



FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

Derek Balsdon

By the time you read this I will have been in post for a year. I am enjoying this new ministry, and I am pleased now to be full-time with MET. It has been a steep learning curve, and there is still lots more to discover about this exciting ministry. We have recently moved into our own house in Congleton; we have stayed within the same town mainly so that Hilary and Jonathan can continue being part of Wellspring Methodist Church.

It has been great to attend the Bible teaching days at Gracious Street, Knaresborough, The King's Cross Church, Doncaster, and Digging for Treasure at Methodist Central Hall Westminster. These have all been good occasions for feeding upon God's Word. It has also been a privilege to attend Firefest, ECG, Cliff Festival and the Methodist Conference, and to meet many of you at the MET Receptions. At Cliff Festival I led a seminar entitled 'Spirit Empowered Mission', the seminar room was full of people, several of whom came forward to receive prayer to be filled afresh with God's Spirit.

It has been a privilege for Hilary and me to attend both the MET Prayer Conference at Willersley Castle and the South West Conference at Torquay. The theme at Willersley Castle was 'The Father Heart of God', and Rev Nick and Mrs Linda Holt helped us feel embraced in Father's deep love for us. Rev David Hull and family came for the Sunday morning Holy Communion service, during which I was commissioned for my role as Development Worker. David and others prayed over Hilary and me, especially for a fresh anointing

of God's Spirit; this was a very special experience. In Torquay Rev David Coffey gave excellent teaching on the theme of 'Mentored by Jesus,' encouraging us to walk more closely with Jesus day by day. On the Sunday, I preached at Goodrington Methodist Church in the morning, and at Plymouth Central Hall in the evening, with a few people responding to God and for prayer ministry at both services. On the Monday Hilary and I went to Wesley's Cottage on the edge of Bodmin Moor, where we shared with a group of local people about 'Hearing God's Voice'. In my MET role, I have also attended 'Navigating Change' and 'Charisma', a Charismatic and Pentecostal Church Leaders' Conference; both have been challenging and renewing.

Preaching and speaking appointments have also taken me to Grimsby, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Liverpool and Leeds. At the request of the Grimsby Leaders of Worship and Preachers meeting I shared some teaching about using different Gifts of the Spirit within Sunday worship, and then we had a time of worship and asked the Holy Spirit to minister to us. I nervously wondered whether or not anything would happen, and then some prophetic words were shared and a message in tongues was sung and then interpreted. God met with us in a meaningful way to build up the Body of Christ. In the Gornal and Sedgley Circuit, as well as preaching on Sundays, I also led a seminar on 'The Biblical Perspective of Marriage'. I have some space in my diary, so if you would like me to come to your church or circuit for

preaching and speaking engagements, please contact me.

Some of my work is desk-based, and this has included helping to put together our marriage leaflet 'Remaining Faithful', and then posting copies out across the Connexion. If you would like more copies for your fellowship group, church or circuit, please get in contact with me. I have also been heavily involved with getting four new MET books published; 'Looking at the Cross Through an Old Testament Lens' by Paul Smith, 'The Message of the Cross Today' in our Digging For Treasure series, 'Colossians: Hope in Desperate Times' by Kevin Jones and 'Embracing Grace' by G Howard Mellor. All of our books are available through our website. Learning how to put things on and off our website has been another challenge! I am in the process of adding 500 audio messages from past events onto our website, and these can be accessed through the 'Resources' tab; some have already been downloaded over 100 times!

Over the past few months I have had numerous pastoral conversations, phone calls and emails concerning deep worries over the direction of travel that Methodism appears to be moving along regarding marriage and relationships. Part of my MET role includes offering pastoral support and encouragement, so you are welcome to contact me. At the Methodist Conference MET hosted a number of events, including a packed fringe evening during which we heard excellent presentations on Remaining Faithful from a Church Perspective, an Individual Perspective and a Cultural Perspective.

'Equipping for Ministry' is a weekend in March which MET runs for students and those within their first 5 years of ministry as Presbyters and Deacons. This year I provided the main content, about how forgiveness helps us stay fresh and serve well. We are grateful to Swan Bank Methodist Church, Stoke-on-Trent, for accommodating this event.

Being able to join in with the wonderful work that God is doing is a great privilege. We value your prayers for us, and appreciate your donations for the work of MET, and as I pray for the work of MET, I am praying for each of you and for your churches.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Derek Balsdon