

THE connexion

Inspiring stories from the Methodist Church



ROOM FOR FAITH

The Methodist Church



Over the Christmas and Epiphany season, on the Church's digital channels alone, at least 185,000 people viewed the film for the Church's 2022 Christmas campaign, *There is Room*. The campaign aimed to open up opportunities for conversations about the place of God and faith in our lives, starting from the Christ-child: born to a single mother, sleeping in an animal feeding trough, visited by rich and poor, and about to have to flee persecution to become a refugee in a foreign country. We have heard from numerous churches how they used the printed resources, personalised the service plans or made connections to the campaign to engage with their communities, all the time sharing with everyone the good news that there is always room for you, whoever you are, in the kingdom of God.

Carrying on the theme, in this issue of *the connexion* magazine you will read about people around the Connexion who have made room for God and found 'the place of faith' in their daily lives; living out a Methodist Way of Life, and engaging in faith conversations. Read how the Revd Richard Sharples unites different faith traditions through art on pages 8-9; or how the Revd Rachel Parkinson grapples with demonstrating her faith across economic divides on pages 20-21. These, and all the stories in this issue, continue to focus on what the Methodist Church is doing locally to engage in God's mission and share the gospel. This is the aim at the heart of *the connexion*, which our past Editor, the Revd Dr David W Perry, was always passionate about keeping as the magazine's guiding principle.

We have been hugely blessed to have David as Editor: his understanding of the Church's mission, not to mention his many contacts across the Connexion, have led to rich content. His creativity and striving for excellence in the design of the magazine resulted in significant change, and in particular, greatly improved photography. We are very grateful for all David has contributed and pray that God will open up new opportunities for his many gifts and talents.

We are now in a period of transition for *the connexion*. We look forward to introducing you to our new Editor in the next issue, and to sharing more stories with you from global Church Partners and around the Connexion.

Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary
The Connexional Team

What is the Connexion?

Methodists belong to local churches and also value being part of a larger community. In calling the Methodist Church in Britain 'the Connexion', Methodism reflects its historical and spiritual roots.

In the 18th century a 'connexion' simply meant those connected to a person or a group – for instance, a politician's network of supporters. So when people spoke of "Mr Wesley's Connexion" they meant followers of the movement led by John Wesley.

Wesley believed that belonging and mutual responsibility were fundamental Christian qualities.

The language of connexion allowed him to express this interdependence, developing its spiritual and practical significance in the organisation and ethos of his movement. Both language and practice are important for Methodists today.

Go to methodist.org.uk/theconnexion to change your order for *the connexion*, or to download the pdf.

Tell us what you think about this issue: theconnexioneditor@methodistchurch.org.uk

As each issue of *the connexion* is commissioned to a specific theme it is not possible to include unsolicited articles. Stories about local churches may feature in Methodist news and podcasts developed by Communications: mediaoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk

THE Connexion

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Stained glass window by Jessica Baum, one of the displays from *Articles of Faith* exhibition (see pages 8-9)

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The Wesley Hotels in London

There are now two boutique Wesley Hotels in London. The Wesley Camden Town was opened by the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference on 12 February and joins the existing Wesley Hotel in Euston. The Wesley Camden Town has 38 bedrooms and the same eco credentials as its sister in Euston. It is in the upper floors of the Camden Town Methodist Church building and the congregation has kept the lower area as a church space for worship. The manager of the two hotels, James Barr, commented "Our hotels are named after the founder of the Methodist Church who taught us to have a servant's heart, which fits the ethos of running a hotel." thewesley.co.uk

Methodist Church House

Methodist Church House, Marylebone Road, London, was handed to its new owners on the 14 February. The new offices of the Methodist Church in Tavistock Place will take around 12-18 months to make ready. Until then, the Connexional Team will be sharing office space with Church of England colleagues at Church House, Westminster.

Better by Degrees

Two leading Methodists have been awarded honorary doctorates. Past President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Dr Leslie Griffiths, Lord Griffiths of Burry Port, received one from the University of Roehampton in January for his work on the governing bodies of Southlands College and the Roehampton Institute of Education.

The Revd Sonia Hicks, Ex-President of the Methodist Conference, will be awarded an honorary doctorate from Oxford Brookes University in May. It recognises her achievements regarding the Church's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy for racial equality and same-sex marriage. Sonia commented "I am delighted that I was selected but I see this as an award for the whole Methodist Connexion in Britain and the steps it is taking towards inclusivity."

For more on the Inclusive Methodist Church go to methodist.org.uk/inclusive-church





**THINK
PIECE**

Why the world **needs faith**

The Revd Dr Susan Henry-Crowe was the General Secretary of the United Methodist Church until December 2022.

We live in times of inequality and unrest, but the Revd Dr Susan Henry-Crowe says faith based on United Methodist Social Principles will bring well-being and social justice.



The world needs to live and be guided by our Social Principles.

The mission of the Church in the 21st century is to align its *raison d'être* (reason for being) with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It constantly needs to refine its mission for the present age, make relevant its message to people today, encourage and form clergy and laity, and uphold the commitments and values of Methodism.

I used to be the General Secretary of the United Methodist Church in the US and my guiding inspiration comes from the United Methodist Social Principles, which you can find on our website umc.org. They are a prayerful effort to speak to the human issues of the contemporary world from a biblical foundation. With resolutions, statements and guidance from our General Conference they are a source of inspiration and hope for thousands of Methodist people around

the globe. Today, we must continue to know, understand, preach and teach the values expressed in the Bible and live them out in the world.

In the United Methodist Church, the Social Principles provide this inspiration. We are called to renew our faith and to bear witness to it from the pulpit and in Sunday school. But we are also called to witness to our faith outside the Church: in coffee shops, at conference tables, and on the international stage. The world needs to live and be guided by our Social Principles. Through faith-filled witness our Methodist communities can contribute to a better world.

An active calling

Methodists are not called to be passive. It is our calling to proactively address civil society

around current issues from a perspective of a living faith. We are called to have a heart for seeking justice and pursuing peace. Our witness is expressed in the halls of national and local governments. We can play our part in influencing legislation, government action and local policies that hinder or advance human well-being. We can do this by understanding and addressing poverty, healthcare, climate justice and peace-building.

Tens of thousands of Methodists across the globe speak out and engage with issues that have resulted in harm from corruption, war, greed, sexism, racism, tribalism and our colonial past. Methodists around the globe are giving witness to the gospel mandates for justice and peace. There are Methodists in Kenya, South Africa and many other countries on the continent of Africa working towards this goal, as well as in Asia, North America, Great Britain and even on the tiniest islands in the South Pacific. They are all engaging day by day in the pursuit of justice and peace.

Our heritage

As Methodists we are motivated by our foundations in Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Our Conference gatherings are times of pain when debating divisive issues, as well as of profound joy, especially over unified agreement. We are inspired by the gift of gathering, the procession of people from around the world claiming the causes of Jesus Christ, the commitments to diversity and inclusion, and standing together for a more just, whole and redeemed creation.

We are animated by so much: from the holy Scripture that binds us and reason that centres us, to the traditions that inspire us, the prayers that hold us, the principles that guide us and the mission around which we journey. Our Methodist heritage is a gift that we must never take for granted.

Courageous witness

A public faith witness is now more important than ever. Globally, the public square is divided and recalcitrant. Nationalism and white supremacy are dangerously on the rise. War and conflict rage. The effects of colonialism continue to influence social, political and economic structures. Brave people who live with mental illness and debilitating conditions are being neglected. There is heartbreaking violence fuelled by homophobia. Children and families are still living in poverty. Greed,



selfishness and inequity abound in political and economic systems. The struggle for democracy and election reform is challenged. So what are we to do? As people of faith we are called to be at the centre of these struggles.

Advocating for climate justice, eliminating poverty and addressing violence is holy work. There are people who stand up for their Methodist values across the UK and around the world: in Kinshasa in the Congo, in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, in Seoul in South Korea, as well as in countless towns and villages in many countries. Churches and individuals must lobby MPs and push national and local governments to take action against rising military budgets, irresponsible policing and gun violence, harassment at our borders and inaccessible healthcare.

We cannot lose heart because love and compassion abound. Even amid mean, ugly,



A public faith witness is now more important than ever.



When it comes to peace and justice there is much to do.

selfish and greedy behaviour, we also witness examples of the most caring, brave, tenacious, steadfast and faith-filled actions imaginable. People offer tireless care and expressions of compassion to people who are vulnerable and living on the margins. Those on the margins of our societies extend themselves in generous and hospitable ways. So, when it comes to peace and justice there is much to do... And our hearts are full of hope.

Taking the Methodist legacy forward

For more than 250 years, the people called Methodists have generously given of their time, talents, gifts and service. And we are continuing to advance this legacy for a brighter future. We carry the commitments to justice and peace as well as the legacy of our forebears as a new season begins. This is expressed beautifully in Denise Levertov's poem 'Beginners'.

Beginners

But we have only begun to love the earth.
 We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.
 How could we tire of hope? So much is in bud.
 How can desire fail? We have only begun to
 imagine justice and mercy.
 Only begun to envision how it might be to live as
 siblings with beast and flower, not as oppressors.
 Surely our river cannot already be hastening into
 the sea of non-being?
 Surely it cannot drag in the silt all that is innocent?
 Not yet, not yet – there is too much broken that
 must be mended.
 Too much hurt we have done to each other that
 cannot yet be forgiven.
 We have only begun to know the power
 that is in us if we would join our solitudes
 in the communion
 of struggle.
 So much is unfolding
 that must complete its
 gesture, so much is in bud.
 Denise Levertov (1923-1997)
 © Denise Levertov, *New Selected Poems*
 (Bloodaxe Books, 2003) bloodaxebooks.com



United Methodist Social Principles

The Natural World

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it.

The Nurturing Community

We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in individuals.

The Social Community

We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God's sight. We reject discrimination and assert the rights of minority groups to equal opportunities.

The Economic Community

We claim all economic systems to be under the judgment of God no less than other facets of the created order.

The Political Community

We hold governments responsible for the protection of people's basic freedoms. We believe that neither church nor state should attempt to dominate the other.

The World Community

God's world is one world. We pledge ourselves to seek the meaning of the gospel in all issues that divide people and threaten the growth of world community.

Our Social Creed

Our Social Creed is a statement of faith reflecting our Social Principles.



We are not called to be observers in the world: how might the United Methodist Social Principles (right) inspire you to act for justice and peace?

The Revd
Dr Jonathan R Hustler
is Secretary of
the Conference.



There was something about the space that was for everyone.



Faith is an ordinary and vital part of life.



Room for faith

In a bland airport prayer room the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler finds a universal truth: whatever our beliefs, we all need a space for faith, to pray and to contemplate eternity.

Airports are not usually scenic places and sightseeing is not usually an option during the long hours of waiting that air travel inevitably involves. However, one evening last year I found myself in a departure lounge for longer than expected and happened to notice that I was opposite the airport prayer room. It was not a particularly pleasing room aesthetically: the furnishings were plain and, being a multifaith space, the accoutrements of any one religion were not on display (but available for those who needed them).

Even though I was the only person in the room (and I did not notice anyone else going in or coming out), it struck me that there was something about the space that was for everyone. In the midst of hectic activity or frustrating inactivity, of business or leisure, of venturing forth or returning home, here was a unique space. Regardless of creed, it seemed to proclaim, having a place in which to pray, to reflect, to be silent or to be conscious of eternity is both ordinary and vital. For everyone who says 'I believe...' whatever their next words are, there is a 'room for faith'.

Faith in all our lives

It seems to me that over the last generation we have seen a subtle but important shift in

British society. The Prime Minister 25 years ago was famously told by his chief adviser "We don't do God." But that has changed. At a Whitehall reception in January, for example, I met the Prime Minister's Deputy Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion, one of a number of government ministers who now speak regularly to church leaders about the issues that concern us.

Ironically, as the proportion of the country who identify as Christian falls below 50 per cent, as a nation we seem to have realised that faith is not simply a private matter, as was commonly assumed in the late 20th century. Still less is it an eccentricity, as it can sometimes be regarded. Rather, faith is an ordinary and vital part of life. We might craft it differently: the discipline of time set aside each day, the religious symbol carried in the pocket, or set on the desk, the small rituals before eating or studying or playing a game, but in the building of our life we will find that we have constructed that 'room for faith'.

I did not stay long in the airport prayer room. I didn't need to do so. It was enough that it was there, enough to be reminded of the dimension of life that begins 'I believe...', enough to remember that every action, including those much less daunting or exciting than getting on a plane, is lived in the context of that 'I believe'.



Articles for faith

The Revd Richard Sharples describes creating an inspirational exhibition of paintings and artefacts from diverse faith traditions in Bristol to prompt conversations on 'where our paths meet'.

I love the Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC), and I can still remember walking into a tent at Greenbelt in the late 1990s and encountering it for the first time. Other than the quality and accessibility of the paintings, I could not believe that this was the Methodist Modern Art Collection. It is one of the things that makes me proud to be a Methodist.

I have helped enable it to be exhibited in two previous appointments – at West Bretton in West Yorkshire, and in Wrexham, North Wales. This time, however, I felt prompted to showcase it in the wider context of other faith traditions.

Where did the prompting come from? I have no doubt that ultimately the answer is the Holy Spirit. In practical terms, though, it was prompted by the title suggested in a conversation with Alison Bevan, Director of the Royal West of England Academy (which

is next door to our church). She suggested 'Articles of Faith'. That helpfully suggests distinct beliefs and physical artefacts used by those who practise faith.

To whom do we reach out?

Our nearest place of non-Christian worship is Park Row (Orthodox) Hebrew Synagogue. The Bristol Interfaith Network asked us if we would like to be linked up with someone from another faith tradition, so I asked to be linked with the synagogue. So it was that I met David Turns, President of the Synagogue, in a nearby coffee shop. Next time he came to meet members of the planning group at the Victoria Methodist Church. From the beginning, he was keen to be involved and saw it as a way of building relationships between our two worshipping communities. We sent each other greetings at festival times and remembered each other in congregational prayers.



Meaning 'an array of colours' in Sanskrit, a rangoli is a multi-coloured floor decoration.

Objects of interest

The vision for the exhibition was to use paintings from the MMAC and artefacts from other faith traditions to open up conversations around various common themes, such as hospitality or hope.

Church member Janet George got in touch with Shiv Sama, chair of the Bristol Hindu temple, and with another church member, Sarah Ball, they began conversations which led to us meeting Alka Mehta-Graham who suggested, amongst other artefacts, that we include a rangoli at the entrance to the exhibition. Meaning 'an array of colours' in Sanskrit, a rangoli is a multi-coloured floor decoration that symbolises wealth, joy and prosperity, as well as thanksgiving to God.

In the meantime, I turned to Bristol University's multifaith chaplaincy for help with making contacts with the Muslim community and was put in touch with Munira Hashmi. She not only came along with ideas for various artefacts that could be exhibited alongside the paintings, but also for workshops that might add richness and diversity to the events programme accompanying the exhibition.

One wonderful exchange in this developing conversation was on the occasion when Munira, together with David Turns and his colleague Jess, came to the church (the exhibition space) along with some of the artefacts and artworks which they had to offer. We began by hearing about the significance of each artefact, and then agreed together how they might best be placed to encourage the conversation.

Where our paths meet

Around a table, we then looked at various straplines which might helpfully accompany the title 'Articles of Faith', to suggest the kind of conversation in which we were already engaged. We settled on 'Where our paths meet'. It is an expression of our experience that all our different faith traditions engage with the same aspects of our Spirit-filled humanity: life and death, suffering, mystery, peace and justice.

I write this a week or two before the exhibition opens on 20 February. Our



All our different faith traditions engage with the same aspects of our Spirit-filled humanity.

experience testifies to the way that staging an exhibition, in this case of the Methodist Modern Art Collection, can provide the opportunity for establishing and deepening relationships between people of different faiths. It is my hope and prayer that when this exhibition is over, such relationships will be a lasting legacy that enables this conversation to continue. For of such is the kingdom of God.



Listen to how God is urging you to make connections with people from other faiths. How might your paths coincide?

The Revd Richard Sharples is the minister of Victoria Methodist Church in Bristol. The exhibition 'Articles of Faith: Where our Paths Meet' finishes on 8 April 2023. There is information about it at vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/articles-of-faith



Spaces have to be warm, safe and welcoming.

Room for a warm welcome

When many people can't afford to heat their homes, we highlight three Methodist churches putting their faith into action, opening their doors to all-comers to use as a warm space.

An estimated seven million households are in fuel poverty in the UK. Feeling cold is not just uncomfortable: it can be dangerous for people who are vulnerable, such as the very young, elderly or those in ill health.

Last year as energy prices rocketed, putting pressure on already stretched family budgets, many communities organised places where struggling people could go for warmth.

The Warm Welcome website coordinates organisations offering a warm space and over 450 local Methodist churches responded. They registered themselves on the website, opening their doors and hearts to prevent cold and loneliness.

Warmth and welcome in Essex

Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church in Essex was one of the first to sign up to the Warm Welcome website. Building on existing outreach projects and collaborating with groups who hire their rooms means people can find warmth and a welcome for as many days as possible each week.



The Superintendent at Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church is the Revd Gill Hulme. She commented "Spaces have to be warm, safe and welcoming. Having things like jigsaws and newspapers around means people can have something to do and feel involved without having to hold conversations with strangers.

"I do go in there with my collar on and talk to whoever wants to chat, but I don't ask why they are here. Conversations start and people feel valued and loved. This can lead to prayers being offered and received, but it's not pushed. Through listening and sharing we can build relationships and trust.

"The synergy of working with charities allows us to open up our Oasis Lounge to more people as a warm space. Organisations that support vulnerable people such as the Bishop's Stortford foodbank and Citizens Advice Bureau use our space. The organisations and charities we partner with have also been very accommodating, accepting new people. We are fortunate that the layout means you can rest and relax in one part of the lounge while activities like our Tuesday craft mornings can carry on unimpeded. New people can join in with activities if they want to, but there's no pressure.

"Some of our visitors have multiple needs, some are very vulnerable, others are lonely. It took a while for the guests from the local night shelter to open up and chat, but they did. Asylum seekers housed in a hotel a few miles away have found that after their walk to town, we provide a place to rest and have something to eat. It helps that we are on the high street and quite visible, but a lot is thanks to our wonderful team of welcomers who make people feel at home. One woman who came to us is now a volunteer. She said to me 'This is what church should be. This place has been a lifesaver.'"

Warmth in Epsom and Merseyside

Epsom Methodist Church has been opening their building to the community each Wednesday throughout the winter, providing warmth, food and spaces for families to meet. They have made a video 'Providing a warm space for the people of Epsom' which you can watch on the Methodist Church YouTube channel [youtube.com/@MethodistGB](https://www.youtube.com/@MethodistGB)



At the other end of the country, St Luke's Methodist Church, Hoylake, in Merseyside has been making room to support their community. Cate Warbrick is the Church and Community Lay Development Worker. She said "We've been busy with people coming in for conversation as well as comfort. We provide spiritual as well as practical warmth. Many who came to us who are on the edge, financially and emotionally. Projects like warm spaces can help people be less fearful about the immediate future. Knowing that they can get food and warmth tomorrow relieves, in some measure, the anxiety of today.

"As a warm welcome space, we provide room for the community to come together. People have donated electric blankets, flasks, gloves, hot water bottles and even slow cookers.

"As Methodists, we are encouraged to respond to the gift of God's unconditional love by considering what we can do personally and together, as followers of Jesus. Warm spaces means using the room we have to care for one another. It epitomises the command to love your neighbour. It is also about challenging the injustice of people not being able to heat their homes or feed themselves.

"Making room for a warm space means making room to listen. It is an opportunity to live authentically and share who we are as Methodists."



It is an opportunity to live authentically and share who we are as Methodists.



This is what church should be. This place has been a lifesaver.



"This is what church should be."
Do you agree?
And could your church become a warm space?

You can discover more at methodist.org.uk/WarmSpaces
You can also find your nearest warm space by searching warmwelcome.uk

Michael Wakelin is Chair of the Religion Media Centre.



Scriptural reasoning creates room for faith

Michael Wakelin reflects on the powerful faith connections made through scriptural reasoning, in which people from different religions respectfully scrutinise each other's texts.

Theologian David Ford says “Scriptural reasoning (SR) is intrinsically valuable, it can be done for its own sake or, better, for God’s sake.” I was first introduced to it in 2012 when I worked for the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, training faith leaders (Jews, Christians and Muslims) in leadership skills. In my SR group of eight, there was a very distinguished imam who was very sceptical. He said: “Why on earth should you want me to comment on your scriptures, and frankly why would I want your thoughts on mine?” There was also a grumpy rabbi, who clearly thought there were more important things to be getting on with and started checking his phone.

How does SR work?

SR originated in Jewish academic circles: Jewish friends enjoy a good argument over texts so it came naturally to them. Then

Christians were invited to take part along with Muslims because the three ‘Abrahamic’ faiths have much in common in terms of revered figures, shared narratives and an understanding of a creator God.

In SR practice, short texts on a theme are chosen from each of the three faiths: a passage from the Hebrew scriptures (some of which we know as the Old Testament), a passage from the New Testament and one from the Qur’an. They are briefly set in context by an expert from that faith, then read in their original language (although we don’t normally use the New Testament Greek) before the English translation is read. Comments are then invited from each individual and a discussion develops.

If that sounds as much fun as watching paint dry, you would be surprised. It is in such a context that scales have fallen from



SR is not about seeking agreement, but rather about better understanding our differences.

my eyes, heaven has opened, and I have seen angels ascending and descending as whole new insights have been discovered through the perspectives of other faith observers. Similarly, I have encountered truths and beauty in the scriptures of other faiths as their sacred words are explained.

Mutual respect and discussion

To be successful, SR practice depends on respect and an understanding that offence will not be given or sought. It is often likened to 'verbal hospitality': inviting strangers into your living room, as it were, and sitting with them in front of the fire, before they return the favour and invite you into their home. In the hands of a good facilitator, time is kept with perhaps half an hour devoted to each text. The facilitator will ensure no one dominates or goes into 'teaching mode' and they also make sure everyone contributes.

Unlike some forms of inter-faith engagement, SR is not about seeking agreement, but rather about better understanding our differences and it develops the art of 'disagreeing well'. Some may find allowing people of other faiths to scrutinise their sacred texts unattractive or even threatening. In my experience people of other faiths giving their opinions does not make me feel vulnerable. In fact, SR has driven me to a deeper understanding of my own faith with occasional epiphanies to relish, and the chance to learn about the faith of others. It is both affirming and challenging and forces people to examine much loved scriptures in a fresh way.

Wide participation

Many Methodists have participated in the Senior Faith Leadership Programme which we run at the Religion Media Centre. It has nurtured the practice of SR over the past 12 years and the openness and inclusivity of Methodist thinking sits comfortably in the SR framework.

As well as the Abrahamic faiths there is growing participation in SR from the dharmic faiths (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism), as well as devotees of Chinese philosophies and latterly secular texts too – making it an inclusive vehicle for our growingly diverse communities.

Themes are chosen to speak to all faiths. The climate crisis is one: all the main faiths agree that God created the world and has left humanity to take care of it. Also, artificial



intelligence (AI) has appeared as a theme because all faiths hold a high view of humanity and recognise the challenges to it coming from AI. Refugees, poverty, sexuality, heaven and 'just war' can all be studied within SR, with often surprising insights and synergies revealing themselves.

Back to the bristling imam and grumpy rabbi. At the end of our programme, my Muslim friend stood up and declared: "Never in all my life did I think I could be friends with an orthodox Jewish rabbi." At which point both men embraced. It wasn't just SR that brought about that miracle, but it certainly played a big role – and I recommend it warmly to you.



I have encountered truths and beauty in the scriptures of other faiths.



To find out more about SR, visit: interfaith.cam.ac.uk/sr and roscastlefoundation.org/scriptural-reasoning



How might scriptural reasoning refresh your faith, and could your church or circuit run a session?



Faith in South Korea

Korean Methodists make room for prayer and peace, as Youth President James Carver discovered, and their relationship with British Methodists is mutually enriching.



Volunteers keep a chain of prayer unbroken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The Korean Methodist Church has strong links with our own Church and recently our Youth President James Carver was invited to visit. The Youth President is a key position in the life of the Methodist Church, engaging young people and encouraging them to raise their voices and be heard. Each year the Youth President undertakes an overseas visit, in partnership with the Global Relationships team, to appreciate the global context the Methodist Church in Britain works within.

James says: "My visit was an opportunity to learn about Methodism and culture in another context. I learned a lot about Korean heritage and we worshipped in one of Korea's

largest Methodist churches. We travelled to the demilitarised zone, between the borders of North and South Korea that separates the two nations. They are officially still at war after the conflict in the 1950s ended in a ceasefire."

A vision of faith

James continues: "Something that amazed me was the respect for Methodist history. Almost all the Kwanglim churches had exhibitions and the main church, which has a strong relationship with Wesley's Chapel in London, had artefacts such as a copy of the death mask of John Wesley. Kwanglim Methodist Church (photo above) has also made donations to support the work of Wesley's Chapel.

“Kwanglim Church makes room for faith with its Central Prayer Room. Staffed by 300 prayer volunteers who keep a chain of prayer unbroken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 day a year, it ensures prayer is at the heart of this church.

“I found visiting the demilitarised zone and hearing of the ongoing work towards peace encouraging and reassuring. Throughout my visit there were reminders of the need to ensure that there is room for peace. The cross at the front of South Kwanglim Church is made from marble from North Korea. The wooden cross at the Kwanglim Retreat Centre is a symbol of hope and reconciliation, the crosspiece made from a tree from the highest mountain of North Korea and the vertical from a tree from the highest mountain in South Korea.

“Throughout my time in South Korea, I witnessed the conscious effort to make room for the prayer and reflection that keep resolution and peace in hearts and minds.”

Methodist mutual help and support

Financial assistance to overseas partners, made possible by the generous donations to the World Mission Fund, is an important part of the work of the Global Relationships team, and your continuing support is much appreciated. However, just as our relationships with overseas partners involve two-way sharing of prayer, theological insight and personnel, we sometimes find ourselves in the position of receiving as well as giving

financial assistance. This reminds us that as partners in the service of Christ we are to support each other, and it may help us avoid the dangers of a false sense of superiority.

We see two-way support in the relationship of the Methodist Church in Britain with the Korean Methodist Church, and especially with the Kwanglim (‘Burning Bush’) churches, which are extremely large and active congregations with their own traditions and emphases within Korean Methodism. The Revd Dr Jen Smith, Superintendent Minister of Wesley’s Chapel in London, sums up the relationship with the main Kwanglim church: “It is both a theological and a resource-sharing covenant relationship.” There is a ‘Kwanglim Room’ on the Wesley’s Chapel premises in London, recognising with gratitude that Kwanglim donated one million pounds in 2013/14 to redo the museum and John Wesley’s house.

The person behind this generosity was the founder of the main Kwanglim church, the late Bishop Sundo Kim, and his marble bust sits in the London premises. Wesley’s Chapel continues to host regular study pilgrimages of groups of Kwanglim clergy. And just as British mission partners have gone to serve in Korea, over the years Kwanglim has sent six ministers to serve as interns at Wesley’s Chapel. The present intern, the Revd Jungseob Park, is helping with refugee support, Korean language evangelism, singing in the choir, and generally helping the London congregation reflect on what church growth could look like.



Make room for the prayer and reflection that keep resolution and peace in hearts and minds.



There is a Kwanglim Room on the Wesley’s Chapel premises.



World Mission Fund

A Methodist Way of Life’s commitment for caring includes that “We will care for ourselves and people around us”. The World Mission Fund supports 107 Partner Churches and organisations worldwide and your kind donations are much appreciated. You can find mission partner stories, learn more about the World Mission Fund, and donate at methodist.org.uk/worldmissionfund



Receiving money from Methodists in Korea helps us in Britain avoid a false sense of superiority: do you agree?

Financing our faith



Grants transforming lives

The Revd Eric Mason wrote "Giving me the full amount required for new hearing aids, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and wanted to thank the Allowances Committee for making this possible. I am now able to hear people and can hear clearly what the preacher is saying on Sunday!"

How is the Church's social and pastoral mission funded? Matt Tattersall summarises the funds that enable the Church to live out *Our Calling*.



Many people gave generously to ensure the work of their local church was sustained.

The Methodist people are known for their generosity, whether that is giving their time, prayers or money. This was particularly in evidence over the last three years when many people gave generously to ensure that the work of their local church was sustained through the pandemic. The connexional funds also continued to benefit from donations over this period, for which we are very grateful.

It is possible to offer a general donation to the Methodist Church Fund, which supports the Church in responding to *Our Calling*. However, there are times when individuals or groups want to contribute to a specific purpose. For example, a retiring collection at a circuit service can be used to support the benevolent funds. Here are some of our main funds.

The Mission in Britain Fund (MBF)

supports work that furthers the Church's mission. It does this principally by helping to fund 'God For All', the Church's Evangelism and Growth strategy and in particular the 'New Places for New People' work, which forms new communities with people who are not yet part of an existing church. In this way, it supports the development and embedding of A Methodist Way of Life; helping all of us live out *Our Calling*. In addition, MBF funds work to do with the Church's strategies: 'Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice', and 'Justice, Dignity and Solidarity'. Finally, it funds Methodist heritage and the Church's commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030.

Matt Tattersall is the Methodist Church in Britain's Director of Finance and Resources.

The World Mission Fund (WMF)

promotes Methodist mission overseas. It does this through developing relationships of mutual help and enrichment with Partner Churches in other countries. It supports education and advocacy work and helps local Methodist partners respond to emergency situations. To further the mutually beneficial relationship, it funds opportunities to learn from our partners by paying for visits and for 'twinning' (when churches or circuits from different countries pair up).

The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD)

is the main connexional benevolent fund. It supports supernumeraries; surviving spouses/partners of deceased ministers; and active ministers (including students and probationers) who are in financial difficulty. The fund has benefitted from generous support in the past, but the calls on it increase year on year. The Connexional Allowances Committee that administers the fund is very grateful for all donations received to this and to the other benevolent funds they oversee.

The Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)

assists ministers, lay employees and their dependants with costs of health-related services, including counselling and recuperative breaks. Since there is an overlap with the FSPD, in practice this fund typically supports counselling and recuperative breaks. Since 2022 the MMBF has been providing support to ministers' children (who may often be adults themselves) who are in need. The Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association used to fund this but as that fund became depleted and income mostly from the traditional collections at district synods reduced, the MMBF has taken over funding these grants.



Grants transforming lives

The Revd Jane Sharpe was awarded a grant from the Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund and said: "I cannot tell you how very grateful I was to see an entry in my bank account this morning, telling me of the very generous grant. The riser recliner chair relieves me of so much pain – I shall bless you all each time I use it."

As well as the MMBF, there are other benevolent funds, created from historic investments specifically to support the educational needs of ministers' children, and to support members of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

The Fund for Training helps fund the provision of initial and further training for presbyters, deacons, lay employees and other lay persons. It also provides grants for students and training institutions.

The Fund for Property supports the work of the trustees of Methodist property and gives grants and loans for property purposes. Historically, grants were made for property projects across the Connexion. However, with dwindling funds available and changes to the approach to grant-giving, this fund is now overseen by the Property Development Committee. It provides grants to managing trustees for feasibility studies in the initial phases of property projects.



I am so thrilled at the grant award the Connexion has made.



God's people have always been prepared to support those in need. What are your intentions today?

You can sign up to Methodist News at methodist.org.uk/signup for regular stories of how connexional funds are transforming lives. Your kind donations continue to support the Church in responding to *Our Calling* and to learn more about the funds of the Church or make a donation, contact the finance department at finance@methodistchurch.org.uk, phone 020 7467 5264, or go to: methodist.org.uk/give



Like John Wesley, I stand up for my beliefs.



When the vote was counted, I tied with the Labour candidate.

Faith in politics

After winning her seat in an exciting tie-break, local preacher Siân Davidson became a Conservative councillor and believes faith and politics go hand in hand.

My grandad, who was Ukrainian and came to the UK during the Second World War, first got me interested in politics. He would talk about what was going on around the world, which caught my attention. As I grew up and our discussions continued, I became interested in trying to make a difference, and in political issues both generally and at a local level.

My political journey

The 2015 general election saw the Conservative Party come to power with David Cameron as Prime Minister. Shortly afterwards I decided to join the Conservative Party and contacted my local Conservative Association. I started by volunteering with local campaigns and then helped with by-elections and general election campaigns across the UK, which gave me the chance to see issues that different communities were facing. I was also fortunate to be an intern for my MP at his office in London and sat in the House of Commons to watch some debates.

I decided to stand as a local councillor and at the fourth attempt was successful. In May 2022 I was the Conservative candidate for the Daresbury, Moore and Sandymoor ward of Halton Borough Council in Cheshire, where I had missed out in previous years by fewer than 30 votes. For months before the election, I was out campaigning with a team of volunteers including many friends. On the night of the election, all eyes were on us as it was a key target seat for all parties. When the vote was counted, I tied with the Labour candidate. The votes were recounted and it was still a tie. In the end, the result was settled by the presiding officer drawing a name at random and mine was chosen. I was both delighted and overwhelmed by the result, as I had so much wanted to make a difference to the town where I had lived all my life.

Faith and politics

People often say that faith and politics shouldn't mix but I disagree: my faith and politics go hand in hand. We read how Jesus and the disciples ministered to people who were often individuals overlooked by society. Jesus went against the status quo, standing up for what he believed in and giving a voice to the voiceless. He even overturned the tables in the Temple when he didn't agree with what was happening. Following Jesus' example and putting my faith into action is something I try

to do every day: as a local councillor; in my job as a teacher; and as a local preacher.

There have been many Christians in politics who have tried to follow the example set by Jesus. One was the MP William Wilberforce. I remember the first time I visited the Museum of Methodism in London where I saw many interesting objects including a pen John Wesley used to write to William Wilberforce about the terrible wrongdoing of slavery at the end of the 18th century.

Today, each of the main UK political parties has a Christian group within them: for example, the Conservative Christian Fellowship, the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum and Christians on the Left (the Labour Party group). In addition, Christians in Politics is a cross-party, non-denominational organisation, which works to equip and encourage Christians to get involved in politics. I was fortunate to be on the board of their Youth Engagement Project.

Like John Wesley, I stand up for my beliefs. Since being elected, I have contributed to borough and parish council meetings, as well as to community events and environment committee meetings. I'm particularly concerned about the environment and the impact of climate change. In my local area, I am the leader of a local plastic-free community, and I'm also the Eco Officer for the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District. I believe that as Christians we have a duty to look after the wonderful planet that God has created and all who call it home. If we each make small changes, together we can make a big impact on the world.



What burning issues are there in your local community that call you to get involved in politics and act for justice?

How to get involved in politics

Politics plays a part in everything from local issues such as street lighting through to the cost-of-living crisis and global climate change. You can get involved in these ways:

- Contact your local councillor or MP about issues you care about.
- Volunteer at a local foodbank, warm space, charity or community group.
- Work with your local community to organise litter picks.
- Join a political party or Christian group.
- Stand as a candidate in council elections.

Siân Davidson is a Conservative councillor for Halton Borough Council representing the Daresbury, Moore and Sandymoor ward. The Methodist Church is a member of JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team) working with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reform Church to speak out on political issues and bring about peace and justice.

Read more at jpit.uk/issues/politics-and-elections

Rich, or rich in faith: must we choose?

Does being comfortably off sap your faith, reflects the Revd Rachel Parkinson, and can you minister to the poor authentically if you are not on the breadline yourself?



The Revd Rachel Parkinson is the Chair of the
Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District.

Years ago I set out to write an essay showing that Luke's Gospel was mainly directed towards people on the margins. The Magnificat (1:46-55) supports that. Then I actually read the whole of Luke's Gospel. Considering the parables that Luke alone records (including the rich fool 12:13-21 and the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31), I concluded that Luke was mainly writing for the wealthy. He wanted to warn this audience that wealth can be an obstacle to accepting the good news that Jesus brings. I have often had cause to remember that in the intervening years.

When I think of my life, a phrase from Psalm 16 comes to mind: "the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places". I have a loving family, good health, a free university education, a job with a pension, and the good fortune to have bought a small back-to-back house in Leeds aged 22. These and other factors mean I have financial security in my late fifties. I have not 'deserved' it. It could so easily have been different.

Tale of two cities

We currently live in Wolverhampton. Neighbours just a stone's throw away are living hand to mouth with no prospect of change. We live in the same small city, but we may as well live on different planets. I feel the gulf between us, recognising the cost-of-living crisis is making this even more acute. Living modestly and generously seems insufficient to close the gap. With some sadness, I join the rich young man in not being ready to respond to Jesus' call to sell all that I own (Luke 18:18-30). So how might this context shape my faith?

Stratton Street Methodist Church community centre lies not far from my manse, though in a very different neighbourhood. Gail Reynolds, the Centre Manager, is the third generation of her family to be involved there and knows the local community and its struggles inside out. Gail agrees that an essential starting point is for people of faith to be clear-eyed about the realities of social inequality and aware of any privilege they have. I am reminded of the words of John Wesley: "One part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it – and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart." Our commitment to being a justice-seeking Church means



that no Methodist can claim ignorance of the social injustice blighting our country and our world. Particularly for those in positions of privilege, our calling is to work out what potential this privilege gives us to challenge the status quo.

God's generosity

A second thing Gail recommends is gratitude. At first, I am suspicious she is letting me off the hook. But perhaps that is to underestimate the transformative power of living a life fully conscious of the generosity and goodness of God. Just as the springboard of our love for others is the knowledge of ourselves as beloved, should not the springboard of a generous and hospitable life be our own sense of gratitude? Where might a greater focus on gratitude take my life as a disciple? The alternative is to root my response in guilt, which is tempting, but alien to the gospel.

Gail says what makes Stratton Street special is that her team is drawn from the local community and share the lived experience of many who come to use the services provided. I recognise the integrity this brings and give thanks for these 'dug-in' Methodists. Even with creative empathy, I can't pretend to have this same understanding. A familiar doubt rises within me. Would my faith stand the test if my life circumstances were different? And if I can't be sure of that, then how can I be an evangelist of hope to communities on the economic margins? Looking back, I know that my faith has been most alive when I've stood on the ground of Good Friday. Yet the security relative wealth offers, shields me from standing in that place too often. This is why Luke is worried for people like me. He knows that riches can easily blunt the sharp edge of faith and leave us imagining we live in our own strength rather than God's.



Riches can easily blunt the sharp edge of faith.



I have financial security in my late fifties. I have not 'deserved' it.



ROOM FOR FAITH

What one thing could you do today to live life in all its richness and help someone struggling financially?



The Revd Dr R F

Leão Neto is Assistant Ecumenical Officer. More stories about Methodist Fellowships and language-diverse congregations will feature in future issues of *the connexion*.



We may speak different languages, but we have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”



May all the language-diverse ministries flourish in our midst.



One faith, many languages

The Revd Dr Leão Neto says migrants coming to the UK are a gift from God to the Methodist Church in Britain, helping it become a language-diverse community upholding one faith.

Three communities I have encountered this year showcase and celebrate the language diversity we have in the Church. In January I took part in a Farsi language service in Doncaster. There were 26 people there, new to the faith. The majority were young men, some of whom had crossed the Channel in small boats. I was moved by their singing of praise to God through Iranian melodies. Although I could not read the words on the screen, the beauty of the Farsi script and the images used took me to a fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

This congregation in Doncaster is new and is led by an Iranian lay pastor employed by two districts. He also serves a church in Hull and a class meeting in Sheffield. The Farsi-speaking

ministry is growing, both here and in many places in the Connexion, with people being baptised and received as members of the Methodist Church.

Cantonese and Ghanaian communities

Following the handover of Hong Kong from the UK to China in 1997, some people entitled to a British National Overseas visa decided to make their home here. Today there is a growing number of Methodist Cantonese-speaking communities in the UK and on the first Sunday of Advent, I preached at a new local Methodist church, which has been gathering for a year or so in Sutton, in the London District. My words were translated into Cantonese for a congregation of

approximately 150 people from Hong Kong. As well as the adults, there were around 50 children and 50 young people meeting separately and I popped into the hall to see the children praying. When chatting, I was amazed at the determination of these people as they struggle to establish themselves in the UK. Estate agents, for example, are demanding a whole year of rent in advance as a deposit.

Finally, the third example I'd like to share with you is my attendance at the end of February of the inaugural service of the new Ghanaian Methodist Church in Clock House, in the Bromley Circuit. The building was originally a music hall acquired by the Methodist Church in 1905. The congregation dwindled and when it ceased to meet, this Ghanaian congregation was planted here. It is the second Ghanaian Methodist Church plant in recent months, following the launch of Dunwell Methodist Church in the Telford Circuit, last May.

Flourishing language-diverse communities

We should all be alert to this gift that God is sending the Methodist Church. New congregations are being formed all the time, such as the Gujarati-speaking congregation in Hays End (in the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit). In Manchester Central Hall the congregation is now bilingual in English and Swahili, and 60 or more people from Hong Kong were baptised and received as members in the Newcastle Chinese Methodist Church in January. Finally, 16 Brazilians are currently being prepared for confirmation in Stoke Newington, London.

Last November a joy-filled language-diverse summit took place in London. To read about it, search for 'Festival of Methodist Fellowships' on the Methodist Church website.

The development of new congregations is missionary work, and the Church needs time to respond. It takes time and effort for new groups to become embedded within local churches, for cross-cultural relationships to flourish and for everyone to feel fully included. But we also need to hurry as right now people are arriving in this country and need to feel welcome. We need to embrace them in our churches, develop friendships and give them space to have services and classes in their native languages.

I urge you to pray that the Church's ministry to all language-diverse communities, including the new Farsi, Cantonese and



Ghanaian church plants, should have deep roots. May all the language-diverse ministries flourish in our midst. Thank you for welcoming Methodists and others who have moved to this part of the world. Today in the Church we may speak different languages, but in the words of Ephesians 4:5 we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."



How might your church or circuit welcome people from language-diverse communities?



Room for vaccinations and faith

Hosting a Covid vaccination clinic in Brackley Methodist church is an opportunity to show God's house is a place of welcome and love for all, writes the Revd Sara Cliff.

You never know, as a pioneer minister, what type of projects God's going to give you. Let me tell you that I had never, in a million years, thought that God would ask me to run a Covid vaccination centre! But, you know what, when you think about it, a vaccination centre is just a massive hospitality opportunity.

Despite only having a week between being approached by the local health authority and needing to open Brackley Methodist Church as a giant clinic, everyone at our church agreed it was something God wanted us to do. We'd never moved that fast on anything before, but we knew we had to make it happen ... and we did!

Within days, we'd put together a large team of volunteers and, soon after that, people were queuing down the road to come into our church for their vaccinations. Incredibly, 700 jobs were administered on the first day. And now, as we're in full-swing for the spring 2023 vaccination campaign, it's hard to believe that the clinic's brought almost 13,000 visitors through our doors.

Supporting a team of health workers from a local pharmacy, our 30 or so volunteers, all from churches in our circuit, have one main job: to give visitors the warmest welcome imaginable. Why? Because serving is a Christ-like way of living. It's our mission, as followers



People were queuing down the road to come into our church.

of Jesus, to live on earth as though we were in heaven, with our acts of love, justice and peace being a taste of how God's world is to be.

Welcoming people

From the first day the centre opened our duty was to show God's love by welcoming visitors and providing reassurance and refreshments.

With little idea of what they were letting themselves in for when they first offered their services, our volunteers put their faith in God (and in me as project coordinator). The team quickly got to grips with the process of talking with people as they queued, welcoming them at the door, booking them in, showing them to the socially distanced seats and ensuring they were looked after once they'd had their jabs. We set up a quiet area for people who needed to wait away from the crowds, and a rest area for people to spend their post-job moments.

At every stage, our team of volunteers, which has expanded to include some from local volunteering networks, offers warm and friendly conversation along with a good dose of humour. We do our best to look after each person while they're with us so that they feel cared for.

Volunteers feel blessed

While we've received some amazing feedback from people we've served over the past 16 months, I know that our volunteers have felt tremendously blessed, too.

One is church member Beth Miskimmon aged 70, who helps regularly. She herself found a warm welcome at church when she moved to the area eight years ago and was keen to volunteer. Having worked in hospitals she is a natural at putting people at ease.

Beth told me how important she feels our project is. She said: "I imagine very few of the people we're helping have been into our church, if any church, before and so I understand that it may be a strange experience for them. It's important to show them that it's a place of warmth and love; and that they're welcome back anytime."

Volunteering hasn't been easy for Beth as she has ME – a health condition that causes



periods of extreme fatigue. This means she has to rest the day before and after each shift. Despite this, she has sometimes worked six-hour days.

Beth told me that the camaraderie between us all keeps her going, saying: "It's a really friendly atmosphere, and I feel fortunate that I'm meeting so many lovely people. Helping at the vaccination centre gives me something special to do, and means that I can be useful. Just being there and caring for people, reassuring them and making sure they're alright is our way of showing God's love to everyone who comes through the door."

Someone recently asked me what I'd say to other churches considering starting a new project. The answer was easy: when God gives you an opportunity, have the faith and confidence that, if it's 'right' and it's of God, it will work. I think our church vaccination centre shows that there's always room for faith, no matter what the size and shape of the project.



The Revd Sara Cliff is minister of Brackley, Silverstone and Towcester Methodist Churches. She is also responsible for mission throughout the Buckingham, Bicester and Brackley Circuit.



I had never thought that God would ask me to run a Covid vaccination centre!



What new opportunities for hospitality do you think God is prompting your church to consider?

Reflection

Seeing the spiritual

The Revd Rob Drost has been Chaplain at Woodhouse Grove School since September 2022. He thanks the previous chaplain, the Revd Vicky Atkins, as well as Professor Ann Sumner, Corinne Miller, Verity Smith and other members of the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee for their hard work on the 'Roper Project', which was installed in summer 2022. You can discover more about the Methodist Modern Art Collection at methodist.org.uk/artcollection

The Revd Rob Drost reflects on four splendid pieces from Frank Roper's *Stations of the Cross*, which are part of the Modern Methodist Art Collection and are on loan to Woodhouse Grove School where he is Chaplain.

My former boss, the Rt Revd Nick Holtam, recently retired Bishop of Salisbury, was once struggling with a group of lads he was preparing for confirmation in East London. But then he took them to the National Gallery and showed them some of the rich art depicting the Christmas story, and they got it.

Sometimes words just do not capture what we want to express, but a stroke of a brush and a dab of paint can. Most of us can find worth and meaning in art. In fact, sometimes people lose themselves in a work of art, becoming completely absorbed by what it is saying to them. You are probably thinking of a piece right now that is full of meaning and joy. Art is personal. It speaks to us differently, whether we are old or young, an artist or someone who can't even draw a straight line.

Roper sculptures

Frank Roper was a sculptor and the Methodist Modern Art Collection owns four aluminium reliefs from a set he made of *Stations of the Cross*. To mark its 60th anniversary last year, the Collection loaned these to Woodhouse Grove School, which is in Yorkshire where Roper was born. *Stations of the Cross* are 14 images depicting Jesus Christ on his way to his crucifixion. The 'stations' or stopping points, grew out of imitations of the *Via Dolorosa* in Jerusalem, a traditional processional route symbolising the path Jesus is believed to have walked to Mount Calvary. It aims to help people imagine what contemporary passers-by must have felt.

Station IV (top right) This shows Mary meeting her son Jesus on the road. The Bible does not actually mention Mary as being on the road, but in Luke 2, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus as a child for a naming ceremony and the Temple priest prophesied that one day her emotions will be so shattered it will be like a sword piercing her soul. Perhaps he was alluding to what it would be like to encounter her son on the road to his death.

Station VII (right) We are not sure how many times Jesus falls and stumbles. Matthew 27 reports there was a man called Simon who helped Jesus to carry his cross.

Station XIII In Roman tradition after someone

died on a cross, the body was taken down and left and sometimes no one came to bury them. There is no mention of Jesus being taken down from the cross, perhaps because the early readers knew the tradition and did not need to be told. In Matthew 27 we read that there were people who knew Jesus at the foot of the cross, weeping for their friend. This is repeated in Mark 15 from verse 40 and in Luke 23:49.

Station XIV This final sculpture features the scene in Matthew 27:57 when Joseph from Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus. He wrapped it in cloth and placed it in his own unused tomb, which was carved out of the side of a hill. A large stone was then placed over the entrance. This story is also told in Mark 15 and in Luke 23. Joseph is named as an important person who disagreed that Jesus should be killed. The story also features in John 19 with the extra detail that Nicodemus, who met Jesus when he was alive, was there, helping Joseph.

Value of art

As well as Frank Roper's sculptures, we are hugely blessed in our school chapel with wonderful stained glass in the choir area above the communion table. It tells the story of the birth of Jesus, through to his visit as a boy to the Temple, where he questioned the leaders.

Gazing on art like this can give a fresh perspective on the life of Jesus and of the Church. It can lead us on a private pilgrimage into belief and faith. That faith is expressed through worship, where we draw near to the divine, which in turn inspires us. We are then sent out into our communities to continue to be the Church in the same tradition as the early disciples, who broke bread, prayed, fed the hungry and championed the undervalued.

We try to teach these values to our students today, so they might become agents of change now and in the future. Our daily chapel assembly worship challenges and celebrates our school community, asking big questions around what difference we as individuals and as a school can make in the world.

Our Methodist values speak of how our school can "do all the good we can" on a daily basis, believing that these words hold us firm to the teaching of God through the life of Jesus and the guidance of Scripture.



Station IV, Jesus meets his blessed Mother



Station VII, Jesus falls for the second time



Station XIII, The deposition (Jesus taken down from the cross)



Station XIV, The entombment (Jesus is laid in the sepulchre)

Cliff Festival

PRESENTS

**Eden
Restored**

28th May

Sunday

27th May

Saturday

RIDING LIGHTS
ANDY FLANNAGAN
JPIT
A ROCHA

EAGA GOSPEL CHOIR
LINBERT SPENCER
JUSTIN THACKER

29th May

Monday

OUR ATLANTIC ROOTS
BEJOY PAL
CHRISTIAN CLIMATE
ACTION

Throughout the weekend:

RUTH VALERIO // PLAY IT BY EAR // ALL WE CAN //
THE METHODIST CHURCH // THE ARCHER PROJECT //
TAKING TIME // GREEN CHRISTIAN

Find out more at
cliffcollege.ac.uk/festival

**scan
me!**

