



FROM THE CHAIR

The Revd David A. Hull

Dear Friends,

I was delighted to be able to welcome a room-full of people to our AGM in May. There was standing room only! We had just come to the end of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' global wave of prayer initiated by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for the days between Ascension and Pentecost. It has been an amazing initiative; whether or not you took part this year, I do hope you will sign up to participate next year.

As I have reflected on the original prayer meeting between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, narrated by Luke in Acts chapter 1, I have been struck by two things: how Jesus filled his time between his resurrection and his ascension, and how the disciples filled their time after Jesus had ascended into heaven. Jesus filled his time by speaking to his disciples 'about the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:3). He ended his earthly ministry in the same way he had begun, by proclaiming the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). That is the Good News, the gospel: God's dynamic rule has come to earth in Jesus and continues through the church, and we are all invited to enter in. No wonder that was how Jesus filled his time!

The disciples filled their time with prayer (Acts 1:14). They could have spent their time talking to one another - about all that had happened and all that might happen - but they chose to spend their time talking to God in prayer. It seems very fitting, then, that we are now called each year to spend those same days in prayer: 'thy Kingdom come'.

As we have reflected on these verses and others, on the situations we face in the Church and in the world, and in our conversations at our last meeting as an Executive Committee, we have sensed that the Lord is calling us to a new season of prayer. I am delighted that, around the Connexion, there were a number of 24/7 prayer initiatives throughout Conference this year as business was discussed and decisions made, and that there will be a new series of prayer events around the Connexion as we visit the historic sites of Methodism to 're-dig the wells'. Please do consider how you and your church might share in this fresh wave of prayer throughout the Connexion.

Although he will continue in role in a part-time capacity until the middle of October, we have taken the opportunities at the AGM and at our reception at Conference to say farewell to Paul Wilson, our Development Worker. After six years' service, he



has now been stationed as the Superintendent Minister of the Liverpool (South) Circuit. Whilst we are very sorry to see him go, we have all sensed the Lord's hand at work in the process and are very grateful to the District Chair and Circuit Stewards for agreeing to a phased start in order to ease the transition for MET. I cannot do justice here to the gratitude we owe to Paul, and to Karen, for all they have done over the past six years in the Lord's service through MET, but I do at least want to say 'thank you' again. I know many of our readers will be holding them in prayer as Paul begins his new role.

Since Conference, a number of people have been in touch to express grave concern about the direction of travel Conference seems clearly to have adopted in the debates surrounding marriage and human relationships, concerns which I share. We will continue to contribute to the debates and provide resources as opportunities arise. Our current statements and resources are all available on our website, on the 'Big Issues' page of the resources section.

As we face these debates, and many others, we must continue to look to the Lord. Whatever is debated and whatever is decided, he continues to be at work for our good and for his glory. So, let's be joyful, let's be prayerful, and let's be thankful, for whatever else is unclear, it is clear that this is his will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Rejoicing in our partnership in the Gospel,

David