

Keeping in Touch Wesley Place Methodist Church, Alsager

Dear Friends,

For those who use the daily lectionary in the Methodist Prayer Handbook, or follow the lectionary very keenly, two important dates stand out in the coming week - 24th May, this Tuesday, is the 284th anniversary of the conversion of John Wesley, the founding father of the Methodist movement, and on Thursday, is celebrated ascension day - when the physical body of Jesus ascended to heaven ready for the Holy Spirit to come at Pentecost (crude maths gives you the 1989th ascension day, but that really is stretching history, maths, and theology!!).

As I saw both events remembered this coming week, it set me thinking. And of course pondering the question what does it have to do with us at Wesley Place?

John Wesley, and his brother Charles were, like their father eighteenth century Anglican clergy. Realising that their church at the time had lost touch with the ordinary people, they set out to preach for the miners, the dockers, the farmers, and the newly developing industrial workers of their time that the Church had lost touch with. John preached in gateways, field corners, village greens, humble houses, and even on his father's grave! Charles wrote hymns in the ordinary language of the day, many of them set to the dance tunes played in the pubs of the times. Both men grew up Christians, they were taught to read from the Bible, learnt to pray with the prayer book in their hands and at their mother Susannah's knee, went to Oxford University and learnt theology. But it wasn't until they felt the burden of their own sin that they sought the assurance of God's forgiveness, and the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives that they really took off and launched a worldwide missionary and renewal movement that today is the second largest Christian grouping in the world. (Yes, after the Catholic Church, more christians in the world today owe

their faith to the Wesleys than are part of the Anglican Communion!). Within decades of their movement taking off, it too had become respectable, and a local man - Hugh Bourne, felt the call to return to the primitive and basic Wesleyan Faith, and so Primitive Methodism was born - the first 'back to basics' campaign of the movement.



The New Testament story of Jesus is about the God of Israel, the Old Testament God appearing on earth in human form and extending his mission of over 2000 years - from Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, the prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and the stories of the temple, the desert wanderings, and exile in a foreign land - extending all of that huge story into one human person and declaring good news and deliverance to the people their religion had come

to explode with unnecessary laws and privileges - delivering forgiveness, grace, and love to all people in every time and place. The Ascension of Jesus is, if you like the popping of the cork out of the bottle, until then followers of Jesus had been confined to 1st century Palestine. With the resurrected body of Jesus ascending to heaven, the way is opened for the Holy Spirit to come at Pentecost (11 days later) and make the work of Jesus infinitely able to spread around the whole world and into every time and place. (For those who question what exactly happened - I have no idea, all history has given us is a story with a powerful meaning. What remains a question though doesn't stop us experiencing the living Christ for ourselves, or the power of the Holy Spirit in our own experience).

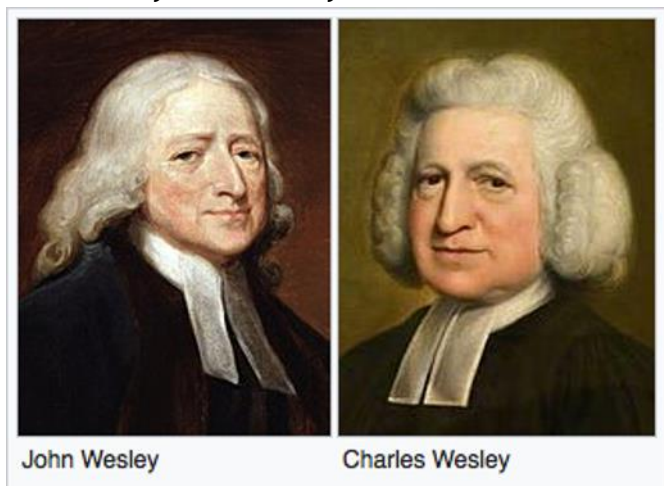
The first thing these two things have in common with us is Mission - they are about going out to share the liberating power of God into our day and age. John Wesley quite deliberately decided to 'be more vile' in his preaching - to go beyond and outside of the comfortable. Christianity is a missionary faith - it is for sharing. How do you feel by God to share your faith, what does it mean to you?

They also teach us the importance of personal experience. John and Charles Wesley in their preaching and hymns laid a pattern of experience for people to be 'saved'. They said all people can know that they are saved. They spoke of salvation, redemption, assurance, and perfection. Words we might find quite off putting - but they lay down the challenge for us - what is our experience of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, what do we know of God, and how are we going and growing in our faith?

Story telling - the ascension is one of those stories that might be classed as a miracle, but which some hearers might wonder at. If we could get into a time machine and go back to see what happened - what would we see? It's a really good and honest question. But the New Testament is a book full of stories that teach us and challenge us to believe. I recently went to the cinema and watched the film 'The Northman' - a great tale of Viking revenge, Kings and invasions, royal family alliances, murder and revenge. If that's too much for you - it's the same story as the Lion King (if you're into Disney) or Hamlet (if Shakespeare is your thing). The story is about loss, human experience, feelings of regret and revenge, and how to live with them and become good and wholesome not eaten up with hatred. John Wesley made claims to have preached to crowds of thousands in venues we know could not have held that many. But the effects of his preaching are well known to many historians scholars, and theologians. The ascension is the story of our God who visited the earth taught and told and showed us the gift of life in all its fullness then returned to heaven in order to come again in a way more appropriate and powerful for all time and place. What stories do you find teach and inspire you? Which story doffed like you are a character in? Do you want to escape or join in?

God's love is beyond respectability, and for the people on the edge. The Wesleys said that God's saving love was for everyone - Charles famously wrote

O for a trumpet voice,
On all the world to call!
To bid their hearts rejoice
In him who died for all;
For all my Lord was crucified,
For all, for all my Saviour died!



And was writing to and for a people to sing who felt excluded and left out. When I look around our Circuit, and the wider Methodist Church, those places where mission is being done are the places where people 'on the edge' (and that phrase can be read in many different ways) are being included.

Finally, forming a group together - John Wesley reckoned that his preaching had failed unless a society had been formed by his hearers - a group of people who would meet together, talk about their faith as it developed, give towards the methodist work, and bring their friends to pray and meet Mr Wesley next time he or one of his preachers passed by. In the story of the ascension Jesus spoke to 'them' and when he had gone, two angels spoke to 'them'. After it happened 'They' returned to Jerusalem to await the Holy Spirit. I was part of a fascinating conversation recently amongst some of us at Wesley Place - where some said how much they appreciated a house group or prayer group, and others said how personal their faith was, how growing and learning was an individual journey and it wasn't helpful to be shared in a group. Yet each person in that conversation spoke of their faith as real, as shared with others in some way, and belonging to a church that both contributed to their faith, and allowed them to give in some way. What is your group? Do you want to join one? Be bold and ask! Are you frightened - summon courage and ask to join in. Are there people you don't want to be in a group with? Fine, ask to join another one! Even as an introvert, I need to share with others at times!

The lectionary readings, if you want to ponder the Bible stories suggested for the coming week are:

The Wesley's conversion - Galatians 4: 1-7.

Ascension Day - Acts 1: 1-11.

God bless,

Rob

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Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people who never knew each other, citizens of distant epochs. Books break the shackles of time. A book is proof that humans are capable of magic.

Sunday	Time	Worship
22nd May	10.30	Led by Dr Geoff Dickinson
29th May	10.30	Led by Mr Daniel Keen
5th June	10.30	Led by Rev Rob Hilton including Holy Communion
5th June	Youtube	Led by Rev Rob Hilton

MONDAY AFTERNOONS @ WESLEY PLACE

Please join us on Monday Afternoon 2pm-4pm for Board Games, tea/coffee, biscuits and chat.
Looking forward to seeing you

Monty Croissant

This week we have had the sad news that Monty Croissant passed away peacefully on Monday night. Monty was a long standing member of Wesley Place and will be fondly remembered by those who knew him. A thanksgiving service will be held on Wednesday 1st June at Wesley Place following a private cremation. Our love and prayers are with Helen and David, Kitty and Hannah

*Wednesday Morning
@ Wesley Place
10.30am*



Join us every Wednesday for a short informal service, followed by tea/coffee and chat afterwards...

We hold in our prayers...

Ken George and Margaret Peel. Ken's Son - Ian's funeral will be at Wesley Place on Thursday 9th June at 11.30am.



Live@5

Sunday 29th May

5pm Zoom Worship

Led by Rev'd Rob Hilton

And Ian White

Topic : Live @ 5

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/83777505999?pwd=Mk5PS29QM3liUXNwdjVIQTBNS2VCdz09>

Meeting ID: 837 7750 5999

Passcode 082913

Stewards at Wesley Place

We say thank you to Helen Robertson for all she has done in her time as a Steward and Senior Steward and we welcome Lesley Peake as she takes up the role of Senior Steward.

At the moment the stewards are

Lesley Peake (Senior)

Sandra Rawlinson

Dot Milner

Andy Shaw

Natasha Walker

Alicia Crompton

Harriet Crompton

The General Church Meeting is being planned for Sunday 26th June and new Stewards will be welcomed then.

Can you help????

Sparkz Kids Club Volunteers Needed:

We run a kids club for primary school aged children from 5:30-7:00pm on a Thursday during term time. We could really do with an extra couple of helpers to volunteer. Helping will mainly consist of engaging with the children and facilitating activities. If we get an extra couple of helpers, you will only be on once every half term. Please get in touch with Jonny for more information. Thank you for your support and prayers.

Have you seen it?

A white garden table with separate metal legs is missing. It is used every year at the Christmas Tree Festival, any idea of it's whereabouts?

Spread the Good News of the Kingdom

"We are ALL urged by Jesus to spread the Good News of the Kingdom. Many of us feel unworthy or incapable of this BUT we can ALL find a way to help. Bible Society passes on the message by translating and issuing bibles to countries around the world that don't have the access to God's word that we sometimes take for granted. Would you consider joining Bible a Month Club, where for £6 a month (less if you wish) you can provide a bible to someone who is desperate to have one in their own language? Or perhaps you would like a box to put your spare cash in? Ask Gordon for more details."



PLATINUM JUBILEE & CHURCH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND EVENTS TO PUT IN YOUR DIARY!

Thursday 2nd June

Two events, linked by a picnic lunch!

In the morning we will have a church decorating and bunting making workshop for all the church family and encourage you all to bring a picnic lunch. We hope to have a display of the church archives that was started during the 150th year and also an update of the display on the Queen's reign from our previous Jubilee celebrations.

Then in the afternoon we will open the church to the whole community for a Cream Tea, craft activity for children of all ages, and chance to view (hopefully) our archive displays. This is a real, drop in, outreach event.

Saturday 4th June

An Action for Children Jubilee celebration

Come along to Action for Children coffee with a twist - tea, coffee, pastries and the chance for children to make their own crown!

Sunday 5th June

Our big back to church street party faith lunch at 1.30pm after the morning service! Outside if we can!!

Free Tickets (for numbers only) are available from Lesley Peake, Sandra Moors, Christianne Morris, Alicia or Celia Crompton.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP!

Things that are needed in advance

We need

- red, white and blue fabric and ribbon of any colour for bunting - please speak to Lesley Peake
- Any church memories you wish to share for our archive display
- Any royal memories or memorabilia you are happy to loan for a display
- Cake stands for the cream tea AND the street party
- We need lots of hands putting together the archive display - speak to Harriet if you can help!

Things that are needed on the day

Thursday 2nd June

- scones and small cakes for the cream tea - see sign up sheet on noticeboard.

Sunday 5th June

- it's a faith lunch so we need lots of food!
- see sign up sheets on noticeboard
- Do add anything else you want to bring!

Finally, do you want to just help in general? There are plenty of jobs and everyone is welcome to take part as much or as little as you like, just speak to Harriet!

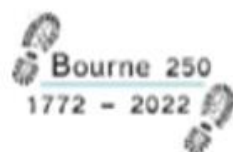
Half term activities

at

Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum

CW2 5QW

for all the family



The museum is open Thursday to Saturday, 11am until 3pm
Sunday, 2 – 4pm

- **Follow** our interactive trail to discover the story of Primitive Methodism
- **Celebrate** the church's birthday by decorating a birthday cake
- **Make** a fiery crown to wear
- **Design** a clay crown pendant for the Queen's Jubilee
- **Share** in a sensory storytelling session (suitable for pre-schoolers up). Thursday & Friday, 11.30am to 12 noon.

All activities are free of charge. Donations welcome.

A selection of light refreshments is available in our Chapel Tea Room.

Sing Along

Harriet has suggested some hymns for the week

I know that my Redeemer Lives
<https://youtu.be/FoPC-PAAUUA>

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing (lyngham)
<https://youtu.be/X-dEfvz6Vms>

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing (cranbrook)
<https://youtu.be/vZaohOTk12Q>

Loving Lord Jesus, help us to be as respectful of strangers as you were and to meet them as equals and valued human beings, not as objects of charity or as people to be avoided because they are different.

May we be sensitive to unknown backgrounds, aware of our own prejudices, open to and accepting of other cultures and willing to learn from them.

Help us to hear their lament for a lost country, for family left behind, for poverty or persecution in a former life – exchanged for the hostility and indifference of an unfair society, where opportunity is far from equal and judgments are made on superficial evidence.

Lord, may our welcome be as genuine, honest and loving as yours. Amen.

Claire Hargreaves, presbyter and Refugee and Interfaith Adviser, South East District

All My Days I will Sing this song Of Gladness

All my days I will sing this song of gladness
Give my praise to the fountain of delights
For in my helplessness, you heard my cry
And waves of mercy poured down on my life

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer
I will sing of the blood that never fails
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleared
Of death defeated and life without end

Beautiful Savior, wonderful counsellor
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history
You're the way, the Truth, the Life
Star of the morning, glorious in holiness
You're the risen One, heaven's champion
And you reign, you reign over all

I long to be where the praise is never-ending
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades
Where countless worshippers will share one song
And cries of 'Worthy' will honour the Lamb!

Beautiful Savior, wonderful counsellor
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history
You're the way, the Truth, the Life
Star of the morning, glorious in holiness
You're the risen One, heaven's champion
And you reign, you reign over all

Sing Along
<https://youtu.be/YccZWGt8so0>

Let us run the race that is set before us in the royal road of love. Let us keep an even pace rooted in the faith of the saints. Let us be grounded in true catholic love, until we are consumed by the fire of your grace for ever. Amen.

John Wesley (1703-1791)

Let us worship the Christ who draws near to each of us. Let us praise the Christ who loves the worst among us. Let us bless the Christ who shares with the least among us. Let us glorify the Christ who intercedes for all among us. Amen.

Ann Griffiths (1776-1805)