

# FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

*The Revd Derek Balsdon*



your throne of grace echo those great and glorious truths. If these words have struck a chord for you, then I encourage you to bring your laments to the Lord, knowing that he loves you, cares for you and will help you through.

Along with the Voice of Methodism Association we have hosted some Zoom meetings for ministers and Local Preachers who are concerned about how best to respond to the annual reaffirmations. Each week I continue to receive communications from those who are struggling to stay within the Methodist Church in Britain, and from those who have resigned. Some are already establishing new churches. I lament with them, and encourage them to keep trusting in the Good Shepherd for strength for the present and guidance for the future.

Even though I am travelling a bit more, the following continue on Zoom: Prayer Meetings, Bible Studies, Bible Teaching Days and Equipping for Ministry (EfM). EfM is the event we put on for presbyters and deacons within the first 5 years of ministry and student ministers. We are grateful that Revd's Nicola and Chris Briggs are organising EfM 2022, and on Saturday 5 February the Revd Andrew Roberts will be speaking on 'Habits for Growth'. If there is anyone within your church or circuit who is eligible to attend EfM, please let them know about it. There will also be a Bible Teaching day on Saturday 5 March entitled Shining for Christ: Learning from Philippians, which will be led by myself and John Hogarth, a Local Preacher and former Chair of MET South West.

In the previous edition of MET Connexion, I mentioned being at my dad's home while he was in hospital; he has made a remarkable recovery, and is living independently again. I am very grateful for all the encouragement that you give to me and to MET, especially your financial and prayer support. It is a wonderful privilege to share together as the Body of Christ.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

**Derek**

\*Totally Forgiving God, R. T. Kendal ISBN 9780340964187, Publisher : John Murray Press

During the autumn of 2021, I have been pleased to be out and about more in my role as the MET Development Worker. I would be glad to receive invitations for preaching and teaching, either in person or online, for 2022. After having come to know some people through online events, it was great to meet in person at REVIVE. I hope to meet more of you at events during this year, such as ECG, Cliff Festival and Methodist Conference. REVIVE: The MET Prayer Weekend at The Hayes was a highlight during the autumn. We are again grateful to Kevin and Anne-Marie Jones for all their work in organising it, and very thankful for Roz Addington's leading of the morning and evening prayers and for Hilary Balsdon's leading of worship. Around 40 people attended and greatly appreciated the opportunity to share together in worship, fellowship, prayer for revival and biblical teaching, and enjoy hospitality at The Hayes.

*Living Through Forgiving* was the theme of the weekend, with a focus on how forgiveness helps us to experience life in all its fullness. We considered accepting God's total forgiveness, forgiving others, forgiving ourselves (letting ourselves off the hook for the things we regret) and even forgiving God. I do not believe that God has done anything wrong, so he does not need our forgiveness; yet sometimes we treat God as if he has wronged us, or blame him for not having done more to help us. These negative attitudes towards God damage our relationship with him, so we need to let God off the hook so that our life in Christ can flourish. I have found R T Kendal's forgiveness trilogy very helpful, especially *Totally Forgiving God\**. The subtitle *How to trust God when you feel he has let you down*, brings us to the heart of the matter.

*Living Through Lamenting* was the title of one session. Although I have taught about forgiveness many times, this was my first time teaching about lamenting. The Wikipedia definition begins: *A lament or lamentation is a passionate expression of grief, often in music, poetry, or song form. The grief is most often born of regret, or mourning.*

Over the past couple of years there has been a lot of lamenting going on across the world and within the church. The Covid pandemic has caused many people to lament, not just over the loss of loved ones (owing to other reasons as well as Covid), but also over the loss of freedoms, such as going out to work, education, finance, mental health, etc. Within the Methodist Church in Britain, whilst many people have welcomed the approval of same-sex marriage and cohabitation, many others have lamented because they believe that the church is moving away from its biblical roots. There are also many other more personal reasons for lamenting. Lamenting enables us to express the deep feelings within our hearts, to bring them to God, and to receive his help and healing. Wikipedia also indicates that laments are some of the oldest forms of writing, and there are plenty of examples within our ancient scriptures; Job, Psalms, Lamentations and more. Many of the Psalms include the pouring out of deep laments, as well as expressions of deep trust in God. Even though Lamentations is almost full of laments, it still contains some deep expressions of trust in God, especially 3:22-23, which speaks of the Lord's great love, never failing compassion and great faithfulness. The songs: Great is thy faithfulness and Lord I come before