



# FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd David A. Hull*

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Dear Friends,

On holiday in the Brecon Beacons recently, we found ourselves driving down narrow country lanes with no idea where we were, or where we were going. We had asked for recommendations of local vantage points with children's play areas and had tried to follow the directions. It was time to give up and, with the children growing increasingly restless, I suggested we should simply see where the road would take us and enjoy the views along the way.

It was then that we passed a sign for Trefeca and a new adventure began. I had no idea we were staying so close to the home of Howell Harris, a contemporary of John Wesley and one of the leaders of the eighteenth century Welsh Methodist revival. We turned into the grounds of the house, now a residential retreat centre and, with the help of the traveller's trusty companion - an iPhone with access to Wikipedia - read up on the history of the area.

Harris had been converted in 1735, at the age of 21, through the preaching of the Revd Pryce Davies in the local parish church. He was refused ordination in the Church of England and so embarked on an itinerant preaching ministry. When at home, banned from preaching in his parish church, he resorted to preaching from his grandparents' grave in the churchyard.

We drove over to the parish church and located the grave. Standing beside it, where people had once stood to hear Harris preach, I was suddenly struck by the thought: independently from one another and many miles apart, Howell Harris and John Wesley had very similar experiences of conversion, rejection and revival. The Lord was working in very similar ways, at almost the same time, in the lives of people who were otherwise unconnected and a long way from one another. In fact, Harris' experiences of conversion, tomb-top preaching and the beginnings of revival all preceded those of Wesley.

When we tell the story of the origins of Methodism, we often begin on the evening of 24 May 1738 as John Wesley 'went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street', quite neglecting the fact that his brother Charles had a conversion experience three days previously and often completely unaware of what

had already happened in Wales. To do so tells a part of the Methodist story, but risks missing the bigger story altogether, a story of what the Lord was doing with a number of people quite independently of each other, at different times and in different places.

All of which leaves me wondering what the Lord is doing in our own day. A number of us feel we are travelling along a road within Methodism, not quite sure where we are and with no idea of where we are going. With so much uncertainty, there are great truths of which we can be certain. We can be certain that the Lord is at work, building his kingdom in such a way that nothing will ever be able to prevail against it. I believe we can also be just as certain that the Lord will be doing that same work with different people and in different places. For me, one of the wonderful fruits of the uncertainty in which we find ourselves has been the number of people who have emerged from around the country and who have come to join with us in walking this journey together.

Elsewhere in this magazine, you will find information about the launch of the Remaining Faithful Network. This new network will enable members of MET who wish to stand together in remaining faithful to the original Wesleyan evangelical vision, and to the biblical and apostolic understanding of marriage as the life-long union of one man and one woman and the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy. Whilst individual members may have other understandings of marriage and relationships, this has always been the position of Methodist Evangelicals Together and our predecessor organisations, and has been reaffirmed unanimously by our AGM. It also continues to be the position of the Evangelical Alliance, of which we are a member organisation.

Of course, whilst it has been a busy summer responding to the decisions of the Methodist Conference, the usual work of MET continues. I do hope I will see you at one of our events in the near future.

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,