

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