

# GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

Carolyn Lawrence

CAROLYN LAWRENCE, VICE PRESIDENT DESIGNATE FOR THE METHODIST CONFERENCE 2020-2021, SHARES HOW GOD OPENED THE DOOR TO THIS ROLE AND SOME OF HER HOPES FOR THE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE COMING YEAR.

Life with Jesus is certainly an exciting roller-coaster of a ride! You just never know what is around the corner! When I went to the Methodist Conference at the end of June my job was to help look after our overseas guests and to coordinate the Global Relationships Fringe event. Little did I know that by the end of the week I'd have been elected as the next Vice President of Conference!

## HOW DID I END UP HERE?

As with all the voluntary roles I have held in the Methodist Church in recent years, the role of Vice President of Conference was not something for which I was searching or pushing, but have increasingly felt that it was a call God had laid on my heart over the past couple of years. I had told God that I was willing to serve in this way if by doing so it would bring glory to Jesus. With a lot of encouragement from many people, I allowed my name to go forward for nomination at the Conference of 2018, but I was not elected and was very content to dodge the bullet, realising that it must mean God had another

direction for my life. I have been busy working in the Global Relationships team of the Methodist Church in London and had pushed the thought of Vice President to one side, thinking the call may be fulfilled in a future year.

The thought of offering for VP again, hadn't occurred to me but Mark and I agreed that whilst I wouldn't push myself forward, if someone asked me to stand again I would take that as a sign from God and test the call. As it turned out, at least 10 different people asked me if I would stand again so about 4 hours before the deadline for nominations, my form went in the box!

When I received the call to let me know I had been elected, I kept thinking they had made a mistake and that they would call me back later to apologise! I couldn't believe that God had chosen me for this awesome and wonderful task. However, it seems that God must have a plan in this for me and the church so it is with a sense of excitement and terror that I now find myself preparing for what lies ahead. Like Esther, I believe that God has called me to this task 'for such a time as this' and will be relying on the prayerful support of others as I prepare to be obedient to whatever God calls me to say and do.

It is always so amazing to see how God works out the details of things like this - my time in Global Relationships ended in August, and if it hadn't, I could not have considered allowing my name to

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go forward, but if I hadn't had the job, I wouldn't even have been at conference this year! He worked out all those details in just the right way to fulfil his plans and purposes as he so often does in large and small ways as we walk in obedience to his will and lay our lives at his feet.

## HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Along with Richard Teal, the President designate, we have been asked to think about a theme for our presidential year. We are still fine-tuning this, but as I have been thinking and praying about the

year ahead with all its challenges, I really believe that God doesn't want me to be side-lined by all the issues facing the church but to really keep my eyes fixed on Jesus and aim to glorify him as much as possible. As Jesus said, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you as well.' I believe that we need to keep our focus on those things that are of eternal value and seek a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit for this time. I believe God still has a good plan for the Methodist Church and am daring to believe that revival and renewal are possible - both for individuals within the church and for us corporately.

During the year ahead, I hope to look at those churches, large and small, that are defying the trend and growing, both here and overseas, and find out what the key features of those churches might be. I hope that during my year of office I will have the opportunity to encourage people in their discipleship and maybe to challenge some of the things that hinder spiritual growth and maturity. I have a real passion for reaching out to those who don't yet know Jesus and also, as a teacher, to help people grow and develop in their faith through finding freedom in Christ from all the baggage of the past, through prayer, study of the bible and through being constantly filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

I pray that over the coming years there will be people who come to know Jesus for the first time, people renewed and encouraged in their faith, people receiving healing and wholeness and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit so that they become disciple-making disciples. I also long to see individuals who have been transformed by Jesus, going on to transform their communities, villages, towns and cities and even the world! I know I am only one person with a vision but thankfully it doesn't depend on me and we have a big God who can do more than all we hope or imagine!

I also have a heart for the Global church and love engaging with our sisters and brothers around the world and learning from their cultures and expressions of faith as well as their unwavering reliance on God and his word.

As I have travelled and ministered across different countries and cultures I



have been humbled and challenged by the way that people who materially have little or nothing, live with a dependence on God moment by moment that we in our materialistic culture know nothing of. One of the most awesome experiences I have had was on a recent mission trip to Kenya where I had the great privilege of preaching to women in a prison on the parable of the prodigal son. These women had nothing in the world's eyes and were at the bottom of the heap in their country and culture and yet I saw a vibrancy of worship and the joy of the Holy Spirit welling up in them in a way I have not seen anywhere else. They were aware of their total dependence on Jesus for everything - something we have lost but I long for us to regain in this nation.

I believe that if we want to see renewal in our lives and churches then it's not rocket science. I believe that we need to get back to the simple basics - get on our knees before God in prayer - repent of our arrogance, thinking we know the best way to grow the church and commit to total dependence on Jesus, without whose help we can do nothing. We need to commit to standing on God's word and ask him for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit. And we need to recognise that the church belongs to Jesus - he has said, 'I will build my church' and it is so exciting to see what he can do with an individual or fellowship when they are sold out for him and his glory.

## A FINAL REQUEST

I have had so many words of encouragement from people all over the country and promises of prayer support. I realise that I can't fulfil all that this calling will demand of me and my family without the support of the many

prayer warriors up and down this land and across the world. I especially realise that as I step out in obedience to Jesus I am, and will continue to be, engaging in spiritual warfare and as Esther pleaded with those she knew to stand with her in prayer and fasting, I implore those of you who have the gift of intercession to stand with me and cover Mark and myself during these coming years. I also look forward to meeting some of you as I travel around.

Thank you for standing with me in this calling. The best truly is yet to come!

*Carolyn Lawrence has a background in Primary education as a teacher and then as an educational Mission Partner with the MCCA in Guyana, South America. Since returning to the UK she has worked in a voluntary capacity within the Methodist Church both locally as a preacher and leader, and nationally in many roles, including the British Area Officer for the 'World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women' and more recently worked as part of the Global Relationships team of the Methodist Church. Carolyn is married to Mark, who is a Minister in the Plymouth and Devonport Circuit.*

