



# FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd Dr David A. Hull*

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Dear Friends,

I always find the description of the rebuilding of the temple in the book of Ezra to be profoundly evocative. It was a day of great rejoicing, but there was another sound mingled with the joy: the sound of sorrow. As the younger people rejoiced, the older people wept (Ezra 3:12).

It is impossible for us to imagine the scene of the dedication of the first temple under King Solomon. As the king prayed, the glory of the Lord filled the temple, so much so that the priests could not enter it, and all the people knelt in worship, saying 'He is good; his love endures forever' (2 Chronicles 7:1-3). However, the Lord responded with a warning that, if they were unfaithful to him, his glory would depart from the temple and it would be destroyed. Sadly, they chose unfaithfulness and the Lord kept his word. In his great vision, Ezekiel watched as the glory departed from the temple (Ezekiel 10:18). The temple was destroyed and the people were carried off into exile.

They longed to return home, but when they finally arrived, they found a desolate land. They set about rebuilding and the young people laid the foundations of the temple with great rejoicing. The older people watched and wept, for this new temple was nothing like the old one. Although they sang the same songs of praise, 'He is good; his love towards Israel endures for ever', the Lord's glory did not return. The longing for the return of the Lord's glory would fill the rest of the Old Testament years.

I wonder if we share something of that sorrow when we sing our great Wesleyan hymns in worship. They are hymns of revival, written in times of revival, expressing the praises and prayers of those who had been revived, who knew what it was for the glory of God to fall in an extraordinary way. As we sing them today, do we ask with tears in our eyes, 'Where is

the glory?' Perhaps many of us are drawn to Habakkuk's great prayer, 'Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy' (Habakkuk 3:2).

When Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached a series of sermons in 1959, marking the centenary of the 1859 revival in Wales, he began by 'diagnosing the need'. He was motivated to mark the anniversary and take the theme of revival, because, he said, of the 'appalling need' of the church and the world and continued, 'unless we, as individual Christians, are feeling a grave concern about the state of the Church and the world today, then we are very poor Christians indeed.' His conclusion: 'We have got to feel it until we become desperate. We must ask ourselves how we can succeed if we do not have this authority, this commission, this might and strength and power. We must cease to have so much confidence in ourselves, and in all our methods and organisations, and in all our slickness. We have got to realise that we must be filled with God's Spirit. And we must be equally certain that God can fill us with his Spirit.'

If Lloyd-Jones could write of the 'appalling need' of the church sixty years ago, how much more must we recognise it today? Yet, there is good news. The history of revival tells us that it is in desperate times that revival begins. Earlier in this edition of MET Connexion, I have written of Joe Church's experience in Rwanda. When he came to the end of himself and cried out in desperation, revival came. The same was true for John Wesley. By God's grace, it can be true for us, too. Let's pray fervently that it will be so.

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,