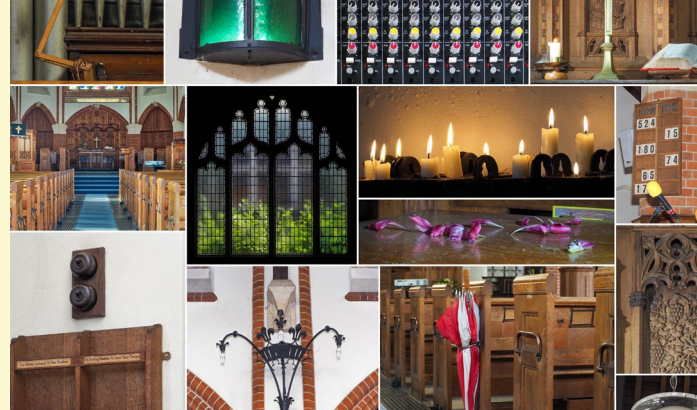






**"Candid, unposed action pictures are often the best."**

Philip Richter is a visual theologian, author and recently retired Methodist minister with a passion for combining photography and spirituality. He has led workshops and study tours on photography and spirituality in the UK and Italy.



## TAKING PHOTOS

Here are some ideas to try out. To begin with, pause. Switch off your camera for a few minutes and just soak up the atmosphere. Wander around and see what's drawing your eye. Discover what stands out for you and then you'll know what pictures to take.

- Try taking photos from different angles: bending down to the floor and looking up or, if the church has a gallery, looking down. You can stand at the lectern or in the pulpit (if you are allowed) to get a different vantage point. This can help make your photos look fresh and less clichéd.
- As well as taking broad-sweep photos, look for the fine detail. Move in closer, or, if necessary, use a zoom lens, to capture the smaller features in a church. At a Methodist church in south-west London, I discovered art nouveau lamp-fittings and umbrella-racks, and even a ceiling loudspeaker that resembled a flying saucer! Pictures of details can look very effective when gathered in a collage (try the free software at [gandr.io](http://gandr.io))
- Looking up or down with your camera, rather than just straight ahead, can reveal eye-catching features in the ceiling or at your feet. You might find an intricate tiled floor or abstract patterns of roof beams, for instance.
- Watch how the light falls on the floor or on other parts of the church, especially if it is coming through stained glass windows. See how it creates beautiful pools of vivid colour.
- If you can, return to the church at different times of day to capture the effect of natural light coming from other directions. The 'colour temperature' of the light will vary, from a cold light at midday to a warmer light in the 'golden hour' leading up to sunset. Shafts of sun can sometimes act as a useful spotlight, as I noticed at Salisbury Methodist Church when just the image of the sun in the large 'Creation Embroidery' was bathed in light.
- The church may be empty when you visit, which can give a note of unreality to your photos, as ultimately a church is about people. In an empty church, try photographing traces of people's activity, such as a half-finished drawing in the children's corner, some well-worn steps, a stray umbrella mislaid by its owner, or the Bible lying open at one of last week's readings.
- In your own church you may get the chance to photograph people (always with their permission). Candid, unposed action pictures are often the best and could be a helpful record of that church's history.

For children of all ages to tune into God and take their first, or next, steps in faith

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