

metconnexion

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FEATURING

JONATHAN BURNSIDE, CATHERINE BUTCHER, TIM THORLBY, DAVID MOSS, CARL TRUEMAN



OUR FAITHFUL
QUEEN

70 YEARS OF FAITH & SERVICE

Serving the King

CELEBRATING THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE



EDITORIAL

Marian Izzard

We have selected the theme of this spring edition of MET Connexion to coincide with the Queen's Jubilee celebrations taking place in June as we felt that it was only fitting and right to mark this special occasion. We have entitled this edition: Serving the King: Celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to recognise and celebrate the Queen's Christian faith and how she draws strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel to inspire and guide her in her rule and reign in this land.

Two of our contributors in this edition have written on some aspect of the service of our servant Queen and the King she serves, whilst others have written on serving the King and Queen, what Jubilee means and what we can learn from the ancient church.

Jonathan Burnside, Professor of Biblical Law at the University of Bristol explains why our Queen upholds the Biblical ideal of Servant Monarchy.

Catherine Butcher, Director of Communications at HOPE Together writes on celebrating the Queen's 70 years of faithful service.

David Moss, Methodist Superintendent Minister and former Army Chaplain reflects on what service to her majesty the Queen means for Christians in the Armed Forces.

Tim Thorlby and Matt Williams from the Jubilee Centre explain how the Biblical Jubilee remains a radical vision of the church for the twenty-first century.

Carl Trueman, Professor of Biblical and religious studies at Grove City College, Pennsylvania, shares lessons for today from the church of the second century.

Our song selections of 'The Servant King', 'King of Kings, Majesty' and 'Rejoice the Lord is King' have been chosen to reflect the kingship of Jesus as the one who came to serve, who reigns victorious and whom we live to serve.

Our new Bible Study series is part one of a three part study on Micah, compiled by Catherine Hutton.

Praying Always is compiled by our Prayer Coordinator, Roz Addington who encourages us to keep our eyes fixed on God through these troubling times and provides us with a four week cycle of prayer pointers.

The next edition of MET Connexion will be the autumn edition.

Every blessing

Marian

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FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

The Revd Derek Balsdon

As I write this, I am looking forward to getting out and about more in my role as Development Worker for MET. This includes going to the Tadcaster Circuit for a Bible teaching day entitled: Images of the Holy Spirit: How can we experience more of God's Spirit? By the time you read this, I will hopefully have seen some of you at ECG, where MET will have provided a prayer ministry team and a stand in the market place. I will also be at Cliff Festival with a resources stand, leading a seminar and at the MET AGM. It will be good to have these opportunities to meet people and share fellowship together.

In March I was pleased to share with John Hogarth in another online Bible Teaching Day, Shining for Christ: Learning from Philippians. Videos of the four main teaching sessions are now available through our website and on our YouTube channel, go to methodistevangelicals.org.uk/videos. These online teaching days continue to be well received, especially by those who live in some of the extremities of our islands. Videos from previous teaching days, including Digging for Treasure, are also accessible through that link.

The weekly prayer meetings on Zoom continue on Sunday evenings, and we have spent quite a bit of time praying concerning Ukraine and its suffering people. We have been able to direct our feelings of helplessness to the Lord in prayer. The weekly Bible studies on Zoom continue on Mondays and Wednesdays, and we are gradually working our way through Acts. Just before writing this, we studied Acts 19, where Paul asked the believers in Ephesus, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' This led to a discussion about how much God's Spirit is welcomed within

our Methodist churches. Towards the end of the session, I led the groups in a prayer exercise, during which we asked God's Spirit to breathe more life into us, and several participants sensed the presence of God's Spirit upon them.

Stir the Fire was an exciting venture during the first 2 weeks of March. The Revd Bill Phares, a Methodist Minister from Alabama, along with his wife Laura, came to the UK on a prayer assignment. When he visited Pill, at the mouth of the river Avon, several local Christians had already gathered. Some of them shared prophetic words that they had received about revival coming to Pill. Bill spoke about responding to God's call to come and pray at various Methodist sites across the UK, and made some prophetic declarations, most of which I filmed on my phone, which can be viewed at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/stir-the-fire-video. I was privileged to spend a couple of days travelling with Bill and Laura, and I went with them to one of the key sites local to where I live, Mow Cop, the birthplace of Primitive Methodism. Bill and Laura travelled 1800 miles around the UK, and visited London, Bristol, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Epworth, along with various other sites across England.

Over the past year we have been building links with leaders of some of the other Wesleyan denominations that exist within the UK. Zoom has enabled us to have some initial meetings, and in January we spent a day together in Bristol. As we have shared fellowship together, we have learnt more about the past, the present and the future vision for each of the denominations. I have also had an opportunity to preach at an Independent Methodist Church in Oldham, which was a positive experience.

Each week I continue to receive emails and phone calls from both lay and ordained Methodists who are struggling within the denomination, so in the light of this I have been hosting a monthly ministers sharing and praying gathering on Zoom. Most of the participants are ordained ministers, and a couple of lay workers who have pastoral care of churches have also joined in. The meeting provides an opportunity for ministers to share some of the things they are struggling with in circuit life, to seek wisdom from one another, and then in Zoom breakout rooms, to receive specific prayer from one another. If you would like details of these meetings, please get in touch with me.

I often receive communications from people who have resigned from the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB), some of whom who have already found new spiritual homes, and others who are unsure of their future. I am aware of 16 new congregations that have been formed over the past two and a half years from people who have left the MCB. Roughly half are almost whole congregations that have left the denomination and have set up a new church together, and the others are where a few people have left several different congregations and have joined together. In all these communications I encourage people to look to the Lord for His guidance for the present and the future, and as Mary said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:4). One of the things many people are struggling with is having a clear idea of what the Lord is calling them to do. Yet we must keep doing what it says in Hebrews 12:2 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...' I am needing to put this into practice, because over recent months I have sensed the Lord wanting me to take a different direction in life and ministry. So, I will be finishing as the Development Worker at the end of August 2022, and I am earnestly seeking the Lord's guidance for the future. It has been a privilege to serve the Lord through MET since October 2018. I greatly appreciate all the great support and wonderful fellowship I have received from MET and especially from the Executive, and also all the assistance that Hilary has given to me as I have served MET.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Derek

THE SERVANT KING

Graham Kendrick

From Heaven, You came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
"Yet not My will but Yours", He said

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

BIBLICAL LAW AND THE SERVANT QUEEN

Jonathan Burnside

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LAW, JONATHAN BURNSIDE EXPLAINS WHY QUEEN ELIZABETH II UPHOLDS THE BIBLICAL IDEAL OF SERVANT MONARCHY

Alfred the Great. Edward the Confessor. The Virgin Queen. It remains to be seen what sobriquet history will bestow on our longest-serving monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, but it would be fitting if posterity crowned her by following the styling she has chosen for herself. This is reflected in the message to her subjects on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her Accession to the throne where she signed herself, simply: 'Your Servant, Elizabeth R.' Queen Elizabeth II's distinctive devotion to duty will justly be praised during her platinum celebrations. Yet the notion of the servant monarch hasn't blown in through the window. Instead, it is rooted in ideas of kingship found in the laws of biblical Israel, including the laws of the king in Deuteronomy. Along with other biblical laws, these have played a determining role in shaping our ideas about the authority and legitimacy of the Crown. They have been an inspiration to some rulers (like King Alfred) and a rebuke to others (like King John). The life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II can be seen as a compelling example of the ideal of servant monarchy, as reflected in biblical law. But we can't have the fruit without

the root. As we commemorate Queen Elizabeth's outstanding achievements, we should also celebrate the biblical ideals of good government, and contend for them, because we cannot take them for granted.

THE SERVANT KING IN DEUTERONOMY

Remarkably, the biblical idea of monarchy rejected ways of conceptualising kingship then current in the ancient Near East. The Deuteronomic laws of the king prohibited a foreigner from becoming king; instead, in classic covenantal style, they stipulated that the king must be a 'brother' Israelite (Deuteronomy 17:15). He must be subject to the covenant between God and Israel. In addition, this 'brotherly king' was limited in terms of how monarchical power was conventionally displayed.

First, the Israelite king was not allowed to acquire 'many horses for himself' (Deuteronomy 17:16), thus preventing the king from developing an elite military class in the form of a royal chariot force. Like the insistence on 'brotherhood,' the prohibition speaks volumes about Deuteronomy's concern to preserve the social egalitarianism of the Exodus, according to which all of the children of Israel were equally indebted to God's saving action on their behalf. This is underlined by the very next verse, which states that the king shall not 'cause the

people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again' (Deuteronomy 17:16). The fear is that the king will reverse what God has done for Israel in the Exodus and become a new Pharaoh. A decentralised form of defence acts as a check on the king's power and keeps him reliant upon God for success in battle. Second, the king cannot 'acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away' (Deuteronomy 17:17). Although this is often taken as a prohibition against taking foreign wives in order to make foreign alliances, with the added risk of idolatry, the text in fact limits multiple marriages generally with all women, not just those with foreign women. Not only does this prevent royal sexual misadventures, it also blocks attempts to consolidate power by marrying into powerful social networks. Finally, the king cannot 'acquire for himself excessive silver and gold' (Deuteronomy 17:17), thereby restricting the king's ability to control fiscal policy. All three prohibitions limit the king's ability to engage in the typical, exclusionary power plays that were common to other monarchies in the Near East. Instead, by limiting his independence, the king is forced to rely, instead, upon Israel's true King - God Himself.

It's for this reason that the Israelite king has only one positive duty in Deuteronomy. This is to 'write for himself

in a book a copy of this law...’ and ‘read in it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them’ (Deuteronomy 17:18-19). He has to spend his time, as Bernard Levinson puts it, in the company of ‘the very... scroll that delimits his powers’ (‘The reconceptualization of kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history’s transformation of Torah,’ *Vetus Testamentum* 51, 2001, p. 522). Such a king really would be like a brother since the very same requirement is made of the ordinary Israelite (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:2; 10:12-13; 31:12). As Jamie A. Grant writes, ‘the king is ... set apart as an exemplar of torah-piety for all the people’ (The King as Exemplar, 2004, p. 208). The Israelite king thus serves the law as a legally-constituted and legally-constrained monarch; a model citizen and a servant of the people.

THE CROWN’S JEWEL

Queen Elizabeth II not only stands in the tradition of servant monarchy exemplified by Deuteronomy, she also stands in an Anglo-Saxon tradition of royal subordination to the Bible – a tradition itself impacted by biblical law. The point is easily demonstrated with reference to two opposing examples: King John (reigning 1199-1216) and King Alfred (reigning 871-899).

In King John’s case, as is well known, the events of Magna Carta were not simply a revolt against Angevin government, and its burdensome taxations, but also a battle of ideas about what monarchical government should be. The central question was whether kings ruled according to their own will, or according to law. Biblical law played a key part in this national drama because it shaped the intellectual convictions of Stephen Langton, who was Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and 1228 and, in that capacity, was the chief negotiator of Magna Carta between King John and the rebel barons. Langton also played a key role in the ultimate redraft of Magna Carta in 1225, this being the version that was subsequently confirmed over 50 times by later English kings. Prior to becoming Archbishop, Langton spent 30 years teaching in the Paris schools and wrote extensively on the limits of rulers. In his commentary on

King Solomon’s accession to the throne, Langton wrote: ‘See how and with what manner and words the king is to speak to his people. Listen to me, my brothers, in our shared humanity, my people, in the way government is exercised’ (cited in Phillipe Buc, *L’ambiguïté du livre: Prince, pouvoir, et peuple dans les commentaires de la Bible au Moyen Âge*, 1994, p. 329). Inspired by Deuteronomy 17:17, Langton’s position on royal taxation paralleled his views regarding monarchy; legitimate in principle, but open to abuse and therefore requiring restraint. Given the importance of royal revenues to negotiations around Magna Carta between 1215 and 1225, this was explosive. Whereas canon law, like English law, put the king ‘above the due process of his courts,’ Torah made the king subordinate (John W. Baldwin, “Due process in Magna Carta,” in Robin Griffith-Jones and Mark Hill, *Magna Carta, Religion and the Rule of Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 51). Langton expected kings to align the laws of their kingdom with biblical law; even King John was supposed to submit to Deuteronomy.

In complete contrast to King John, who despised biblical law, even whilst paying lip-service to it, King Alfred the Great gave it an unparalleled place of honour. His law-code was the first and only codification of Old English law. Alfred’s laws were the first to apply to all lands under English rule and they were based, explicitly, on the laws of Moses (specifically, a lengthy extract from the Covenant Code of Exodus). This, in fact, was one of the earliest attempts at translating the Bible into Old English: of everything Alfred could have translated from the Bible for his people, he chose biblical law. To cap it all, Alfred did not simply translate the biblical laws but creatively interpreted and applied them to his kingdom, skilfully integrating the *lex dei* (law of God) and the *lex mundane* (worldly law). In particular, Alfred tells us that he ‘gathered together’ synodal judgments ‘and commanded to write down many of those that our predecessors held, which to me seemed good; and many that did not seem good to me I set aside with my wise men’s counsel...’ (Alfred’s Laws 49.9; Todd Preston, *King Alfred’s Book of Laws*, 2012).



“
Queen Elizabeth II shows us the benefits of an English monarchy that, at its best, emphasises its accountability to God, and to the people, as well as conciliar government. All of these virtues will be tested in the road ahead.

”
 Alfred typified a style of consultative kingship that placed the king under the law. This wasn’t new: it was standard practice for Anglo-Saxon kings to issue laws on the advice of their council. What is novel is Alfred’s express submission of the monarchy to biblical law. Alfred stands in the line of Moses. Alfred is part of the reason why Langton could write, in his first letter to the English people, as Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1207, that ‘whatever service is rendered to the temporal king to the prejudice of the eternal king is undoubtedly an act of treachery’ (F. M. Powicke, Stephen Langton, 1965, p. 97). Alfred’s law-code arguably anticipated Magna Carta itself with its biblical and Old English motifs of Exodus-style freedom. The point is that our modern ideas about government – understood as the servant of public, or common, good, and subject to the Rule of Law – have been hard-won and owe much, historically, to the reception of biblical law.

THE SERVANT QUEEN AND HER SERVANT KING

From her Coronation onwards, Queen Elizabeth II has formally displayed her own, willing subordination to the Scriptures and regularly points to Jesus Christ as her inspiration. In doing so, she is part of a noble royal tradition in which the Deuteronomic model of the servant king is affirmed and given new energy in the gospel. The Gospels demonstrate a profound continuity

with the Deuteronomic model of the servant king and the many critiques of authoritarianism made within the Hebrew Bible. According to this, the New Testament’s proclamation of Jesus as Lord not only intensifies the relativisation of all earthly political authorities but also intensifies humbled government. All authorities are meant to be humble servants of the Lord and of the people they govern. Rulers are accountable to God but also to other human beings. It is hard to exaggerate the significance of this ‘de-divinisation’ of temporal power, which radically underlies developing understandings of constitutional order as they developed within Christian Europe.

On 2 June 1953, Elizabeth swore an oath on the Bible. In doing so, and in keeping her promise, we have all been blessed. By modelling herself on her Servant King, our servant Queen has shown us of the benefits not only of a Deuteronomic style of monarchy but also of that particular style of English monarchy that, at its best, emphasises accountability to God, and to the people, as well as conciliar government. All of these virtues will be tested in the road ahead. As we celebrate her, let’s also remember the source of her inspirations and lay hold of them with renewed vigour, for we have the advantage of one thing she never had: her own example.

Jonathan Burnside is Professor of Biblical Law at the Law School, University of Bristol, and is the author of, among other books, ‘God, Justice and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). He is currently completing a book on the influence of biblical law on English political history between the ninth and nineteenth centuries.





CELEBRATING THE QUEEN'S 70 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE

Catherine Butcher

AUTHOR CATHERINE BUTCHER INVITES US TO BRING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

This year, the country and Commonwealth are celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Hours of documentaries and pages of print are exploring her life. Many examine the remarkable changes that have taken place in her reign. Pictures of all things royal, from hats to horses, record seven decades of royal history, but few focus on the source of her strength.

As she said at Christmas in 2002: 'I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning; I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God. Like others of you who draw inspiration from your own faith, I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.'

During this Platinum Jubilee year, churches have an amazing opportunity to bring their communities together to celebrate the Queen's 70-year reign and to talk about her faith, which has been the source of her strength. To

help churches to make the most of this wonderful opportunity, HOPE Together and Biblica have published a beautiful gift book - Our Faithful Queen - which gives a unique insight into the Queen's life of faith and service.

As she approached the day of her Coronation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, gave the Queen a slim volume of daily Bible readings and prayers to use as she prepared for that powerful Westminster Abbey service. Fewer than a dozen copies of this Little Book of Private Devotions were printed. This new book, Our Faithful Queen, draws on those prayers, the Bible verses upon which she was invited to meditate, and the speeches she has made. These show how her Christian faith enabled her to prepare for her reign and how that faith has sustained her in the life that has followed.

ANOINTING

The focus of the Little Book of Private Devotions was the deep symbolism of the Coronation ceremony, rooted in the Bible. At the heart of the Coronation, there was a hidden ceremony, screened from view under a canopy so the television cameras could not film it. At this most sacred moment, the Queen was anointed with oil.

As Our Faithful Queen explains: 'Anointing symbolically sets people apart

for service and pours out the life and power of God ... God's anointing makes the difference between an ordinary human life and a life empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

'Just as God has equipped the Queen for her role as Sovereign over the past 70 years and answered her prayers, Christians believe that God wants to equip each of us for our roles in life and invites us to talk to him in prayer so he can answer our prayers too.'

For the anointing at her Coronation, the Queen's regal robes were removed, leaving her wearing a simple white dress, as the Devotions reminded her: '... stripped of all royal dignity, to offer myself in my own person for his work.'

Symbolically she was coming to God as an ordinary woman like any other Christian without any special status. She was asking God to send his Holy Spirit to enable her to take on her royal role. In her Devotions she anticipated this significant moment: 'By the anointing God makes, blesses, and consecrates me Queen: and I am till my dying day "his anointed servant". In the anointing God creates a new relationship between himself and me, giving me for my use in this office just those resources of his divine grace which I need to dispose hands and heart and mind to do his will.'



Coincidentally, the Platinum Jubilee four-day Bank Holiday from 2-5 June, ends on Pentecost Sunday, which makes it an ideal opportunity to focus on the work of God's Holy Spirit in equipping the Queen, and all of Jesus' followers, for a life of service.

ANSWERED PRAYER

The gift book Our Faithful Queen also highlights the prayers the Queen was invited to pray and the requests she has made for prayer throughout her life.

In her first Christmas broadcast as Queen in 1952 she asked for prayer: 'Pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve him and you, all the days of my life.'

As her Coronation ended, the Queen left Westminster Abbey to the sound of the National Anthem: '... long live our noble queen, God save the Queen'. Seventy years later, after one of the longest reigns in history, the prayers of that much-sung song have been answered.

On the fortieth anniversary of her accession in 1992, a year which the Queen described as an 'annus horribilis', she acknowledged that prayers 'have sustained me through all these years.'

Four days before she gave that speech, Windsor Castle had been badly damaged by fire. In that year, the marriages of three of her four children had broken down. As Our Faithful Queen reflects: 'Any mother would have been saddened by such a year, but the Queen had to endure it in the full glare of the scandal-hungry media. That year, and every year; that week and almost every week of her life, the Queen would be found joining millions of others in churches around the world, asking God for wisdom.

'Yes, she was crowned with a priceless, jewelled crown of gold. But she has also worn her metaphorical 'crown of thorns' with the grace and faithfulness for which she prayed: "For myself, and for my peoples I pray that thou wilt make our minds to be wise, our hearts sound,

and our wills righteous, according to thy will and unto thy glory: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

Just as God has equipped the Queen for her role as Sovereign over the past 70 years and answered her prayers, Christians believe that God wants to equip each of us for our roles in life and invites us to talk to him in prayer so he can answer our prayers too.

RESOURCES

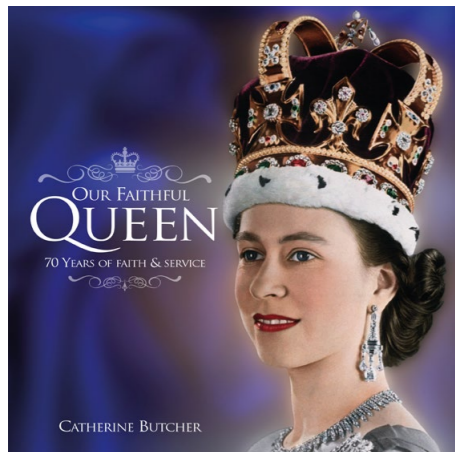
HOPE Together, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and other partners are helping churches around the Commonwealth to mark this special occasion with special church services and community parties. www.theplatinumjubilee.com is a dedicated website with all the ideas and resources needed to bring communities together to celebrate.

Street Parties

- Your Street Party Planner - ideas, plans and games for fun-packed community events developed in collaboration with the Methodist Church.

A New Anthem

- A new anthem 'Rise Up and Serve' has been commissioned by HOPE Together and partners, and written by popular song writers Graham Kendrick, Mal Pope and Rend Collective. The lyrics and sheet music are free to download.
- A YouTube video featuring Commonwealth choirs singing 'Rise Up & Serve' is being filmed at the Tower of London. It is produced by Les Moir from the Word & Worship Trust, who played a significant role in bringing together The UK Blessing, which has been watched by nearly 5 million people.



Souvenir giftbook

- Our Faithful Queen - a gift book using rarely-seen prayers the Queen prayed as she prepared for the Coronation. Our Faithful Queen

is a 64-page book full of photos showing the Queen through her life. It is based on the prayers the Queen prayed in preparation for her Coronation - prayers given to her by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, in a book of devotions to use from 1 May 1953 to 2 June - her Coronation day.



Gift book for toddlers

- An animation and book The Girl Who Grew Up To Be Queen for under 5s has been published using Happyland children's toys from The Early Learning Centre to explore the question, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'

Celebrate by serving others

- 70 Acts of Service is an invitation to communities to celebrate the Queen's 70 years of service by serving others - the 70 community service ideas include: ideas for individuals, small groups and whole communities. Examples include:
 - Drop a small card to a hidden hero, just to let them know they're noticed.
 - In a queue? Buy the next person in line a coffee/sandwich/pint along with your order. Or pay for a bus ticket for the person behind you.
 - Ask a local care home if there are residents who have no visitors, who'd welcome a visit. Commit to visiting at least once a month.
 - Set up a free shoe-shine stall in your high street or town centre - with the necessary permission from the local authority.

Resources for young people

- On Her Majesty's Service for 11-14s - seven ready-to-use sessions for youth organisations, schools and uniformed organisation produced by youth specialists from the Church of England, HOPE Together, Pais Movement, Youth For Christ, YouthScape, The Message, Prayer Spaces In Schools, Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade.

Banners, mugs and bunting

- Banners, posters and other Platinum Jubilee branded resources are available from CPO - www.cpo.org.uk/queen-platinum-jubilee

Catherine Butcher is the author of 'Our Faithful Queen' and co-author, with Mark Greene, of 'The Servant Queen and the King She Serves'. For the past 10 years, Catherine has been communications director for HOPE Together alongside other freelance writing and editing work. She trained as a newspaper journalist in Eastbourne, where she still lives at the edge of the South Downs National Park. She and her husband Adrian worship at their local Anglican church, where Catherine is a Reader. She is a member of the Church of England's General Synod, loves sea swimming all year round, and enjoys walking with their dog Milly.



RISE UP & SERVE

*Graham Kendrick,
Mal Pope & Rend Collective*

In this glorious year of the Jubilee
We give thanks for Her Majesty
In honour of a faithful heart
Who chose to serve and to play her part

Many nations have gathered here
From the mountain heights let the song ring clear
Celebrating the answered call
Blessed with prayer and sacred oil

*'Rise up and serve' is the call we hear
With hope in our hearts, joining as one, making history
Let fanfares sound through this Jubilee
Rise up and serve, thanking God for Her Majesty*

May God's good grace be upon her now
To complete the task and fulfil her vow.
May the trust in Christ she has held so long
Be the truth that burns brightly on

One hope, one vision
On many tongues one song
From East to West
Let's keep it burning on

One hope, one vision
On many tongues one song
From East to West
Let's keep it burning on
Keep it burning on

Rise up, come on and rise up,
In this year of jubilee
Rise up, come on and rise up,
Celebration time is here

The Jubilee is coming
Everyone is singing
Rise up and greet the dawn
The Jubilee is coming
Everyone is singing
Let's keep it burning on
Keep it burning on

PROCLAIMING A JUBILEE FOR A NEW GENERATION

Tim Thorlby & Matt Williams

TIM THORLBY AND MATT WILLIAMS FROM THE JUBILEE CENTRE EXPLAIN HOW THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE REMAINS A RADICAL VISION FOR THE CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

For nearly 40 years, the Jubilee Centre in Cambridge has been shaping and promoting a biblical vision of society. Much has changed in this time and we are now renewing the charity so that it remains 'fit for purpose' for the future. We also have the clear intention of increasing our impact on the UK.

Whilst our strategy may be changing (more on this later), our mission remains the same. We remain inspired by the Jubilee Centre's original biblical vision of a nation defined by economic justice, a strong society and environmental sustainability - all built upon strong and healthy relationships. At the core of our vision is the Old Testament idea of the 'Jubilee'.

We believe that the time is right to rediscover this idea, in all its fulness, and work with a new generation to bring Jubilee to the UK.

In this article we explain what the biblical Jubilee was and why it mattered. At the end, we conclude by outlining our new strategy for making this a reality today.

jubilee noun

a time for celebrating | a year of liberation and restoration

A core feature within this vision of a 'good society' was the idea of a 'Sabbath' which created an important rhythm for the people to live by.

THE SABBATH

The Law in the Old Testament set out a clear and integrated national framework for the people of Israel to live by. It wove together the legal, religious, political, social and economic rules to govern the nation, with the purpose of establishing a land of peace, prosperity and harmony.

A core feature within this vision of a 'good society' was the idea of a 'Sabbath' which created an important rhythm for the people to live by. The Sabbath operated on three different time horizons; it was much more than a weekly pattern, it had longer term implications too:

- **A Sabbath Day** - Every week the seventh day was meant to be a holy day, a day of rest when no work was to be done and, by implication, the land itself was allowed to rest also (Exodus 20:8-11).
- **A Sabbath Year** - Every seven years, Israel was also instructed to give their land 'rest' and

not to work the fields for the whole year (Leviticus 25:1-7). They would live on food harvested previously or on what grew naturally during the year.

- The book of Deuteronomy also adds to this. This 'fallow year' was to be accompanied by the cancellation of all debts between Israelites (Deuteronomy 15:1-3). This seventh year was called 'the year of release'.
- **A Jubilee Year** - Finally, after every 49 years (after every seven Sabbath years), in the fiftieth year, the trumpet was to be sounded at the close of the Day of Atonement and a 'Jubilee Year' declared (Leviticus 25:8-55). The trumpet used was traditionally a ram's horn, with the Hebrew words for 'ram's horn' and 'jubilee' sounding very similar: 'Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you' (Leviticus 25:10a).

In the Jubilee Year, the Israelites were told to let the land rest fallow, to return to their ancestral family properties and to release anyone working as a bonded labourer. It was a major national 'reset'.

THE JUBILEE YEAR

The arrangements for the Jubilee Year were unusual. The Israelites were given three main instructions about the Jubilee Year in Leviticus, chapter 25:

- **Rest for the land** - It was to be another year of rest for the land; they were not to sow and reap as normal.
- **Return to their family land** - Everyone was asked to return to their 'family property'. Where land had been bought and sold in the past, these arrangements would lapse in the Jubilee Year and families would return to their ancestral lands. In modern terms, you would say that there was no selling of freehold, only the leasing of land and all leases terminated in the fiftieth year and ownership reverted to the original owner: 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants' (Leviticus 25:23). There were different arrangements for properties in cities which could be permanently bought and sold, but these were houses, not farms for sustaining livelihoods.
- **Release those in debt bondage** - Anyone who had become so poor that they had to give up their land and 'sell themselves' to another to pay their way through work, was treated as a 'bonded labourer'. They were housed and fed by an 'employer' in return for their work; they were



supposed to be treated as hired labourers. In the Year of Jubilee, these people and their families were free to leave their employer and return home to their former property, with their family, to start again with their own land: a year of liberty. (Deuteronomy 15:12-18 also adds provisions for some bonded labourers to be released between Jubilees, after six years of work, but the Jubilee applied to everyone.)

Taken together, these Sabbath laws, provide a radical and profoundly important framework for Israel's social and economic life. The Jubilee Year in particular stands out as the crowning glory of the Law.

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WHAT DOES THE JUBILEE MEAN?

There are several features of these arrangements which are worth highlighting.

Firstly, the framework which God called Israel to live by integrated religious concerns with social, economic and environmental considerations in one holistic approach. A person's relationship with God also shaped their relationship to their family, community, work and the land. The Sabbath arrangements (all together) not only pointed the people of Israel to God and reminded them of their reliance upon his provision, they also provided a practical and just set of rules for how they would do business with each other. At the root of this integrated vision of national life is the reminder from God: 'the land is mine...and you are...my tenants' (Leviticus 25:23).

Secondly, the vision for national life is powered by God's grace and generosity to his people. It is no coincidence that the Jubilee Year is announced on the Day of Atonement - the day when the people ask for and receive God's forgiveness for their waywardness. It is only that strong sense of forgiveness from God that empowers the nation to participate in a radical act of wealth redistribution, as properties are returned to their original owners. To those being set free and given a second chance, this is a day of liberation, but to those who had done well for themselves but who were called to give properties back, this was a day of sacrifice for the benefit of the community. Only the deepest and strongest motivation would have enabled this kind of action - only a call from God no less.

And what prize is gained from this national act? As the people's relationship with God is restored, so all other relationships are put right also - with each other and the land itself. All of the Law - the religious and the practical - points to one ultimate purpose; the desire by God to live happily with his people: 'I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people' (Leviticus 26:12).

Thirdly, what are we to make of the practical social and economic actions taken in the Jubilee Year? What do they mean? We believe that there are four key elements to the practising of Jubilee:

- The Jubilee recognises that the land itself (the 'environment') has limits that must be respected. The Sabbath years and the Jubilee Year gave the land of Israel regular periods of rest and recovery from their farming practices, providing for ecological flourishing.
- The Jubilee prioritises the long-term stability and rootedness of families and communities over the accumulation of material wealth. The buying and selling of land was clearly both normal and acceptable, but it was only ever temporary. Land could not be sold permanently, only leased until the next Jubilee when it reverted to its original owner. Anyone who had moved or lost their land would return to 'the land of their forefathers'. To modern eyes this is the most radical - and perhaps bewildering - part of the Jubilee.

The clue to understanding this requirement is in the repeated warning in the passage about land (Leviticus 25:14-17); twice God says 'do not take advantage of each other'. Marketplaces have a tendency to operate unfairly - differences in starting position, negotiating power and circumstances can lead to greatly unequal outcomes. Fifty years of buying and selling would have generated winners and losers. The solution was not to outlaw markets, which serve a useful purpose, but to place limits upon them, to ensure that social purposes ultimately outweighed financial purposes. The Jubilee provided a 'reset'.

Those who had lost their land (the main means of providing an income for your family) were given a chance



There was to be no permanent landless class of people who could not make a living for themselves. Every generation was given hope for the future.



to start again. There was to be no permanent landless class of people who could not make a living for themselves. Every generation was given hope for the future. And those who had accumulated land and wealth (and workers) were reminded that this was not the national priority and required to relinquish some of their assets.

The return to family lands also brought extended families back together again, and restored their links with the land that God had originally given them (for example, see Numbers 33:54). Every family had a permanent home.

- The Jubilee puts God on the side of the market's 'losers'. The Leviticus passage says '...proclaim liberty throughout the land...' (Leviticus 25:10). The emphasis on liberty assumes that God is talking directly to those who are burdened and oppressed and need to be set free. It is perhaps hard to see how a wealthy family would welcome the Jubilee Year, as they handed back the keys, free of charge, for the properties they had amassed - although of course they retain their own property. Does this seem unfair to us? It squarely addresses the hubris of our modern 'meritocracy' where the winners reckon to deserve their enhanced lot in their life, regardless of their starting points, the work of others and, often, sheer luck. It underlines the message that the accumulation of material wealth is not the ultimate purpose of national life. In terms of land and wealth, there is such a thing as 'enough'. It also protects the market's winners from the dangers that too much wealth can pose for a healthy faith in God.

A JUBILEE FOR A NEW GENERATION

These issues are more than just matters of history.

The prophet Isaiah goes on to reference the Jubilee Year (Isaiah 61:1-2) as he looks forward to the coming of the Messiah who will 'proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. It was an idea that lived on.

Jesus himself then chooses this same passage to announce the start of his public ministry, not only reading it out but announcing 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4: 14-21). Jesus declares to the stunned crowd in Nazareth that the year of the Lord's favour has arrived, quoting that same passage in Isaiah. Jesus brings the fulfilment of that holistic relational restoration promised in Leviticus - liberation and release.

So, what does it mean for us, today?

We believe that the biblical vision of society, and the idea of Jubilee, still have relevance and power today. In a post-Christendom state we are clearly not about to shape and impose a national framework as in the days of the Old Testament, but the vision still has power to shape ideas and motivate action. Much can be achieved through grassroots movements.

As part of the Jubilee Centre's renewal, we are moving to focus our efforts in order to achieve greater depth and impact.

We are returning to the marketplace. From 2022 we will be working with Christians, churches and others to build a movement for 'good business, a fair economy and dignified work'.

We will combine theological reflection, research and collaboration with practitioners in the marketplace to experiment with new ways of working. We will be rolling up our sleeves, taking a few risks and innovating in our new 'Jubilee Learning Labs'.

Our new working agenda, 'Beautiful Agenda' is on our website and sets out the biblical principles for enterprise, drawing on the Jubilee. We are also finalising the report from our current research project which identifies and celebrates those Christians already pioneering purpose-driven enterprises in the UK. This pioneering work is already happening. We look forward to working with a growing movement of people to accelerate and expand this work and to deliver radical action.

We believe that the Church in the UK has a key role to play in engaging more fully with businesses, workers and the marketplace. Millions of Christians work in the private sector already. There is great potential for the Church to deepen its discipleship and contribute to the cultural renewal of our nation. Join us!



Tim Thorlby is the new Director of the Jubilee Centre. He was formerly part of the founding team and the Managing Director of Clean for Good, a pioneering Christian cleaning company in London and has worked in charity, public policy consultancy and local government.



Dr Matt Williams is the Head of Biblical Insight at the Jubilee Centre and specialises in biblical and theological research, particularly around socio-economic issues. Most of his working life has been spent in higher education (both learning and teaching) as well as practically addressing poverty. Outside of the Jubilee Centre, he works in community organising, is involved in African development work and is a founding director of a social enterprise.

JUBILEE CENTRE

You can find out more about the work of the Jubilee Centre, and read 'Beautiful Enterprise' at Jubilee-Centre.org

MOVING ON

Farewell to Derek, our Development Worker, at the end of August

It is with a real sense of sadness that we will say farewell to the Revd Derek Balsdon, our MET Development Worker at the end of August. Derek has served in this role for the last four and a half years, (three years full time, and a year half-time).

Derek has certainly been 'the right man for the job' and has made an immense contribution to the role of Development Worker. The role changed somewhat drastically with the onset of Covid in early 2020, and so for two and half years he had to abandon plans of travelling around the country to lead teaching weekends and taking part in events. Instead, he underwent a steep learning curve to become very successfully a master of technology with hosting Zoom Bible studies, teaching days, prayer meetings and numerous MET meetings. He also has acquired some excellent skills in website editing and graphic design. Perhaps he surprised himself with new found gifts and a natural technical ability!

Derek has been a very diligent, supportive and hard-working colleague with a 'can do' attitude to everything, willing to take on momentous tasks with such grace and positivity. We are also very grateful for his extra support with his work on the finance side of things in absence of a treasurer.

We would all agree that his appointment in this role has been 'for such a time as this'. We will of course miss him being a key part of the team, but we know that God is faithful and we trust his leading and guiding for Derek and his wife Hilary as they discern the next phase of his ministry.

Please pray for the trustees and executive committee as we discern the next steps in the future of the role of Development Worker.

Marian Izzard, MET General Secretary



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MET AGM

Saturday 4 June 2:00 - 3:30pm

At Cliff Festival

Samuel Chadwick Lecture Room,
Cliff College, Calver, Hope Valley S32 3XG

This will be a hybrid meeting, so both in person
and on Zoom

*If you want to join in via Zoom,
please email Derek Balsdon
development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk
ASAP and by 1:00pm on Friday 3 June*

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DIGGING FOR TREASURE

Saturday 1 October | On Zoom

Expository Preaching day-conference

Word and Worship

Speakers:

The Revd John Risbridger

Mrs Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman

The Revd Dr Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman

*For further details visit
methodistevangelicals.org.uk/dft*

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MICAH PART 1

Catherine Hutton

THIS BIBLE STUDY IS PART 1 OF A THREE-PART BIBLE STUDY IN THIS AND THE NEXT TWO EDITIONS OF MET CONNEXION.

INTRODUCTION: MICAH'S MISSION-FIELD

Approaching the prophetic words of Micah, we may be aware of the tiny portion that we often read at Christmas: Micah 5:2, 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel ...' Or, the often quoted Micah 6:8, 'And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' There is far more relevance in Micah than these brief glimpses and, indeed, these also are better understood in the context of the whole work.

Do you have favourite words from Micah? When did you first hear them? Why have they remained with you?

In the second part of the 8th century BC, there was a comfort and ease to the lives of the people of the cities of Israel and Judah. God's people enjoyed a time of wealth. They had become selfish and greedy. Their faith had become less concerned with the priorities of God's Law or the words of prophets who had gone before. Instead, God's people

had taken to persecuting the poor and creating poverty in place of providing for those in need. Those who were rich were becoming indolent in their complacency and affluence.

Ponder on your own cultural situation. Has it brought about a laziness towards, or a greater dependence and reliance on keeping faithful to God?

Micah follows Isaiah who had been God's mouthpiece in the days of King Uzziah (767 BC). He would precede Zephaniah and Jeremiah who would go on to speak into the reign of King Josiah. As a counterpoint to the godlessness and wickedness of the kings, the prophets were the mouthpieces of God to speak to kings and society. Micah, a preacher-prophet came to Jerusalem from Moresheth-gath (1:1-2) to speak God's truth and judgment into a situation of moral and spiritual depravity.

Even the context for Micah resonates with much that is going on among God's people, especially in our current era, which is shaped by international crisis, pandemic, social media's authority and a liberal-humanist agenda.

In what ways do you see these influences making an impact on your own views of Scripture, and the outworking of your faith? How might you develop a resilience in your faith? Who and what might help you here?

A Challenge to Listen and Act: Micah 1:1-2

'The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah - the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, you peoples, all of you, listen, earth and all who live in it, that the Sovereign Lord may bear witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.'

We know from this that these words of prophecy from Micah are not going to be comfortable. They are going to rankle with the easy life of the people who pay lip service to God. The people of God are under oppression from the Assyrians. The nation of Israel and Judah is divided and yet there is a single, sovereign judgment; the rule of God is not limited by humanly ascribed boundaries.

We might sometimes feel that we are exempt from the judgment that God is bringing. Yet, as we look at the people of God in Micah's time, we see that even the faithful are suffering along with the faithless. The effects of sin are far reaching and no one is excluded from their impact.

How do you respond to the suggestion that we are all implicated in the 'sins of our nation'? What might be done?

Verse 2 Is the call to Hear and Listen to the holy utterance from God. This is not

confined to the local peoples, but to the created peoples of all times and regions in the earth. We are reminded that God's authority and sovereignty is not to be thwarted by earthly satisfaction and wealth. No matter how sophisticated the peoples of the earth may be, God is greater and is not to be gone against. It is here that we begin to note the framing of this prophetic word as a court of law. Those who do go against God will be brought to account, judged and punished. The scope of God's reign and rule is important as the people had created a religion to suit the comfort of their own era and circumstance. Micah's view is larger than the Northern and Southern kingdoms and yet very much is all about them.

Think about how 'Justice' is often a 'buzz word' used in Methodist/Christian circles. What are your reactions to the various ways 'Justice' is used in churches? How does Micah apply 'Justice' to a people who aren't committed to faith rooted in God and his rule?

Verses 3-5 Describe the nature and character of the Lord Almighty whose sovereignty and strength has been ignored along with his Law and the word of the patriarchs and prophets. God remains true to his own character, even though the perceptions of him are culturally diminished or even, bluntly, erroneous as they were in Micah's time. The terrible reminder of the vastness of his power and the genuinely awesome nature of his strength makes the human viewpoint tiny and the human arrogance of assertion against God as nothing. His answer to godlessness and the terrible ways that religion behaves as a result, is to break them into nothingness.

Verses 6-8 show the ease with which they will be brought low Samaria, strong and proud as the capital city, will be 'rubble'. The 'Promised Land' into which God had delivered his Covenant people was to be brought down as the people denied the sovereign rule of God in favour of their own desires for wealth and ease. The indictment of the wages belonging to prostitutes being returned to prostitutes, reminds us of the faithlessness of the people of Israel in keeping their side of the Covenant relationship. Much like Hosea's relationship with his faithless

wife, Gomer, this is adultery, turning from their Covenant relationship to espouse gods and idols, and is abhorrent to God. The awfulness is in that although the idols and artefacts purchased by the wages of cultic prostitution have been destroyed, they will be traded for a different set of favours which do not honour Yahweh. Given over to greed, lust and idolatry, there is to be a reckoning which will be harsh and terrible. Micah, as the Lord's mouthpiece, will grieve over it and yet it will have to run its course. Micah's torment is prophetic and shows the Lord's pain over this outrage in the Promised Land.

How might these verses speak into the spiritual landscape of your local fellowship?

Verse 9 begins the evaluation of the issue. Sin permeates culture and corrupts entire peoples. Where the leadership is flawed and faulty, there will be a passing-on to the general population. Where the spiritual covering of the kings and priests is corrupted and idolatrous, unholy and not honouring of God, it follows that the whole nation will fall victim to the sinfulness. From Samaria to Jerusalem, they may be divided as nations, but they are united by idolatry and greed and godlessness.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Verses 10-16 Micah lists the places that have fallen. Once pleasant, safe and beautiful, they are tortured, and Micah describes them in their fallenness. The prophetic devices here are puns and word-play. They are worth looking up and investigating to see how Micah uses them to describe a terrible time of destruction where even names will be subverted. It will be a time for mourning and a time for shame. There are reminders in the text of defeats and retreats; Adullam in verse 15, for example, is the place King David escaped to as he retreated from Saul's attack in 1 Samuel 22:1. What is coming will be such desperate times as this. Verse 16 confirms that exile away from the Land of Promises is coming.

Maybe you feel that we are living in a time such as Micah is describing, or are on the verge of it. Perhaps this is

a time for repentance and for a deep commitment to God, that you might weather the storm. Are there others with whom you can pray regularly for the spiritual recovery of our nation?

The following chapters in Micah will build on these opening indictments. Micah speaks of woes to come in response to the godless behaviour of the people. Destruction will follow at the hands of the Assyrians. King Hezekiah will fend them off for a while, but to do this will ally with Egypt rather than trusting in the God of Promise. The fact that Hezekiah does not trust God is another blow for the kingly line of Judah.

The Revd Catherine Hutton is Lead Minister for Epsom and Cheam Methodist Churches. She has a passion for building the church in discipleship for true evangelism, Scriptural holiness and missional engagement with the local community. She lives in Epsom with her husband Gavin, two sons - Aidan & Joel - and Rocky, the ministry Chihuahua. She is partial to a sparkly manicure and a good Marvel movie.



SERVING KING AND QUEEN

David Moss

FORMER ARMY CHAPLAIN, DAVID MOSS REFLECTS ON WHAT SERVICE TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH MEANS FOR CHRISTIANS IN THE ARMED FORCES

In Westminster Abbey lies the grave of the unknown warrior from World War I. The inscription reads:

'Beneath this stone rests the body of a British warrior unknown by name or rank brought back from France to lie among the most illustrious of the Land and buried here on Armistice Day 11 Nov: 1920, in the presence of His Majesty King George V his Ministers of State the Chiefs of his forces and a vast concourse of the nation

Thus commemorated are the many multitudes who during the Great War of 1914-1918 gave the most that man can give life itself for God for King and Country for loved ones home and empire for the sacred cause of justice and the freedom of the world They buried him among kings because he had done good toward God and toward his house.'

Arguably specific battles and wars come to define the ethos and culture of our British armed services: the Royal Navy looks to the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), the Royal Air Force to the Battle of Britain (1940) and the regiments of the British Army look to such events as the Battle of

Waterloo (1815) and World War I and II. I write as a former chaplain in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, but with apologies to those of the other Services, as my former service will inform my approach in this article. Army Chaplains look to World War I as the war which defined the ethos of chaplaincy for us, with incarnational ministry, which means we live amongst the troops and, although non-combatant, experience the joys and difficulties of service, including war itself.

The inscription on the grave of the unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey provides us with an insight into the loyalties that a member of the armed forces lived with and still lives with: God, King or Queen, Empire or Commonwealth, Country, Armed Forces, home, loved ones and freedom. These loyalties are layered, displaying multiple layers of commitment. For practicing Christians in the military, their faith in Jesus provides the foundation for service.

If you have ever visited a military base, you will have noticed many indications in which Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II calls for the loyalty of those serving. Many offices will have a picture of Queen Elizabeth on the wall, the Union Flag will be flying freely and everyone's uniform carries badges, many of which have the Queen's crown in them; even the buttons on many of the best uniforms include the Queen's crown. When a monarch changes, then the crown does also.

When I first joined the Chaplains' Department as a regular chaplain (1997), I was posted to Cyprus. Our boys went away to board at a school in England, coming home for the holidays. Ali, my wife, and I immersed ourselves in military life. As one entered the military base, flying high on a flagpole was the red, white and blue of the Union Flag. There was no doubt this was a British base. When we went to the cinema, before we saw the film we all stood to attention and sang the National Anthem. These things hadn't been part of our life in our previous circuit, the Burslem Mission, in Stoke on Trent. In fact I can't recall ever singing the National Anthem in a cinema before this.

Loyalty to the Crown is expected and taught in the forces. This happens in basic training for both commissioned and non-commissioned serving personnel. It is also reflected in the book of rules, which regulates the whole of a soldier's life; Queen's Regulations, or 'QRs' as they are known. Prime Ministers come and go, but the Queen remains constant. In a very real sense, all three of the Armed Services serve the Queen. Of course, this is a result of our history, a civil war and regicide in the mid-seventeenth century.

In 2003, the United Kingdom went to war in Iraq. 46,150 British military personnel were deployed. In the months leading up to this war, there



were constant discussions in the press and on the TV about the rights and wrongs of the war and if it should happen. Our Prime Minister was Tony Blair and he was in a special relationship with the President of the United States George Bush; it seemed as if we would go to war. In the UK there were protests about the possible war. My regiment, 36 Engineer Regiment were planning to go. As their chaplain, I wanted to go with them, not because I was a great supporter of war, but because I wanted to serve God with my soldiers. All these discussions about the rights and wrongs of the war were not missed by the soldiers and officers.

However, as soon as we knew that invasion was imminent: all discussion ceased! No one told us to stop, the discussion just did. The whole regiment worked as one to serve well, fight and survive; I think I am correct in saying that no one was there for Tony Blair, we were there for one another, for Queen and country and, as far as I was concerned I was serving God by being where the soldiers in my care had been sent.

When somebody joins the UK armed forces, they make promises to the Crown. The Oath of Allegiance is not to the government of the day, but to the Queen and her successors. When non-commissioned officers become Warrant Officers as Warrant Officer II they wear a crown, when they become a Warrant Officer I they wear a Royal Coat of Arms. A chaplain is a commissioned officer. On my Chaplains' Commission from the Queen, now framed, are the words:

'To our trusty and beloved Rev... Greeting! We, reposing especial trust and confidence in your loyalty, piety and good conduct, do by these presents, constitute and appoint you to be an Officer in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department of Our Land Forces ...'

There is one word which differs from a regular officer's commission, in the chaplains' version the word piety replaces the word courage. In many ways, having chaplains in uniform, holding the Queen's Commission, reflects an earlier model of church and state, but importantly even in a more secular space, there is still a place for chaplaincy. By chaplains wearing uniform, the ministry is incarnational, working and living amongst the military because one belongs to them.

I have a small travel Bible. This accompanied me to all the places the Royal Army Chaplains' Department sent me as a military chaplain. In some ways it is an example of the sacrifices all serving personnel make when they take 'the Queen's shilling'. In the front I listed all the countries I served in as a chaplain, 16 countries in all.

The work and service of military Christians, and chaplains, is well supported by a variety of Christian military charities. As a chaplain, I worked very closely with these. Soldiers' Airmen's Scripture Readers Association (SASRA) is a wonderful organisation; Readers, with the agreement of the chaplain and Commanding Officer, can



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By chaplains wearing uniform, the ministry is incarnational, working and living amongst the military because one belongs to them.

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visit soldiers and airmen in the barracks, talking about faith and encouraging believers from amongst those they meet. The Armed Forces Christian Union (AFCU) is another group. This organisation produces a very good magazine, holds conferences and encourages Christians serving in the military. One of the most useful groups which supports the faith in the military is the Naval and Military Bible Society, who work closely with the Scripture Gift Mission. Through them, chaplains endeavour to present New Testaments to new recruits. In addition to this, whilst serving and especially whilst on operations, booklets are available for chaplains to distribute. In the Iraq War (Op Telic), I was able to distribute many copies of the New Testament which

had desert camouflage covers. It was a delight to see some soldiers, who had never showed any previous inclination for the spiritual life, reading the Bible together in their down time.

In the time of John Wesley, there was a Methodist who felt called by God to serve in the Army. He was called John Haime; he was a volunteer soldier who wrote to Wesley as he was serving overseas. He became one of Wesley's preachers, creating an Army ministry (at the time there was no such thing as Methodist army chaplains).

Wesley's Journal quotes a letter from John Haime:

'1744 May 1, - We marched to the camp near Brussels. There a few of us joined into a society, being sensible, where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is our Lord in the midst of them. We sung a hymn, which drew about two hundred soldiers together, and they all behaved decently ... Our society is now increased upwards of two hundred; and the hearers are frequently more than a thousand, although many say I am mad; and others have endeavoured to incense the Field Marshal against us.'

I mention John Haime because there is a tradition of people joining up in order to share their faith with others or coming to faith in the Services and continuing to serve the Crown, but with the desire to make a difference for Christ where they have been placed. These are 'unofficial' missionaries, but people called by God. For example, I know of one officer and family who joined up to serve Christ, they are inspirational, supporting soldiers, families and chaplains wherever posted. Her Majesty as a practising Christian influences how military believers understand their relationship with the Crown. It makes it easier in many ways, but it is important to recognise that being a Christian in the Services is difficult, challenging and at times involves persecution. There are Christians from Commonwealth countries who join the military. Ten or so years ago there was an influx of soldiers from Fiji, some joining because of God's missionary call. Congregations, many of them with a Methodist core, sprang up in a variety of military bases, a great work of the Spirit.

Serving Christ, the King, the Queen is complex and not understood by all

Christians. Like many things, this is a divisive subject. As we approach this Platinum Jubilee, please pray for: our Armed Forces, chaplains, Christians in the military, our Queen and the royal family.

The Revd David Moss is currently a Methodist Superintendent minister, serving in the East of Cornwall, in the Callington and Gunnislake Circuit.



KING OF KINGS, MAJESTY

Jarrood Cooper

King of Kings, Majesty,
God of Heaven living in me
Gentle Saviour, closest friend
Strong Deliverer, beginning and end
All within me falls at Your throne

***Your Majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty***

Earth and Heaven worship You
Love eternal, Faithful and True
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls
Brought this sinner near to Your throne
All within me cries out in praise.

Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty
I live to serve Your Majesty



LEARNING FROM THE ANCIENT CHURCH

Carl Trueman

PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR CARL TRUEMAN SHARES LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM THE CHURCH OF THE SECOND CENTURY

Traditional Christians are typically those who take history seriously. We have a faith rooted in historical claims (supremely the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the events and actions of his life) and see our religious communities as standing in a line extending back through time to Pentecost and beyond. Thus, when faced with peculiar challenges, Christians often look to the past to find hope with regard to their experience in the present. Typically, Protestants look to the Reformation, and Catholics look to the High Middle Ages. If only we might be able to return to that world, we tell ourselves, all might be well.

Anyone with a realistic sense of history knows that such returns are at best virtually impossible. First, neither the Reformation nor the High Middle Ages were the golden eras that later religious nostalgia would have us believe. The societies in which the church operated in those periods are gone forever, thanks in large part to the ways in which technology has reshaped the world in which we now live.

If we are to find a precedent for our times, I believe that we must go further back in time, to the second century and the immediately post-apostolic church. There, Christianity was a little-understood, despised, marginal sect. It was suspected of being immoral and seditious. Eating the body and blood of their god and calling each other 'brother' and 'sister' even when married to each other, made Christians and Christianity sound highly dubious to outsiders. And the claim that 'Jesus is Lord!' was on the surface a pledge of loyalty that derogated from that owed to Caesar. That is very like the situation of the church today. For example, we are considered irrational bigots for our stance on gay marriage. In the aftermath of the Trump presidency, it has become routine to hear religious conservatives in general, and evangelical Christians in particular, decried as representing a threat to civil society.

Like our spiritual ancestors in the second century, we too are deemed immoral and seditious.

Of course, the analogy is not perfect. The church in the second century faced a pagan world that had never known Christianity. We live in a world that is de-Christianizing, often self-consciously and intentionally. That means that the opposition is likely better informed and more pro-active than in the ancient church. Yet a glance at the Church's strategy in the second century is still instructive.

First, it is clear from the New Testament and from early non-canonical texts like the Didache that community was central to church life. The Acts of the Apostles presents a picture of a church where Christians cared for and served each other. The Didache sets forth a set of moral prescriptions, including a ban on abortion and infanticide, which served to distinguish the church from the world around. Christian identity was clearly a very practical, down-to-earth, and day-to-day thing.

This makes perfect sense. Underlying the notion of the social imaginary - is that identity is shaped by the communities to which we belong. And we all have various identities - I am a husband, a father, a teacher, an Englishman, an immigrant, a writer, a rugby fan, in addition to being a Christian. And the strongest identities I have, forming my strongest intuitions, derive from the strongest communities to which I belong. And that means that the church needs to be the strongest community to which we each belong.

Ironically, the LGBTQ+ community is proof of this point: the reason they have moved from the margins to centre stage is intimately connected to the strong communities they formed while on the margins. This is why lamentation for Christianity's cultural marginalization, while legitimate, cannot be the sole response of the church to the current social convulsions she is experiencing. Lament, for sure - we should lament that the world is not as it should be, as many of the Psalms

“

Paul himself comments that when an unbeliever accidentally turns up at a church service, he should be struck by the other-worldly holiness of what is going on. The most powerful witness to the gospel is the church herself, simply going about the business of worship.

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teach us -- but also organize. Become a community. By this, the Lord says, shall all men know that you are my disciples, by the love you have for each other. And that means community.

This brings me to the second lesson we can learn from the early church. Community in terms of its day-to-day details might look different in a city to a rural village, or in the USA to the United Kingdom. But there are certain elements that the church in every place will share: worship and fellowship. Gathering together on the Lord's Day, praying, singing God's praise, hearing the word read and preached, celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper, giving materially to the church's work - these are things all Christians should do when gathered together. It might sound trite, but a large part of the church's witness to the world is simply being the church in worship. Paul himself comments that when an unbeliever accidentally turns up at a church service, he should be struck by the other-worldly holiness of what is going on. The most powerful witness to the gospel is the church herself, simply going about the business of worship.

Many Christians talk of engaging the culture. In fact, the culture is most dramatically engaged by the church presenting it with another culture, another form of community, rooted in her liturgical worship practices and manifested in the loving community that exists both in and beyond the worship service. Many talk of the culture war between Christians and secularism, and certainly the Bible itself uses martial language to describe the spiritual conflict of this present age. But perhaps 'cultural protest' is a way of translating better that idea into modern idiom, given the reality and history of physical warfare in our world. The church protests to the wider culture by offering a true vision of what it means to be a human being made in the image of God.

This approach is certainly hinted at in second century Christian literature. The so-called Greek Apologists, such as Justin Martyr, addressed the Roman Empire from a Christian perspective. What is so interesting when compared to some of the ways many Christians, right and left, do so today, is how respectful



these ancient apologists were. They did not spend their time denouncing the evils of the emperor and his court. Rather, they argued positively that Christians made the best citizens, the best parents, the best servants, the best neighbours, the best employees, and that they should thus be left alone and allowed to carry on with their day-to-day lives without being harassed by the authorities. Of course, there were limits to what they could do to participate in civic life: if asked to sacrifice to the emperor as to a god they would have to refuse, but beyond such demands, they could be good members of the Roman community.

In the fifth century, Augustine in Book XIX of his masterpiece, 'The City of God', offered a similar argument. Christians, he said, were citizens of the earthly city and the city of God. Their pagan neighbours might only be citizens of the earthly city, but this still meant that the two groups shared common interests or loves, above all the peace and prosperity of the earthly city. Both pagans and Christians wanted these things and could work together to achieve them. And that meant that Christians could and should be good citizens to the extent that their higher commitment to God allowed them to do so.

The Apologists and Augustine both offer a vision of the church in a hostile culture that calls on the church to be the church and on Christians to be constructive members of the wider society in which they are placed. Some might respond that failing to engage in aggressive and direct confrontation looks rather like defeatism or withdrawal. But is it? On key issues such as abortion, Christians in the West are still at liberty to use their rights as members of the earthly city to campaign for the good. I am not here calling for a kind of passive quietism whereby Christians abdicate their civic responsibilities or make no connection between how to pursue those civic responsibilities and their religious beliefs. I am suggesting

rather that engaging in cultural warfare using the world's tools, rhetoric, and weapons is not the way for God's people. If the Apologists and Augustine were passive quietists, it is rather hard to explain how Christianity came to be so dominant in the West for so many centuries. The historical evidence suggests rather that their approach proved remarkably effective over time. And so it may again – perhaps not in my lifetime or even that of my children. But God is sovereign, God plays the long game, and God's will shall be done, on earth as it is heaven.

Content taken from *Strange New World* by Carl Trueman, ©2022. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, crossway.org.

Born and raised in England, Carl Trueman obtained his PhD at Aberdeen and has taught on the faculties of the Universities of Nottingham and Aberdeen before moving to the United States in 2001 to teach at Westminster Theological Seminary (PA). Since 2018, he has served as a professor at Grove City College, PA in the Calderwood School of Arts and Humanities. His most recent books are 'The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Expressive Individualism, Cultural Amnesia, and the Road to Sexual Revolution' and 'Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution' (both from Crossway).



REJOICE THE LORD IS KING!

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks, and sing,
and triumph evermore:

He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:

***Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
rejoice, again I say, rejoice!***

Rejoice in glorious hope;
Jesus the Judge shall come,
and take His servants up
to their eternal home:

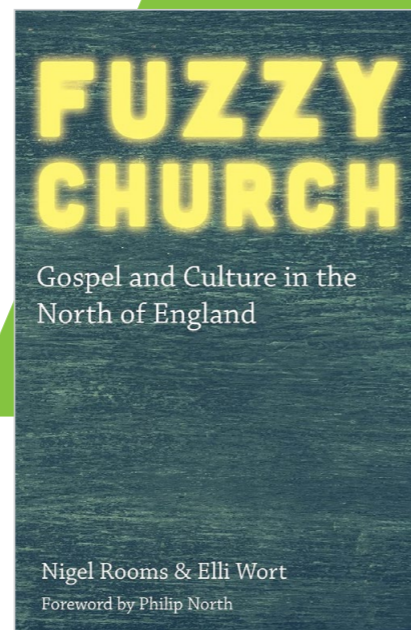
Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains
he took his seat above:

We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
God's trumpet-call shall sound: rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules both earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given:



RESOURCE REVIEWS



FUZZY CHURCH: GOSPEL AND CULTURE IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

Nigel Rooms & Elli Wort

Durham, England: Sacristy Press, 2021
ISBN 978-1-78959-167-5 | pp. 130, £16.99

Being a 'Yorkshire lass', I purchased 'Fuzzy Church: Gospel and Culture in the North of England' with eagerness. Recommended by a colleague (not from the 'North'), the opening italicised statement records the following: 'This book presents the findings and implications of qualitative field research in churches in the North of England where "something is happening"'. Nothing quite like a bit of qualitative research! I dived in.

The authors both describe themselves as white and middle class, one from the north, who now lives in the south, and vice-versa. The writing is clearly 'academic', well referenced - in fact, there is so much referencing/quoting of other people's work I wondered at what point I would learn what they had discovered for themselves! It is not an easy read. Other reviews contained in the book give a ringing endorsement of this work. One states it is 'fun'. They must have read a different book to me!

The authors define what the 'north' is - (a real 'location'). They speak of the importance of humour, welcome, the various characteristics exhibited by 'northerners' - and thankfully they did manage to avoid crass caricatures. Before reaching the term 'fuzzy church' (which they stress is not 'wishy washy' or 'fluffy'), they were looking for 'flourishing churches'. They could not find any! This was because most viewed 'flourishing' as meaning 'successful'. I am not sure

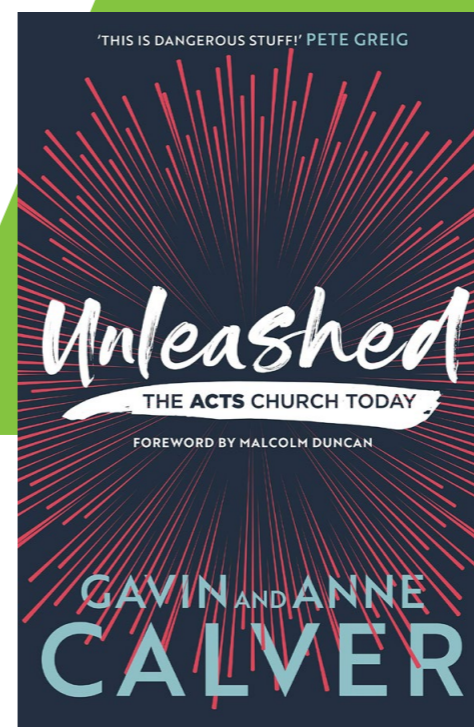
this is just semantics - however, they changed the wording to perhaps reflect a more honest account - places where 'something is happening'. By their own admission, these places were fragile.

So, is there a 'northern' gospel? They certainly believe that the gospel in a northern accent is 'down to earth, honest, real, inclusive and vulnerable'. Thankfully, the authors acknowledged 'northern ness' is 'much more complex' than they had thought. It certainly is!

What is disappointingly missing is the 'fuzziness of the church' alongside the following northern realities: class identity, football, local traditions, politics, dialect, accent (formal and informal), the impact of immigration, massive demographic changes (leading to numerous church closures), social cohesion, national and local pride, integration (and lack of it), opportunities (and lack of them), Child Sexual Exploitation, the alienation of traditional communities and the rise of right wing. Where is 'fuzzy church' here? Perhaps a sequel?

Review by the Revd Jo Archer-Siddall. Jo is a Superintendent Minister in the Rotherham and Dearne Valley circuit. She is married to Eddie and they have three daughters. She keeps parrots and other tropical animals. Prior to Ministry Jo was a Police Officer.

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UNLEASHED: THE ACTS CHURCH TODAY

Gavin and Anne Calver

London, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020
ISBN 978-1-78974-136-0 | pp. 223, £7.99

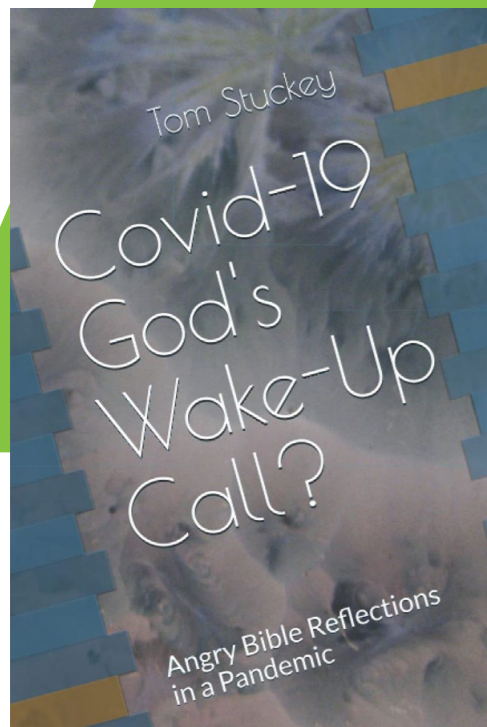
If you would like an increase of God's presence and power unleashed into your life and church, then I encourage you to read this highly inspirational and deeply challenging book. Gavin and Anne Calver reveal how taking a fresh look at Acts is helping them, in their personal lives and in their ministries, to be more Holy Spirit led. Through seeking God's Spirit, they are more able to help others experience the life-transforming presence of God.

There are 5 parts to this book, Unleashed: -Power, -People, -Presence, -Potential, -Participators. While some people consider we are in a 'post-Christian' context, Anne and Gavin believe that we are in a 'pre-Christian' context; being a Christian is like living as a cultural alien. The more secular the world is, then the more supernatural the church needs to be. In our 'pre-Christian' context, God's Spirit can unleash the church into supernatural gifts and a life-changing mission today, as he did in the early church era. The presence of God's Spirit makes a transforming difference to our lives, our ministries and our churches.

Peter can remind us of ourselves, prone to failure, yet still powerfully used by the Lord. In the light of this, 'then who knows what the Lord might choose to do with one of us?' Peter's effectiveness was intrinsically linked to him being part of the Spirit-filled Christian community. How can our church communities unleash Spirit-empowered people to do God's kingdom work? The Advance mentoring programme is currently helping over 1000 people to become more effective witnesses amidst the people they are in contact with day by day. 'Wherever we find ourselves, that place is where we can make a difference for Christ.'

As well as being optimistic, Gavin and Anne are also realistic; like with the early church and with Nehemiah, we will face opposition. And like them, we need to stand firm and pursue God's calling, so we need to be braver. Each chapter ends with helpful questions for personal reflection and group discussion, and further reading. It would make a great book for a house group to use as they study the book of Acts. In this twenty-first century, like in the first century, as words, works and wonders come together, lives are wonderfully changed.

Reviewed by the Revd Derek Balsdon who is a Methodist Presbyterian, and serves as the Development Worker for MET



COVID-19 GOD'S WAKE-UP CALL? ANGRY BIBLE REFLECTIONS IN A PANDEMIC

Tom Stuckey

Independently Published, 2021
ISBN 9798526520089 | pp. 118, £7.99

In this book, Tom Stuckey invites the reader to reflect upon the Covid-19 pandemic as God's wake-up call to the church. Seventeen chapters, each focusing on a Bible passage, chart a theological journey from the normal through the abnormal (lockdown) to the new normal.

Covid-19 shattered the comforts of family, prosperity, security, and the familiar, offering the Job-like opportunity to question our understanding of God. The chapters reflecting on what was normal explore our relationship with creation and a call to address climate change. There is a challenge to the theology of progressive revelation, questioning whether have we failed to take the Old Testament seriously? Have we made a holy God a cosy God?

Lockdown, Tom Stuckey suggests, was the modern-day ark, a place of safety. Locked away, we heard the voice of creation afresh and voiced our lament. The question is whether we heard the anguish of God and the call to change course, repent and enter new normality?

Tom Stuckey suggests that in the new normal, the church faces challenges of hybrid worship, smaller congregations, and decisions to cease to meet. Do we embrace small missional communities or concentrate on managing decline? Tom Stuckey asks, 'Have we missed the wake-up call?' In reflecting on the letters to the churches in Sardis and Philadelphia, he notes that the churches flourished. While the book is a prophetic challenge to amend our ways, Tom Stuckey sees hope in a church 'less visible but far more potent!' It is a church that acts justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God.

This book has a prophetic edge, recognising Covid-19 as a wake-up call to the church. It is a vehicle for theological reflection with congregations, preachers and leaders to be Kingdom people.

Reviewed by the Revd Paul Wilson who is the Superintendent minister of the Liverpool (South) Circuit and a former Chair of MET.



PRAYING ALWAYS

*Roz Addington,
MET's Prayer Secretary*

As we look around the world and see all that is happening - wars, displaced people, many natural disasters - it is easy to feel despair. We are surrounded by doom and gloom. The Bible tells us that these things must happen in the last days (Matthew 24:6-8). I believe God's hand is on all that is happening, and his purposes are slowly being worked out. I feel God is telling us to look beyond these events and to keep our eyes fixed on him. He is our light and strength in these dark times. We are in dark and difficult days, but

keeping our eyes fixed on God will lift our spirits and help us to rise above the despair the world is facing. God is stronger than anything that might come our way. It is his light and strength that will carry us through. We need to keep praying more than ever. Draw close to God and he will come close to you (James 4:8).

If you wish to contact Roz with any prayer requests then please email her at: roz.addington1@btinternet.com



WEEK 1 | THE CHURCH

- 1. Repentance:** of moving away from Biblical holiness; not being prayer centred; failure to listen for God's voice; not waiting on God; denying the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8 & 13; 1 John 1:9).
- 2. Church Leaders:** the President and Vice-President of Conference, Sonia Hicks and Barbara Easton; Chairs of District, Superintendents, Presbyters, Deacons and Lay Workers; Local Preachers and leaders of worship (Proverbs 16:3; Phillipians 4:6-7).
- 3. Scriptural Holiness:** a return to Scriptural holiness; a renewed passion for preaching the gospel; for the centrality of prayer; a longing for the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; James 1:5-8).
- 4. The work of MET:** for the 3R's: rediscovering the Wesleyan vision, renewing the Wesleyan mission and releasing a new generation of Wesleyan leaders; moving forward into the future; for David Hull as Chair; Derek Balsdon as Development Worker; the trustees and the executive (Joshua 1:6-9; Hebrews 13:20-21).
- 5. Mission and Vision:** a dynamic, renewed vision and boldness for reaching out to communities; strategies based on biblical teaching; the power of the Holy Spirit to transform all forms of outreach; God's power to fall on us, bringing about revival (Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15).
- 6. Cliff College:** Ashley Cooper as Principal, and the staff team; scriptural authority to be upheld; students to grow in Biblical faith; good opportunities to put their learning into practice (Isaiah 43:1-3; Psalm 127:1).
- 7. Children and Young people:** Nathan Veall and his work with the rising generation; the initiative of WHOTWAY; all who work with children and young people; clear biblical teaching; inspiration and guidance through the Holy Spirit; protection from erroneous teaching and false doctrine (Proverbs 2:6-8; Titus 2:6-7).



WEEK 2 | GREAT BRITAIN

- 1. Her Majesty, the Queen:** give thanks for her faith, commitment, and service to the country; pray for her Platinum Jubilee celebrations; for health, protection, and for other members of the Royal family (Psalm 16:1-2 & 7-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).
- 2. Covid Pandemic:** give thanks for the advances made in stemming the virus; continuing protection, particularly against further variants; those suffering from long-Covid; mental health issues (Isaiah 40:28-31; Philippians 4:13).
- 3. NHS & Social Care:** NHS staff; the back log of patients awaiting other treatments; mental health issues, especially children; adequate funding and staffing levels in both care homes and hospitals; people needing care packages (Psalm 23; 1 Peter 5:7).
- 4. The Government:** wisdom and integrity for the Prime Minister and all members of the Cabinet; justice in all policies put forward; an encounter with God and a returning to our Christian heritage (Zechariah 7:8-10; Psalm 127:1).
- 5. Revival:** a realisation that God alone has the answers to the complex issues facing our country; for the Holy Spirit to fall on us, bringing conviction of sin, repentance, and a transformation of lives (1 John 1:9; James 4:7-10).
- 6. Rising poverty:** food banks; inflation, particularly fuel prices; the homeless and the need for affordable housing and rental properties; the many struggling to make ends meet; the marginalised and vulnerable (1 John 3:17-18; Deuteronomy 15:10-11).
- 7. Gangs, knife crime and County Lines:** youngsters caught up in gang culture and the related problems of knife crime and drug abuse; those trapped in County Lines; justice; the perpetrators; the police dealing with these issues (Psalm 27:1-2 & 11-14; Psalm 107:13-14).



WEEK 3 | WORLD ISSUES

- 1. Ukraine:** a stop to any continuing conflict; refugees; support to re-build broken lives; re-building the country – homes, public buildings, infrastructure; medical resources including mental health facilities; support for those countries coping with refugees (Psalm 55:16-19; Isaiah 41:10-11).
- 2. The Persecuted Church:** Afghanistan and other Islamic controlled countries; basic human rights to be upheld; justice and fair treatment, especially for women; other countries around the world where Christianity is suppressed; release of those in detention; strength and resilience for those suffering (Psalm 145:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:2-4).
- 3. World poverty:** people living in poverty across the globe; finance from governmental bodies to tackle these issues; provision for those facing starvation; adequate sanitation and housing; health care (James 2:5; Psalm 140:12).
- 4. War-torn areas of the world:** those who have lost everything; refugee camps, especially Yemen and Syria; compassion amongst the richer nations to offer sanctuary; adequate aid where there is famine and disease; justice and relief for the helpless (Psalm 121; Proverbs 14:31).
- 5. Relief and aid agencies:** rich nations to support poorer nations; charities supporting the oppressed; access to those who need aid the most; adequate funding to be made available (Luke 12:33-34; Isaiah 58:10).
- 6. Those living under repressive regimes:** nations where there is no democracy, particularly Hong Kong, China, Russia, Myanmar, Belarus and North Korea; those detained for speaking out; exposure of injustices; governments to take action (Psalm 9:9-10; Amos 5:24).
- 7. Natural disasters:** those across the world who have experienced earthquakes, fires, floods, storms, and drought; financial and mental health support; aid agencies working to alleviate the suffering; finance to re-build infrastructure, particularly in poorer nations (Philippians 4:18; Romans 12:12-13).



WEEK 4 | CLIMATE CHANGE

- 1. Repentance:** forgiveness for our abuse of the planet; our ravaging of its resources; destruction of its eco-systems; pollution of the land and sea, causing reduction in biodiversity (Isaiah 24:4-6; Revelation 4:11).
- 2. COP26 agreements:** for nations to commit to the pledges made; reduction in carbon emissions; protection of communities and natural habitats; commitment to release finance to poorer nations; collaboration and the working together to bring meaningful change (Romans 15:5; 1 Peter 3:8-9).
- 3. Carbon emissions:** an urgency among governments to act collaboratively; new technologies to reduce these emissions; financial guarantees from wealthier nations to enable poorer nations to make greener and more sustainable choices (Jeremiah 2:7).
- 4. Rising sea levels:** those living in low lying coastal regions; sufficient aid for those affected; climate refugees (Psalm 82:3-4).
- 5. Illegal logging:** financial help to tackle the problem; perpetrators to be brought to justice; prevention of loss of habitats and the extinction of wildlife, adding to the problem of increased carbon emissions and rising sea levels (Psalm 136:1 & 4-9).
- 6. Plastics:** commitment worldwide to reduce, even eliminate all plastics; for environmentally friendly materials to be found; for 'political will' around the world to bring in legislation and funding to enable this to happen; the clearing up of polluted habitats (Galatians 6:2).
- 7. Changing weather patterns:** areas where there is hardship owing to natural disasters; new strains of crops to stand extremes of weather; farmers coping with these extremes of weather. Cry to the Lord for mercy (2 Chronicles 7:14).

PSALM 145: 1-5

*I will exalt you, my God the King
I will praise your name forever and ever
Every day I will praise you
And extol your name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise
His greatness no-one can fathom
They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty
And I will meditate on your wonderful works.*



FROM THE CHAIR

The Revd Dr David A. Hull

Dear Friends,

LEARNING TO SING AGAIN

I was greatly moved recently to read in two short articles, one by the Christian author, Sheridan Voysey and the other on the BBC website, of the Australian regent honeyeater bird and its need to learn to sing again. It is, apparently, on the verge of extinction, so much so that the few male birds that remain do not have contact with older male birds from whom they can learn to sing their distinctive song. It leaves them unable to attract a mate, which further contributes to the stark decline of the species.

There is, however, good news. Conservationists are helping the regent honeyeater birds to learn to sing again. They are playing recordings of the distinctive song to the birds in the hope they will learn to imitate it. As they rediscover their song, they will flourish again.

This edition of MET Connexion takes a 'double-sided' theme of Jubilee. It is a great delight that we have been able to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, celebrating her 70 years of faithful service and the faith in the Lord Jesus - her Lord and ours - which has sustained her. I do hope there will be much rejoicing over the long bank holiday weekend given in her honour!

Connected to that theme is our look at the Old Testament understanding of Jubilee, which was marked, not every 70 years, but every 50, when land was returned, debts were cancelled, and slaves were freed. That fiftieth year must have been, for many in ancient Israel, a year of learning to sing again. It has much to teach us in our own day and age.

It feels that many of us need to learn to sing again today. The country, indeed the world, has been worn down by a global pandemic, with its accompanying heart-breaking losses and significant restrictions on daily life, still casting a shadow in many ways.

Christians have been affected, just like everyone else. Then there's the state of Christian faith across this part of the world: that can be greatly discouraging too. Over recent years, a growing longing and excitement has developed within me for a rekindling of the Wesleyan evangelical flame within this, the motherland of Methodism. Across the nation, and beyond our shores, the Christian faith appears to be at a very low ebb. The tide will, of course, turn. In the meantime, we need to learn to sing again!

It is this, I believe, that is at the heart of the ministry of MET during the current season, both within the Methodist Church and as we work more widely with other Wesleyan evangelical denominations and organisations. Methodism, it is famously said, was born in song. Now we need to help each other to learn to sing again. As we rediscover our song, we will flourish once more.

Writing of seasons, it is both with enormous gratitude and with a touch of sadness that we come to the end of a season within MET: we will be saying goodbye to the Revd Derek Balsdon who will be moving on from his role as MET's Development Worker into pastures new at the end of the summer. This is the second time I have worked closely with Derek - he was a colleague in my first circuit when I was ordained - and it has been a great joy to be able to serve with him again.

As Chair, I have been utterly dependent upon Derek's support and good grace! Without a doubt, he has been God's man in this role for such a time as this. Throughout the long months of lockdowns, he responded with great flexibility, quickly learning new skills in online communication and video production which have been at the core of our ministry over the last couple of years. It has coincided with a deeply distressing period for many evangelicals within the Methodist Church and I know that many of our members have been deeply grateful to Derek for being on the end of the phone, emails and letters, when a listening ear or some advice was needed. Hilary, Derek's wife, has been at his side throughout his ministry amongst us and I am immensely grateful for the sacrificial way in which she also has given of her time and talents to further our work.

Enclosed with this mailing are the Reports for our AGM on Saturday 4 June at 2 pm at Cliff College, during the Cliff Festival. I do hope you will be able to join us, either in person or online. If you wish to join via Zoom, please register with Derek as soon as possible, and by 1 pm on Friday 3 June at the very latest: development@methodistevangelicals.org.uk. Whether or not you can join us, please have the meeting in your prayers over the coming days.

Let's learn to sing again and thus be reborn in song! There is, after all, a song that is being sung over us; we only have to listen. Because of Jesus, the Lord our God is with us; he is mighty to save. He takes great delight in us, he quiets us with his love, and rejoices over us with singing! (Zephaniah 3:17)

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,

David



met

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Evangelicals
Together

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