

metconnexion

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FEATURING

DEREK BALSDON, MATT BIRD, ANTHONY BOATENG, PAUL HOUGHTON, SIMON GUILLEBAUD



The Transforming Love of God

LOST IN WONDER, LOVE, AND PRAISE



EDITORIAL

Marian Izzard

In this edition we have sought to feature how lives and situations can be changed and have been changed by God's Transforming Love.

Derek Balsdon, our former Development Worker has entitled his article: Spirit-Empowered Transformation and considers how Jesus' manifesto as proclaimed in Luke 4:18-19 brings transformation.

Matt Bird, CEO of the Global Network NAYBA, calls on churches to rise to the challenges of today to seize the initiative and to reach out in helping lift the burdens of their neighbourhoods. In so doing, they will impact and transform communities.

Anthony Boateng, Vice-President of the Methodist Church, challenges the Church to seek revival urgently through the transforming love of God. His article is a summary of his address given at the Methodist Conference 2022, 'Revival: The Methodist Dream'.

Paul Houghton, CEO of Kingdom Bank, in his article: 'Responding to God's Transforming Love', reflects on how Kingdom Bank encounters God's transforming love through God's people.

Simon Guillebaud, founder of Great Lakes Outreach shares with us in his article 'Beauty from Ashes in Burundi' some profound and incredible stories of inspirational friends who are transforming thousands of lives in the world's poorest nation.

Finally, just as we were preparing the final edits to this edition, we learnt of the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We have therefore compiled a short tribute to our late Queen featuring how she clearly demonstrated a life transformed by the love of God in her rule and reign.

Our song and hymn selections: The Power of Your Love, Love Divine, Revive Thy Work O God and O for a Heart to Praise My God, have been chosen to reflect something of the transforming work of God which is available to each one of us.

Our Bible Study continues with Part 2 of our study in Micah, compiled by Catherine Hutton.

Praying Always is compiled by our Prayer Co-ordinator, Roz Addington and provides us with a weekly focus over four weeks covering The Church, Great Britain, World Issues and The Natural World and Climate Change.

The next MET Connexion edition will be the winter edition.

Every blessing

Marian

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SPIRIT-EMPOWERED TRANSFORMATION

Derek Balsdon

DEREK BALSDON, WHO SERVED AS MET DEVELOPMENT WORKER, CONSIDERS HOW JESUS' MANIFESTO BRINGS TRANSFORMATION

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor
He has sent me to
proclaim freedom for the prisoners,
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

Luke 4:18-19

These verses can be viewed as Jesus' manifesto. They speak of being anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring good news to the poor through evangelism and justice. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He read most of Isaiah 61:1-2, but stopped short of reading the end of v. 2, and I will return to that later. Jesus then claimed to be the One to fulfil those prophetic words. They were perfectly fulfilled in and through Spirit-anointed Jesus, and this article considers how they can be partially fulfilled through us today.

In Luke 3, we read that, when Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, and Father God affirmed Jesus as his beloved Son. Luke 4 starts with the temptations of Jesus, and that is followed in Luke 4:14-30 with Jesus in Nazareth. In 2017 I visited Nazareth, went to what is known as the Synagogue Church, where I was honoured to read these words to our group. It was wonderful to read them so close to their original setting.

Many preachers pray through Luke 4:18-19 before going to preach. I used to feel that it was somewhat presumptuous to pray these words over myself, and then I read 'The Heart of Revival' by Nicky Gumbel, based on Isaiah chapters 40 - 66. Nicky encourages his readers to claim Isaiah 61:1-2a for their lives and ministries. Reading that passage has helped me feel more at ease praying them for myself. Why not pray those words for yourself and the ministry the Lord has called you to exercise? Like John the Baptist, I recognise that we are not worthy even to untie Jesus' sandals, yet he wants to speak and work powerfully through his followers.

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT?

Luke 4:14 amazes me: 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.' The temptations hadn't weakened Jesus; he came out of the desert in the power of the Spirit. Whatever we are going through personally, the power of the Spirit can still anoint our words and actions.

After reading Isaiah 61:1-2a Jesus said, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'. He made a staggering claim, for which many of the people rejected him. In the past, God's

Spirit had anointed a few of Israel's faithful prophets, priests, kings, and crafts people. But what was this local upstart doing, claiming to be anointed with the Spirit? They drove him out of the town, and tried to throw him down a cliff; they acted unjustly against the One who was bringing God's justice.

As Jesus then embarked upon his earthly ministry, the Spirit flowed through his authoritative teaching and glorious miracles, and many lives were touched and transformed by God's love. How did Jesus continue in the power of the Spirit? He did so, through nurturing his relationship with the Father and the Spirit, by spending time in prayer and by faithfully obeying his Father's calling. By following Jesus' example of nurture and obedience, we can also continue with the anointing of God's Spirit.

Prevenient Grace is the belief that God's Spirit is at work in our lives before we become Christians. Some Christians experience being filled with God's Spirit at conversion, whereas for others it is a subsequent experience. I am less concerned about when individuals were filled with God's Spirit, but more concerned about them being currently filled. The present reality is more important than a past experience.

WHO ARE 'THE POOR' IN THIS 21ST CENTURY?

No matter how long we have been a Christian, and no matter how strong our faith is, we are still somewhat spiritually impoverished; but there is still more Good News for us. We share God's love believing that through us others will be enriched by the Father, by Jesus and by the Holy Spirit.

There are also millions of people in this country, and millions more around the world who are physically impoverished; those who have little money for the basic needs of life. The increasing cost of living is causing massive financial challenges for so many people in the UK and around the world. How is God's Spirit wanting you to assist those who are physically poor?

Jesus fulfilled this manifesto by sharing the Good News of God with whoever he came across, women and men, children

and adults, ordinary people and religious leaders. Jesus was, and still is, Good News in this 21st century.

EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

After visiting the Holy Land, I did some further study, and wrote a paper about Jesus' words in relation to contemporary politics in the Middle East, focusing on Luke 4. My studying broadened my appreciation of Jesus' manifesto. Up until then I had mainly viewed it in spiritual terms, with a slight recognition of their social side. I now see them as being just as much social as spiritual. It is not that their spiritual meaning has lessened, but that their social meaning has increased. Evangelism and Justice are like the two sides of a coin, both essential to the whole. John Wesley birthed the Methodist movement in evangelism and justice.

WHO ARE 'THE PRISONERS' IN THIS 21ST CENTURY?

Jesus continued, 'He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners'. Pause for a few moments and consider, 'Who are 'the prisoners' in this 21st century?

21st century prisoners include those who are:

- not experiencing Jesus' forgiveness
- feeling guilty for their wrongs
- physically locked up in prison
- addicted
- suffering hurt and/or abuse
- victims within modern day slavery and the sex industry
- trapped in spiralling debt
- feeling like prisoners in their own country
- within the asylum seeker systems

In the spiritual sense, Jesus continues to set people free from the prison of sin. Medical doctors and counsellors are aware that many of their patients would feel so much better if they could experience forgiveness and freedom from guilt. In the light of this, in my sharing of the Good News I now speak more about freedom from guilt and less about forgiveness of sin. Many people today don't recognise that they are sinners, yet they do know that they feel guilty. The Good News is that through



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In my sharing of the Good News I now speak more about freedom from guilt and less about forgiveness of sin. Many people today don't recognise that they are sinners, yet they do know that they feel guilty. The Good News is that through repenting of sin and trusting Jesus as Saviour, people can experience God's transforming love freeing them from sin and guilt.



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In the autumn of 2021, REVIVE: the MET Prayer Weekend took place. The theme was 'Living Through Forgiving', and I spoke about the freedom which God wants us to experience through lamenting, forgiving others and accepting his total forgiveness. That weekend enabled people to experience greater freedom in Jesus Christ.

'Freedom for the prisoners' also has a justice side. Across the world, and across this county, there are many people caught in the poverty trap, and many feel imprisoned by debt. Lots of people are trapped in abusive relationships. As individuals and as churches we need to help such people find freedom, and that can be through things like supporting Food Banks, running Christians Against Poverty schemes, offering counselling and so on.

The following is taken from a Tearfund email dated 7/2/2020:

After spending 12 years in a Rwandan jail for his involvement in the 1994 genocide, Claude was released. But it didn't fix things. 'It was very difficult,' says Claude. 'In my mind, I was still in prison.' Claude's wife bore the brunt of his guilt. He mistreated her, and drank heavily, using up the family's food money. Then, staff from our (Tearfund's) local church partner invited him to come to a meeting. The pastor was sharing Luke 4:18... Claude says: "Freedom for the prisoners!" It was when I heard the declaration of Jesus that I was free of prison, that's when I felt in my mind really free'.

As Claude met the unconditional love of Jesus, he also found courage to approach the people he needed forgiveness from - the family members of those he had killed. That same love gave them grace to forgive him. The change in Claude has brought reconciliation in his community and his home. He treats his wife well and is an active member of our church partner programme, which helps people work together to build their faith and

grow their resources. He used to be an enemy in the community, he says, but now he is a friend. 'I am living in harmony with the people whose family members I killed.' Claude's world looks truly different.

When Jesus was proclaiming his mission in Luke 4:18, there must have been sceptics who asked how he was going to do this. However, every day we see people like Claude released from the shackles of social, economic and spiritual poverty. It is a confirmation of Christ's proclamation to the world.'

What a powerful example of the freedom from prison that Jesus brings into peoples' lives in this 21st century. Let's confidently proclaim the Good News that God's transforming love helps release people from the shackles of social, economic and spiritual poverty.

WHO ARE 'THE BLIND' IN THIS 21ST CENTURY?

Jesus continued, 'and recovery of sight for the blind'. This covers 3 broad areas: to do with self, to do with God and to do with others. It concerns those who need healing for physical and mental health issues - personal well-being. It involves seeing and experiencing God more clearly - spiritual well-being. It also concerns- seeing the needs of others, and acting to help and to bring about justice; the well-being of society. The two greatest commandments are to love God with our all, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. In a similar way, the recovery of sight for the blind involves seeing God, seeing ourselves and seeing others in clearer ways.

Through his earthly ministry Jesus opened the eyes of the physically blind, as well as performing many other miraculous healings. Jesus also helped people to see God more clearly, to see themselves as precious to God, and he encouraged them to love and serve others in good and godly ways. Helping others to see God more clearly, to see themselves more dearly, and to see the needs of others more plainly is all part of God's transforming love in this 21st century.



WHO ARE 'THE OPPRESSED' IN THIS 21ST CENTURY?

Jesus continued, 'to release the oppressed'. Jesus freed people from sin, from evil spirits, from cultural stigmas such as cleansing lepers and healing women with blood issues, from the legalism of the Pharisees, and women from being the underdogs, etc.

Release for the oppressed has some overlap with the previous two phrases, yet goes deeper. Many people, even some Christians, can't seem to find freedom from some past sins. Many people, including some Christians, are suffering from a wide range of addictions: drugs, gambling, pornography, alcohol, greed, to name a few. Many people, including Christians, are oppressed, having suffered from broken relationships or abuse. Many people, especially young people, are getting caught up in gangs, County Lines drug trafficking and sexual exploitation. There are also many people who have evil spirits within them. Jesus wants to set them free. The good news is that Jesus can help release people from any form of oppression. Sometimes he does it instantly, at other times he takes a little longer. Whether freedom happens instantly or over a period of time, it is still the work of Jesus releasing the oppressed.

We hear so much bad news that it can

somewhat overshadow the good news. One thing that helps me continue believing that Jesus is good news is reading about lives transformed by the love of God. Some time ago I read 'Taming of a Villain,' the story of Allen Langham. I quote:

'There was some kind of revival going on in the prison at the time, with inmates committing their lives to Jesus. A newspaper at the time published an editorial headed "There is an answer to the drugs dilemma!" It included the following statement: "Anglican prison chaplain David Powe, currently based in Belmarsh in south-east London, is seeing hundreds of criminals find real purpose to their lives through the 'power' of the gospel."

A few months ago, I was privileged to hear Tanya speak. She is a Ukrainian married to a Russian, and their mission work in Ukraine involves evangelism and justice. Tanya shared that in Mariupol, 100 adults and children were sheltering in the basement of a school, and realised that they had to flee quickly. Even though their cars had been damaged by gunshot, amazingly they all managed to reach safety. Tanya also mentioned that an elderly man had run out of food and prayed that the Lord would provide, and the next day their mission team knocked on his door and gave him a food parcel. Even in the midst of devastation, destruction and death, people are experiencing God's transforming love. And of course, all those who are supporting and housing Ukrainians and others are working for justice.

THE YEAR OF THE LORD'S FAVOUR

Jesus stopped short of reading what came next, 'and the day of vengeance of our God' (Isaiah 61:2b). Perhaps he didn't include the words about God's judgement because he would bear the wrath against sin as he died in our place.

'The year of the Lord's favour' is similar to Mark 1:15 'The time has come, the kingdom of God is near'. Here, the word 'year' doesn't mean 12 months, but an era. In this era between Jesus' earthly ministry and his final coming, everyone can experience the Lord's favour, the transforming love of the Father, Jesus

and the Holy Spirit. In the 1st century, as Jesus carried out his earthly mission, he offered the Lord's favour to everyone, and in this 21st century the Holy Spirit anoints us to offer God's blessings and benefits to others, so we can be agents of his transforming work.

In the Old Testament we learn that every 50th year was to be a jubilee, a year to free people from their debts, release slaves, and return property to the Assignor; a year of the Lord's favour. Jesus' manifesto ended with 'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,' or in other words 'to proclaim the Lord's Jubilee'. The freedom that Jesus offers to us and to others is certainly something worth proclaiming. The jubilee year of God's favour was once every 50 years, whereas, through Jesus Christ, every year is one of God's favour, and every day is the day of God's favour. Every day our Spirit-anointed words and works can be channels for God's transforming love to minister into the lives of others.

FOR REFLECTION...

The more of God's favour that we ourselves experience, the more his favour will flow through us and make a transforming difference to the lives of those around us. God's Spirit wants all Christians to be anointed for evangelism and justice so that more and more people will experience his transforming love upon their lives and situations. Before turning the page, I invite you to pause, and spend a few minutes praying through the words of Luke 4:18-19, and claim them for yourself.

The Revd Derek Balsdon is a former Development Worker for MET and lives in Congleton with his wife Hilary.



THE POWER OF YOUR LOVE

Geoff Bullock

Lord I Come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed,
Flowing from the grace
That I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of your love.

*Hold me close,
Let your love surround me;
Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
And I will soar with you,
Your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.*

Lord unveil my eyes,
Let me see you face to face,
The knowledge of your love
As you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind,
As your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
By the power of your love.

IMPACTING AND TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE LOCAL CHURCH

Matt Bird

MATT BIRD, CEO OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK NAYBA, CALLS ON CHURCHES TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE DAY, TAKING THE INITIATIVE AND USING THEIR UNIQUE POSITION TO HELP LIFT THE BURDENS OF THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS.

History shows that communities are transformed when churches take the initiative to provide services and opportunities for society. Whether it is education, health or employment, many of today's social provision has its roots in the church. Whenever there was a need across communities, the church stepped up to help.

Until the church intervened in the 18th century, the UK's working children were not educated; it was then that Sunday schools were established. These schools were the precursors to a national system of education that are now part of everyday life. They have empowered children from all neighbourhoods to access better life choices.

As society changes, churches need to keep pace to reflect the local need. We are uniquely placed to help our communities. Over recent years, the number of food banks has increased and debt advice from Christian organisations has helped thousands.

Without churches deciding to help transform their communities, such initiatives may not have happened. If they had, it is likely they would have been provided at a cost.

Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson praised UK churches for their role in supporting their communities during coronavirus lockdowns. This example proves how the actions of the church can transform communities.

Many churches attempt to reach neighbourhoods but end up frustrated when they find it is not as straight forward as they expect. Simply providing a building as a community asset is not enough in today's world. Instead, churches may want to consider what is necessary for their individual community with its unique requirements.



This is why NAYBA exists: to provide churches with practical help and resources to equip them to better love their neighbours and transform their neighbourhoods. In doing so, we are helping Christians carry out Jesus's command to love our neighbour.

CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul writes, 'Carry each other's burdens so you will fulfil the law of Christ.' Paul

is asking us to make the burdens of others lighter.

The Cambridge dictionary describes a burden as: 'A duty or responsibility that is hard to bear.' As Christians, we are expected to step up to carry the burdens of others because within us dwells the love of Christ.

Our worldwide communities have always faced burdens, whether that's in times of international crises, such as wars, or less seismic but nevertheless life-changing events that create heartache and hardship.

Just getting through life can be a burden to many people in our communities. At the moment, our communities face economic hardship in the UK through the cost of living crisis. Energy bills are to rise by 80 per cent, with the average annual bill rising to £3,549.

In a poll carried out at the end of August 2022, almost one third of the UK's adults say they will have no choice but to turn to credit cards to keep the lights on this winter. Many elderly people say they will have to choose to eat or heat!

We are called in such times, where burdens increase, to step up and double our efforts for the sake of our communities. In Matthew 5:42, as Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, he challenges us: 'Give to the one who asks

you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.'

A MORDECAI MOMENT

As we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt that God was calling the Church to step up and serve our communities as society faced two enormous challenges: mental health and economic crisis. This was, and still is in light of the cost of living crisis, the Church's Mordecai moment.

In an article, I wrote:

"Mordecai was a relative and guardian of Queen Esther, a Jew placed in the Persian royal palace after becoming the wife of King Xerxes. After discovering the king was going to allow his highest official to wipe out the Jews, Mordecai approached the queen.

He challenged Esther, saying, 'For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?' (Esther 4:14).

As a result, Esther stepped up and, after bravely approaching the king, the Jews in the city of Susa were saved.

I believe God is saying to the church today that it was created 'for such a time as this'. We must not remain silent because we can bring relief and deliverance during this crisis. But if we do not grasp this opportunity, the Church's relevance will diminish and die."



"I believe God is saying to the church today that it was created for such a time as this'. We must not remain silent because we can bring relief and deliverance during this crisis. But if we do not grasp this opportunity, the Church's relevance will diminish and die."

REACH OUT

The impact of the pandemic still weighs on our communities and a double whammy of rising food prices means we must stand ready for 'a time such as this'.

Following the publication of that article, NAYBA launched two initiatives to improve local economies: the Spirit of Enterprise Course and Mind Your Own Business projects. The course shows churches that they can become a driving force in helping encourage entrepreneurs through enterprise.

Following this, churches across the UK are now running Mind Your Own Business projects. This helps churches reach out

to the unemployed in their community who may be interested in starting their own business. It offers practical resources that can be helpful to anyone starting a business whether they are believers or not.

As a result, dozens of businesses have now been launched and, by these enterprises working together, they are increasing the well-being within their communities.

We are called to love our neighbour and, while being a listening ear is necessary, it is more powerful for the church to provide the resources that ease burdens within communities.

There is an old adage about giving a person a fish and they will eat today, but teaching them to fish means they will eat for a lifetime. This practical approach from churches will transform their neighbourhoods and communities. And we all know what Jesus achieved when it came to fish!

Matt Bird is a global speaker and social and business entrepreneur who has spoken in 50 countries to more than a million people and authored sixteen books. He is the Founder and Chief Executive of the global non-profit NAYBA whose mission is to help local churches love their neighbours and transform their neighbourhoods. Currently NAYBA partners with churches in 20 nations across 4 continents. Matt is also an executive coach who enables his clients to achieve significant business goals, become published authors and impactful public speakers. When he is not travelling he lives between London, UK and Noto in Sicily, Italy. You can find out more at www.CoffeeWithMatt.com.



LOVE DIVINE

Charles Wesley

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

1 JOHN 4: 9-12

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

REVIVAL THROUGH THE TRANSFORMING LOVE OF GOD

Anthony Boateng

ANTHONY BOATENG, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE METHODIST CHURCH, CHALLENGES THE CHURCH TO SEEK REVIVAL URGENTLY, IN A SUMMARY OF HIS ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE METHODIST CONFERENCE 2022, 'REVIVAL: THE METHODIST DREAM'.

Love is a consistent theme in the Bible. This overarching theme of this year's Conference, 'The Greatest Commandment', encourages us to focus on the transforming love of God and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 and Acts 2:4-21.

The apostle Paul exhorts the Church of the Thessalonians to continue to grow in love in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12. For us, it means exercising patience and impartiality towards one another; it means creating space for the limitations of one another; it means forbearing one another. You see, friends, God has shown us love and mercy; in return, all he asks is for us to offer it back to others.

Over the years, I have been praying in my heart, yearning for revival - yearning to have power to comprehend the depth and breadth of God's power, and be filled with the fullness of God, because I know deep down the survival of our beloved church depends on it. Now for this to happen, as a church, we must repent from our sins, and wait upon God for his essential outpouring Spirit. That means as a church we have to be completely dependent on the sovereignty of God. Only then can churches get lifted out of spiritual indifference and worldliness into earnest desires for more of Christ and renewed commitment to our Methodist calling.

WHY REVIVAL?

I am sad to report that, according to our Statistics for Mission report, active membership has fallen by over 20,000 between 2013 and 2016. Unfortunately, this trend continued as data from 2019 suggests that active membership fell by a further 18,000. I am concerned that at this rate of decline we are going to go out of existence.

In every era the church needs revival - certainly now more than ever when we are having to grapple with countless issues. You see, without revival, the church will not survive, owing to division and spiritual dilution. It is time for us to strive to revive the Wesleyan fire in our everyday life. Now is the time to revive the Wesleyan vision. We need an encounter of the Holy Spirit in our worship, a deep sense of the intimate love of God which then flows into the lives of others through evangelism, Christ like-living, social concern and renewal.

According to Martyn Lloyd Jones, Welsh protestant minister, 'Revival, above everything else, is a glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is the restoration of him to the centre of the life of the Church.' In the heart of every committed Christian, there is the longing to know that quality and depth of spiritual reality, and the presence of God in one's personal life.

On 24 May 1738, John Wesley attended a group meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, where he received an experience of assurance of his new birth. In 1807 during the Primitive Methodist days, under Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, revival was apparent during the Mow Cop camp meetings.

More recently, between the 1980s and 90s, through the charismatic and ecumenical movement, the gift and empowering of the Holy Spirit was a regular occurrence through churches and congregations. There was collaboration and unity in churches including different denominations. It seemed, in some ways, to be a repetition of the Day of Pentecost, resulting in church growth. Those who were open to the work of the Holy Spirit became a part of it and those who failed to recognize it did not. Some may say that the Methodist Church was, as a whole, not open enough to the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE BACKDROP

Friends, I want to draw our attention to Acts 2:4-21. The overall message of this passage is about discipleship, our relationship with God and our worship of him. To offer a bit of context, prior to this event, Jesus gave his disciples a commandment: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized by the Holy Spirit' (Acts 1:4-5).

Fast forward, during the Jewish festival of Pentecost, all of Jesus' disciples were gathered together. The city of Jerusalem was alive with people from all walks of life, including Jews who had settled there from all over the empire. It was a special day, but Jesus' followers were separate from the festivities. They knew about Jesus and the prophet Joel's prophecy. They wanted to be found in the presence of God. They were determined not to leave the same.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The disciples wanted to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came like a mighty wind, which filled the whole house where they were sitting. They discovered that God seeks an intimate relationship with each one of us.

The question is, as a church do we nurture intimate relationships with God enough? Like on the day of Pentecost, we need the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. I thank God there were some circuits, during the Covid pandemic, which held weekly prayer meetings via Zoom and still continue to do so today.

OUR WORSHIP OF GOD

Friends, what is the focus of our worship? Do we really allow space for the Holy Spirit to operate? Do we allow space to hear God's voice? Feedback and personal experience suggest that, in some of our churches, our worship of God lacks depth and does not incorporate the Holy Spirit. There is often little room for spontaneity and dynamism, which might make it difficult for us to appeal to the younger generation. Regular Bible studies and prayer meetings have become a thing of the past. We need to find ways to revive the things that were the bedrock of Methodism. We need a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.

CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE

We need ideas and decisions that give hope to our future. Every church or circuit needs a decent size collaborative team of preachers and worship leaders every week or rotating

“

...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

*In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.*

*Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.*

*I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.*

*The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious
day of the Lord.*

*And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

”

regularly to help provide consistency, and give the church the confidence to try new songs. I can almost hear Charles Wesley saying to us: 'What has happened to our worship?' We need a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to invest more into our worship. We need a cluster of churches to come together to form a team ministry, in order to provide services in strategic locations to reach a missing generation. Sustainable, Spirit-filled and creative - these have got to be the key areas of focus over the coming year. We need to inspire more young people to get into ministry and leadership and this may just be the way to do that.

CHURCH UNITY

Notice that on the day of Pentecost, the people in the Upper Room were of one accord - there was unity. Boundaries and walls were broken. Friends, I submit to us that we need to come together with one voice.

Friends, we need a collective mind-set. We need teamwork. It is imperative that we share our resources. I believe this is one way to achieve church growth and take some of the load off our local preachers and ministers. We need to release our ministers to be ministers rather than allow them to become bogged down by property maintenance. We need to shift the focus of our church from committees to worship. We need to change the culture of how we do things. Why are we not getting a group of young people who are on fire for God to fill the gap in our preaching plan or evangelism? Why not trust them to bring something new? Why not invest more in them? This is just my view, and you may disagree. We need to be more creative. We need to trust our lay workers and people more.

EVANGELISM

Notice the process that led to the day of Pentecost: from Salvation to Transformation and then to Empowerment. We need to develop a more authentic message about the gospel. We need to revive the band and class meetings (or at least modernize them), apply the Methodist Way of Life in a non-prescriptive way through house groups and not just in the pulpit, to help disciple and transform individuals to transform their community. We need to create more leadership programs to equip new leaders to run house groups.

After the day of Pentecost, the disciples went on to evangelise and as many as 3,000 became followers of Jesus on a single occasion. You see when God wants to bring salvation to a community, the first thing he does is bring it to individuals. He then uses those individuals to become a symbol of salvation through transformation in the community. Lastly, he empowers them through a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Manifestation of the Holy Spirit is evangelistic. Friends, I propose that we need this in our evangelism.

As a church and society, we have become over dependent on the strength of the flesh - over dependent on our human wisdom - over dependent on books instead of the Bible. You see, any church that ignores the power of the Holy Spirit will plunder into dissolution.

Friends, how is our worship helping us to develop as disciples? Is there evangelism when we meet together? Is our evangelism inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit? Is it deeply rooted in the word of God? As a church we feel inadequate in the area of evangelism and the impact on our Christian witness is very apparent. We need to connect to Christ in such a transformative way that his light burning through us will draw others from all around. Friends, we must be people of worship. We must be a church of sound teaching. We have much to offer the world, but we need the power of the Holy Spirit in everything.

CONCLUSION

This year, it is my hope that we as a church will work faithfully alongside one another in love, and be prepared to put our heads above the parapet and thirst to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I look forward to a return to the intimate devotion to the Lord which Susanna Wesley knew in her Epworth home. I look forward to the day when the church will be filled with an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit just as John and Charles Wesley received in their own day. It is my vision that we will see again a move of the Holy Spirit as Hugh Bourne and Williams Clowes saw on Mow Cop.

I look forward to the day when churches and circuits will hold regular prayer meetings and revival conferences. I look forward to the day when we will have a bold message about the gospel. I look forward to the day when we will revive the band and class meetings and commit meaningfully to our Methodist Way of Life. I look forward to the day when our worship will help us to develop as disciples. I look forward to the day when our evangelism will be inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit and deeply rooted in the word of God. I look forward to the day when there will be unity in churches, denominations and endless co-operation.

I look forward to the day when God's prophecy will be fulfilled again. When God will pour out his Spirit on our church; when our sons and daughters will prophecy; and all will see visions and dream dreams. Amen and God bless you!

Anthony Boateng, Vice-President of the Methodist Church, is a Local Preacher in the Westminster Circuit, with a passion for revival. He is the Convenor of the London District Social Responsibility Commission and, until last year, was a member of the Church Action for Tax Justice Management Committee and Methodist Central Hall Westminster Leadership Team. In his day job, Anthony works part-time for a government Work and Health programme which seeks to help people who are unemployed, as well as those with health conditions into employment.



“

I look forward to the day when God's prophecy will be fulfilled again. When God will pour out his Spirit on our church; when our sons and daughters will prophecy; and all will see visions and dream dreams.

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Martyn
Lloyd-Jones
REVIVAL

Foreword by J.I. Packer

REVIVAL

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Crossway, 1987

ISBN 10: 0720806526 / ISBN 13: 9780891074151 | pp. 306

I highly recommend this book, particularly for those who are longing for revival and feel burdened by the current state of the church and secular culture. This book is very relevant to our current context even though it was originally written over sixty years ago. Not only does it offer an in-depth reflection of where the church has gone wrong over the years, it provides helpful Biblically rooted solutions for those seeking revival, or who are in search for inspiration.

*Reviewed by Anthony Boateng
Available on Amazon*



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REVIVE THY WORK O GOD

Albert Midlane

Revive thy work O Lord;
Thy mighty arm make bare;
Speak with the voice that wakes the dead,
And make thy people hear:

***Revive thy work, O Lord,
While here to thee we bow;
Descend, O gracious Lord, descend!
O come and bless us now.***

Revive thy work, O Lord;
Now let us thirst for thee;
And hungering for the bread of life
May all our spirits be:

Revive thy work, O Lord;
Exalt thy precious name;
And, by the Holy Ghost, our love
For thee and thine inflame:

Revive thy work, O Lord;
Give power unto thy word;
Grant that thy blessed gospel may
In living faith be heard:

Revive thy work, O Lord,
And give refreshing showers;
The glory shall be all thine own,
The blessing, Lord, be ours:

EPHESIANS 3: 17 – 19

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



MICAH PART 2

Catherine Hutton

THIS BIBLE STUDY IS PART 2 OF A THREE-PART BIBLE STUDY IN MET CONNEXION.

We are going to pass quickly through Micah chapter 3 to focus on chapter 4 in this study. When we read through Micah chapter 3, we witness the weight of the Lord's rebuke against those who are in positions of responsibility for the well-being and the faith of his people.

There has been selfishness and greed shown by rulers, leaders and prophets which will lead to disgrace and the absence of God's presence in their lives and their influence will be without God's authority. Verses 1 and 2 are particularly graphic and distasteful. The outcome of God's abandonment of them is inevitable, and towards the end of the chapter, in verses 9-12, we see their vain and self-serving mockery of worshipping the true and living God equated with the 'high places' of pagan idolatry in the land. There is an indictment here that bears a permanent witness to all who lead others in worldly or spiritual terms. Those who arrogantly use their position or calling to raise themselves up over the people whom they should be serving will not be honoured by God. This is a stark warning to us all to be faithful in the discharge of all our duties and honourable in the things which we deem 'godly'.

Pause to read chapter 3 and linger on the impact of Micah's words. What do you make of chapter 3 verse 12? Are there challenges for you to address in your own heart?

Micah's Israel was a long way from the vision of the descendants innumerable that God had promised Abraham. Faithless and wicked, these people were cheats and were greedy; not people who followed the Law and the Prophets. God's judgement against this wickedness would lead to generations of hopelessness and struggle as the people of Israel were taken captive, along with their lands and all their wealth.

Here, in the middle of the prophecy, Micah paints a picture of the promise that living faithfully in step with God will bring.

Look at the opening words of chapter 4, verse 1. Consider the time you are in. How might the future pictured here offer hope and life for your situation?

We also find painted here a picture of the reality of God's power. Even when the people have failed, God does not fail. God's mountain is higher than the 'high places' on which idols and false gods are worshipped. God's rule is one of peace and of justice which will have consequences.

What are the consequences of God's rule for the nations?

What are the consequences of God's rule for the faithless Jerusalem?

The vision of God's peace and rule is beautiful. It shows the world living under Yahweh's rule and the gentle grace that flows from living in step with God.

THE REMNANT

Does remaining faithful to a minority cause make you an idiot or a hero? Think about various causes you have supported for too long or gave up before they were over and so contributed to the demise of something good...

I love the reference to 'the remnant' which we find in verses 7 and 8. The remnant will be a people who have kept faithful to God and honoured him by keeping his Law and paying attention to the words of his faithful Prophets. This goes against the prevailing culture of the time. The remnant is a significant image in Micah, one that is good for us to dwell on.

What beautiful or useful things can be made out of remnants?

Consider the use of food ingredients, fabric, other materials such as wood or metal or waste...

God's remnant will not be the scraps and waste of something that was once great - it will be the good which is left when the bad and rotten is taken away. The remnant will be the start of a new people who will be built into the great people innumerable as promised to Abraham & Sarah.

I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The Lord will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.
Micah 4:7

In Micah's day, the lame were those who would not be able to walk very well. Those people were deemed as having no military usefulness in defending a nation, and yet these are the ones whom God is going to make into his own mighty people. Their strength is their faithfulness to God and their love of God's priorities for themselves, other people and the rest of the world. There is no strength like it. Once the strong nation, full of pride and arrogance in its own abilities is brought low, God will gather up the least and the last to rebuild the covenant people. They are the remnant.

Today, this verse could be read as are those who have no credibility or social currency. They/we are mocked openly and despised for their lack of guile and their inability to fit in with the popular people. Those who are so absorbed with their own priorities that they take no notice of the fashion and trends around them. These are the people whom Jesus came to serve and to save, and as a consequence these are the people who populate the church of Christ. These are the ones who are not 'cool' or with the up to the moment language that make them easily fit in. Instead, they are totally focused on the things of God. They are committed to honouring the people of the world as God intended - without deceit or cheating. They conduct their life and faith with justice, love and honour. They are today's remnant.

Is the language of 'remnant' important to us today? What might it mean for you, your fellowship group or local church?

I wonder if it might be liberating to be the 'remnant', having discarded the pressures of fitting in with the world views that rankle and instead embracing priorities that take seriously the rule and reign of God? It will never lead to elevation in worldly circles, but we look to the original for our example:

Jesus would be the one born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of Judah's cities - into the line of King David who was the least of Jesse's sons.

Jesus will be full of loving kindness and mercy; Jesus will do justice and walk in step with the plans and purposes of God. He is the ultimate remnant on which the people of God will be built - without a break in the ancestral line. Jesus is the one who is the 'Yes' to all God's promises. God is the promise keeper in the making and maintaining of his covenant throughout scripture and in eternity.

Talk about God as promise keeper in Micah's prophecy.

How do the people know that God can be trusted?

How do you know that God can be trusted?

PRAY

- For a heart of love for the world.
- An attitude of joyful obedience to God.
- A desire to love as he loves.
- A willingness to be considered nothing so that the blessing comes from God alone.
- Pray that the world might come to know salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen

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.



RESPONDING TO GOD'S TRANSFORMING LOVE

Paul Houghton



PAUL HOUGHTON, CEO OF KINGDOM BANK, REFLECTS ON HOW KINGDOM BANK ENCOUNTERS GOD'S TRANSFORMING LOVE THROUGH GOD'S PEOPLE.

There are few moments more heart-warming than hearing stories of a local church being utterly counter-cultural in their practical love for one another and their community. Whilst the world is obsessed by love, desperate for intimacy and constantly seeking fulfilment, without Christ it is at best clutching at straws. No secular tennis club, WI group or local choir will ever have the motivation or power to live out the self-giving love which we see modelled in Jesus - this can only come from a new heart curved outwards by the Spirit, a personal relationship with the Son and a deep knowledge of the Father's care.

God is love - the Bible tells me so. But lest I'm tempted simply to provide my wife with a copy of our marriage certificate on Valentine's Day to confirm my undying affection, I need to remember that every episode of the Bible story is a demonstration of God's love in action. Again and again, we see his mercy and compassion for a rebellious people in practical day-to-day life. 'The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love' is a repeated refrain throughout Scripture as time after time God underlines his character not just in word but in deed.

It rings out as he establishes his covenant relationship with his chosen people at Sinai - his great faithfulness shown in rescue, defeat of enemies and provision of food and water, despite a grumbling and stiff-necked people. Then, later in Israel's history, despite their repeated unfaithfulness to the covenant and the consequences in exile, the people remember their God and he doesn't desert them. It is an awesome thing that, when we are unfaithful and ugly, God's love is steadfast, enduring, and resolute. "Though the mountains be shaken,

and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the Lord, who has compassion on you' (Isaiah 54:10).

And, of course, God's character is supremely seen at the cross. Despite our rejection of him, he provides a rescue at the cost of his Son in order to save us and call us his friends. 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15:13). And yet we were his enemies not his friends. 'But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8). What an incredible God we have, what a wonderful gospel message, and what a great motivation to live lives transformed by the Spirit - lives of humble servant-heartedness; lives of godly care and compassion; lives of love for fellow Christians and those in our communities.

At Kingdom Bank, we find ourselves in the privileged position of seeing gospel partnership in action. As a Christian bank which serves UK evangelical churches with mortgages, we have the regulatory responsibility to explore the detail of ministers' and churches' finances. As a Christian bank which enables individuals and churches to give their money as mission, we see Christians investing for eternity. Each customer is a powerful demonstration of the transforming love of God.

We often provide mortgages for gospel workers who are giving their lives in service of the Lord, either in the UK or across the globe. Time and again, we witness first-hand the practical sacrificial love and care ministers and their families have for the communities they seek to serve with the gospel - often communities which have traditionally been seen as 'tough', or 'hard-to-reach'. Living in the heart of the community is crucial for ministry, following the apostle Paul's pattern of sharing life as well as the gospel. Over the past few years we have seen workers and churches making particular efforts to bring this

about - acquiring homes which enable them to become part of the life of the local community, not 'lobbing in' the message of salvation from a safe distance outside.

Increasingly, ministers and churches are partnering with Kingdom Bank and other agencies to buy property under shared-ownership structures. This enables the purchase of a house or flat in areas (typically London and the South East) normally considered unaffordable. Again, the goal is a desire to live within the community the church is seeking to serve. But, more especially, the longing to see people saved is driving innovation in the structure of lending and acquiring property.

Overall, we are greatly encouraged by the growing range of opportunities we have to serve Christian workers. Each one represents a minister and their congregation loving their communities. In turn, we have been delighted by their experience of working with a mortgage provider who shares their passion, understands their finances and whose mission is to bring glory to God by serving them with gospel-fuelled lending.

On the other side of the Bank's balance sheet, there are savings and deposit accounts. By opening a Kingdom Bank account, individuals, churches and Christian charities are trusting us to use those funds to facilitate UK church growth whilst we look after them safely. As the Bank's lending has started to grow rapidly over the past 18 months, it has been exciting to see the 'penny drop' for Christians and churches: they are beginning to realise that they can also serve the gospel with their money whilst it's sitting earning interest. Indeed, we need more Christians and churches to hold money with us, or we can't continue to expand our ministry.

As Christians it's not a new concept that we can use our assets for gospel purposes: we give our time for church activities, we use our homes for hospitality, and we give lifts to church in our cars. But for our 'rainy day' savings in the bank to be giving glory to the Lord is perhaps a newer idea. One of our church customers was delighted when they realised that, by depositing a legacy they had received into a Kingdom Bank reserve account, they have been expressing the love of Christ in gospel partnership, enabling us to fund a minister's mortgage.

Much of our lending directly supports Bible teaching ministries. We are also thrilled to support Christian outreach projects which, alongside gospel proclamation, care for the practical needs of the more vulnerable in society, including those released from prison, those caught up in addictions and those struggling to find work. One customer provides some of the most disadvantaged in the North East with practical skills training, supported housing and a loving, caring community. Those who have been helped use the skills they have learnt to benefit those around them, especially people in the same difficult situations that they themselves experienced. We see other customers running youth groups, after school activities and community work with vulnerable people to reach into their communities with practical help and the wonderful news

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As a bank we are continually challenged and encouraged by the way we see our customers respond to God's transforming love. It reminds us that we demonstrate our love for God in how we love others.

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of a Saviour. Through all these different expressions of care and compassion, Christians are showing the love of Christ which they have experienced at the cross.

As a bank, we are continually challenged and encouraged by the way we see our customers respond to God's transforming love. It reminds us that we demonstrate our love for God in how we love others. 'We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: 'Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.'" (1 John 4:19 -21)

This is the reason why we as Christians proclaim the gospel, reach out to others in need and help in our communities. This is the reason why we support missionaries, give to our churches, and pray for each other. We are living out our love for the Lord and love to those around us, by following the sacrificial example of Christ himself. At Kingdom Bank we see this wonderful transforming love in action every day, as we facilitate gospel partnership between customers: Christians with savings and churches with property needs. May it always be for his glory!

Paul Houghton joined the Kingdom Bank team as CEO in 2020 and leads the Bank's strategic thinking and planning as it seeks to serve UK churches.

Outside work, Paul sits on the Council of Oak Hill Theological College, chairs the Board of Governors at Birkdale School in Sheffield, and is an active member of his local Anglican evangelical church in Sheffield.



 **Kingdom Bank**

QUEEN ELIZABETH II (1926-2022) — A LIFE TRANSFORMED BY THE LOVE OF GOD

Marian Izzard Editor

The Queen's death on 8 September was a defining moment in British history and in all of our lives. At the great age of 96, her departure from this life was not unexpected, but nevertheless it shook the nation, the Commonwealth and the world.

The Queen was the longest reigning monarch in British history. For those of us under the age of 80, she is the only monarch we have ever known; she has always been there - always a constant and reassuring presence and a steadying influence throughout the changing times in our lives.

Since her passing, we have witnessed a tremendous outpouring of love, respect and grief from the public and from individuals who wanted to pay tribute to her selfless values, her devotion to duty, her diligence, her unwavering commitment and her steadfast faithful service to the nation and the Commonwealth over the 70 years of her reign.

Undergirding all of this was her personal faith in Jesus - which shone throughout her life.

Her 21st birthday speech declared that her whole life would be devoted and dedicated to serving God, the nation and the Commonwealth.

These solemn promises were made at her Coronation in 1953 and 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.'*

Those prayers were answered - the Queen was a woman of integrity, faithful to the promises she made throughout her long reign.

The Queen rooted her life and her reign in God's word to inspire and guide her - she referred to her faith in God to be like an anchor.

Her Christmas broadcast messages to the nation and Commonwealth over the years were an opportunity to share something of the hope, peace and joy found in Jesus. In 2002 her Christmas message said this: *'I know just how much I rely on my 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... I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.'*

Her passing touched the nation as we watched thousands who joined the long and winding queue to view her Lying-in-State at Westminster Hall. The queue had become like a pilgrimage, with countless individuals streaming from all around the country and some from around the world to join it. Many made friends with strangers as they queued for the long hours together throughout the day and night; all with the common purpose of making it to the same destination to take a last look at their faithful Queen. They came to pay their respects to a Queen who had been an inspiration and an example; living out godly qualities of kindness, resilience, gentleness and forgiveness. All this alongside a genuine human touch; making people feel at ease, a keen wit and sense of humour - often seeing the funny side when things went wrong! She was a real and relatable person; genuine, never wavering, faithful to the end.

Writer and broadcaster Gyles Brandreth, whilst commentating on the queue to see the Queen's Lying-in-State, said: *'The Queen was an exemplar of goodness, people are reaching out to touch that; they want something of that.'*

She was a beacon of hope, and an inspiration to us all.

And then the momentous and spectacular state funeral - with its solemnity, dignity and pageantry - watched by over 4 billion viewers around the world. It brought people together

- whether watching at home, via a live link on a big screen somewhere or from a bagged space along the route of the funeral cortege.

The funeral was all that the Queen had planned and wanted it to be - an evangelistic message of hope.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said this in his sermon in reference to the reading from John 14:6: *'Jesus - who in our reading does not tell his disciples how to follow, but who to follow - said: 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Her Late Majesty's example was not set through her position or her ambition, but through whom she followed.'*

And went on to say: *'We will all face the merciful judgement of God: we can all share the Queen's hope which in life and*

death inspired her servant leadership. Service in life, hope in death. All who follow the Queen's example, and inspiration of trust and faith in God, can with her say: 'We will meet again.'

The focus towards the end of the service was on the sparkling Imperial State Crown proudly positioned on top of the coffin. This crown had been placed upon the Queen at the commencement of her reign at her Coronation. It was a profound and poignant moment as Charles Wesley's hymn Love Divine was sung. The concluding line said it all: *'Till we cast our crowns before thee - lost in wonder, love and praise!'*

The Queen was a woman appointed for such a time as this Her unwavering Christian faith boldly proclaimed in life and in death.



BEAUTY FROM ASHES IN BURUNDI

Simon Guillebaud

SIMON GUILLEBAUD INTRODUCES INSPIRATIONAL FRIENDS WHO ARE TRANSFORMING THOUSANDS IN THE WORLD'S POOREST NATION

According to the World Bank, Burundi is both the poorest and the hungriest country in the world. Sitting in the very heart of Africa, it is a small country the size of Wales, with a huge neighbour to the west in the form of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and another big one to the south and east in Tanzania. Having been part of Ruanda-Urundi until 1962, the two nations split into Rwanda and Burundi when they gained their independence from their Belgian colonial rulers. Sadly, since that time, there have been repeated genocides and a huge amount of suffering as the two main ethnic groups - the majority Hutus (85%) and minority Tutsis - experienced power tussles and reversals of fortunes.

Bosco is one of Burundi's most influential Christian leaders, and his story helps to understand the depths of darkness that have to be overcome in the country to see genuine lasting reconciliation and transformation. His smile is genuine and his manner relaxed, but they belie what has happened to him in his life ...

It was 29 October 1993, a week after the President of Burundi had been assassinated. The whole country was experiencing bloodshed, and Bosco's region was no exception. Bosco was a timid 7-year-old, sheltering in a house with a number of his extended family. His father and elder sister fled into the swamp at 4 am, having heard that the killers would shortly arrive. His mother had swollen legs and couldn't flee, and in any case they all thought that women and children would be left alone.

But no.

At 5 am, the killers arrived and tried to break down the front door. In the ensuing panic, everyone inside fled out of the back door, but people with bows and arrows were waiting there for them. Of the fifteen children, only three escaped. All five adults were killed. Bosco was one of the three to break through the cordon and make it to the bush.

After an hour, in the quiet, he crept back with his sister to try to find his mother. There she lay, still alive, with both arms and legs hacked off. He hugged her and wept, and then begrudgingly left her to die as the killers were still nearby and she was beyond hope. He was her last born, and didn't want to leave her side, but there was no choice. They had to try to get to the nearest church to

relative safety. Meantime (and he only discovered it two weeks later), his father had also been killed.

They went to the house of a friend from the other tribe - even in the darkest moments, goodness was to be found. This man was willing to put himself in danger by trying to rescue them. He told them that the following morning the killers would burn down the forest to flush out those still hiding, so he told them to return to the bush and be ready before dawn, when he would guide them to safety.

Early the next morning, he led Bosco and Bosco's sister through the mist. She thought he was going to betray them, so at one stage she refused to follow. Bosco had to obey her and it was a mistake, because they soon came across a gang of killers, who were resting on the veranda of a house. When the killers saw Bosco, they rushed into the house to pick up their machetes, and then chased them. Bosco and his sister literally ran for their lives, reaching the Catholic church just fifty yards in front of the fastest-running killer. Belgian priests took them in and nursed them until safe passage to the capital could be arranged.

Fast-forward to today and now Bosco runs Igniting Communities for Jesus (ICJ). Only he and his three sisters



“

I went back to my job and prayed in front of the computer: 'Lord, if that wasn't a madman but he was indeed sent by you, give me a radical sign right now!' I took a phone call at my desk and the voice at the end of the line out of the blue said: 'Do you know anyone who wants to work in Burundi?'

”



survived that dreadful period. But he doesn't dwell on the past, and is instead, through ICJ, discipling many widows and orphans out of poverty, teaching them improved farming methodologies, and seeing significant numbers drawn to Jesus.

I arrived in 1999 in what was recognised as the most dangerous country in the world. I had left a marketing job after a very dramatic call to Burundi. A man had approached me saying he had a message from God for me: 'I believe God wants you to go to Burundi!' I went back to my job and prayed in front of the computer: 'Lord, if that wasn't a madman but was indeed sent by you, give me a radical 'ign right now!' I took a phone call at my desk and the voice at the end of the line out of the blue said: 'Do you know anyone who wants to work in Burundi?' Extraordinary! I was off!

When I arrived, Burundi was in the thick of a 13-year war which eventually ended in 2005. I lived expecting to die, and had many close shaves. They were very dark times. Yet the darkness has not overcome the light, and some of God's best troops are in Burundi. In due course, I set up Great Lakes Outreach (GLO), whose stated mission is to identify, empower and equip the best local leaders of passion, integrity, gifting and vision, for the transformation of the nation bottom up and top down. So amongst the 25 partner organisations, there are some wonderful brothers and sisters, like Bosco, having a powerful impact on society. Let me introduce you to just a few more of them:

Dieudonne Nahimana lost his father the same month as Bosco, buried alive in a pit. Years later when he saw street kids wallowing in the filth, he had to do something about it. He started an organisation called New Generation, and has mentored hundreds of young lives into productive jobs and vibrant faith. Years later, he went back to the site of his father's murder, meeting with the murderer himself, to preach reconciliation together. The murderer has now passed away, but Dieudonne sponsors his two children - yes, the children of the man who killed his



father - through schooling. How do you do that? And the story's not finished, because Dieudonne stood as an independent candidate in the 2020 Presidential elections, playing a huge role in stabilising the country at a highly volatile time.

Onesphore started an organisation called Harvest Initiatives (HI). He was born four days after the 1972 genocide began. As his family fled their burning village, his mother wanted to discard him into the bush as they ran because she thought he was already dead. However the father refused, and Onesphore actually survived. When he was told what happened years later, he felt God telling him to surrender all, including his promising career as a lawyer, to mobilise a mission movement in the nation and beyond.

For the last 16 years, HI has sent out hundreds of evangelists each year (except in 2020 because of Covid restrictions) for two weeks of apostolic outreach. During those times, God's Spirit has been poured out in power, with an estimated 170,000+ people giving their lives to Jesus. The blind have seen, deaf have heard, mute have spoken, lame have walked - their accounts of multiple miracles over the years reads like a 29th chapter of the book of Acts!

Macaire contracted polio as a child, which left him unable to walk. He always said he didn't want to resort to begging, and he ended up training as a tailor. What he soon discovered, however, was that running a bar was more lucrative. He'd hire young females to draw in men, and business was thriving. He was so charming that, in spite of his disability, one of those young ladies called Dallia agreed to marry him - even though it could have meant she would bear no children. As it happens, though, they now have six children together, and another six grandchildren so far!

Dallia came to faith first and prayed for Macaire. When he too was radically converted, he knew he had to leave his drunken ways behind, close the bar, and lose his main source of income. He started praying for people and many were healed. Word got around, and people flocked to his house. This was during the war when there were rebel movements and any unusual gatherings were treated with suspicion. So many people came to his house that he started planning morning and afternoon sessions.

One day, the authorities came and arrested him. He was put in prison with three other pastors. The latter were released when they signed a document saying they'd stop those meetings. But Macaire refused: 'I'm doing God's work.

Whilst others are killing, I'm praying with people and being used to heal the sick. I cannot sign!' So they kept him in prison. Then the Governor came and ordered him to stop those meetings. He replied: 'Sir, I will sign that paper on condition you agree that when you die and you come before God, you will tell him that you were the one who stopped Macaire's work!'

At that, the Governor balked! Instead, he encouraged Macaire to register a new church and helped him in the process. A couple of decades later, Macaire has planted 23 churches! He graduated recently from Nation to Nation Christian University, having set up a rural theological training satellite in his own house! He's getting older now, and having walked on his hands for the last five decades, someone recently provided funding for him to buy a car, so his grandson now ferries him around in it!

Another key emerging leader is Innocent, who started an organisation called Purpose Discovery. He realised as a young man that he had the gift of healing. On one occasion, he prayed for a hunchback who had been bent over for 18 years. The man immediately straightened up, and piled him high with avocados in gratitude!

Another time, he was leading an outreach team, and they were taking a lunch break after the Sunday service. Two mute girls asked him to pray for their healing. He left his team members eating, led the two girls into a room, and said to God: 'Lord, even if I have to stay here three days, I won't give up praying until you heal them!' Actually, within ten minutes they'd started crying audibly, and were indeed completely healed. He took them to the choir practice, and said: 'Hey, I've got you two new choir members!' The head chorister said: 'Don't mess us around, we know those girls are mute!' Innocent turned to the girls and said: 'Anything you want to tell him?' They opened their mouths and started singing a worship song! Three of the choir members fell to their knees whilst others gasped and burst into tears! The girls hadn't said a word in over a decade.

These are just a selection of the many men and women of faith who are passionately engaged in gospel ministry in Burundi, supported by Great Lakes Outreach. Ministry is contested, challenging and costly. However, lives are being transformed across the nation, and God is answering the prayers of many. GLO is involved in evangelism, discipleship, theological training, education, micro-finance, street children, orphanages, refugees, prostitutes, business creation, agriculture - the list goes on. It is very strategic, and very fruitful.

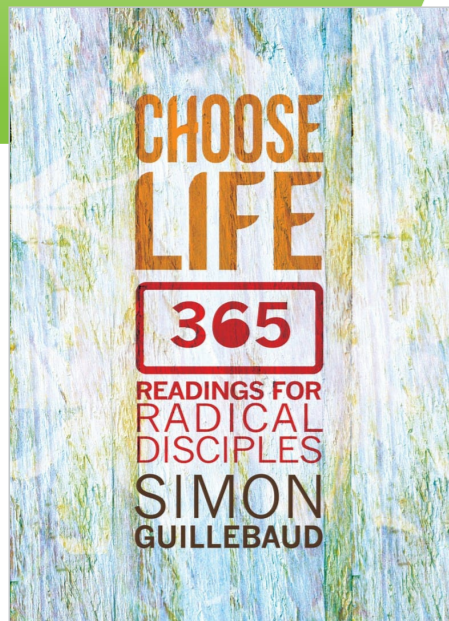
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 ”

Dangerously Alive. Also, I do a weekly podcast called 'Inspired...with Simon Guillebaud' where I interview people around the world with amazing stories of triumphant faith in whatever challenging circumstances. Well worth subscribing to!

Author, speaker, social entrepreneur, husband and father, cyclist and charity founder, Simon Guillebaud MBE had a very clear call to Burundi in 1999, when it was regarded as the most dangerous country on earth. He later set up Great Lakes Outreach with the vision to transform Burundi and beyond through holistic mission, working with gifted local leaders of integrity. For more information, visit www.greatlakesoutreach.org and www.simonguillebaud.com.



If you wanted to be involved in praying for the work, visiting, or sowing financially, check out www.greatlakesoutreach.org or www.simonguillebaud.com. You can contact me, or read about what God has done in several books I've written: the award-winning daily devotional Choose Life 365, More Than Conquerors, or



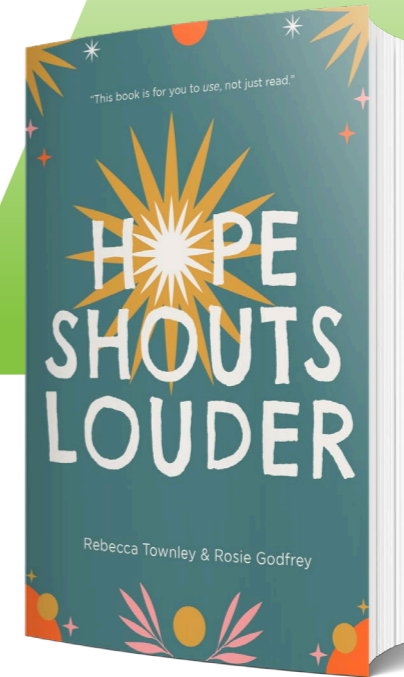
CHOOSE LIFE 365 *Simon Guillebaud*

Oxford, England: Monarch Books 2014
ISBN 978-0857215222 | pp. 384, £12.99

Choose Life is a brilliant devotional that has helped many in our church to engage with scripture on a daily basis. Simon, in his gracious and inimitable manner, says it how it is. It's inspired and challenged us to live as everyday disciples committed to the radical mission of Jesus. Love it!

Reviewed by Gareth Dickinson, Vicar of St Luke's Maidstone

RESOURCE REVIEWS



HOPE SHOUTS LOUDER *Rebecca Townley and Rosie Godfrey*

Indianapolis, IN: Light & Life Publishing, 2022
ISBN 978 0 89 367435 9 | pp.181, £9.99

In this easy to read book, the authors share stories from their own Christian lives and experience, and encourage readers to engage with God in a closer way. The chapters are short which makes it easy to pick up and put down if you are short on time! Each section ends with some questions to aid reflection and prayer, and the book would make a great tool for the gentle discipleship of women.

The writers share openly about their own journeys of faith and walk with the Lord, speaking candidly about some of the difficulties they have faced and how Jesus has helped them in various circumstances. They clearly have a good relationship with each other and also share how their friendship has been an encouragement to them along the way.

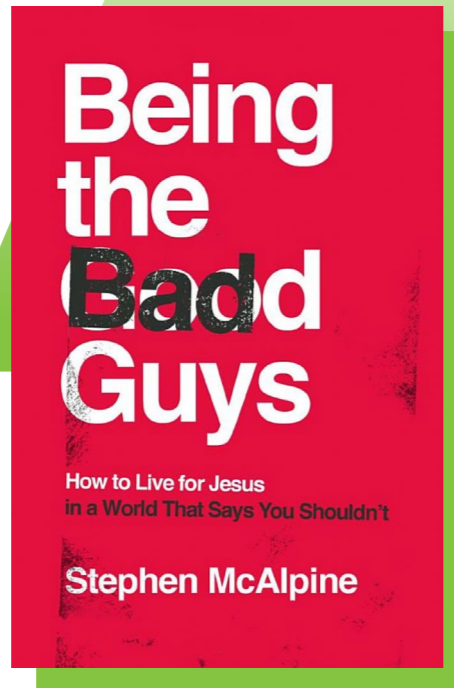
The 'Pause Points' and prayers give readers an opportunity to engage with the material in a deeper way than when you simply read a book. It would make a great book for a women's house group to read together and to use the reflections to aid discussion in meetings. The sections would equally be of benefit for someone to use in their private quiet times with the Lord and there is space for making notes so that readers can make the book their own faith journal.

At the end of the book, there is encouragement for anyone who doesn't yet know Jesus to invite him into their life and includes a prayer of commitment, so the book would also be a helpful gift for a not yet Christian friend or someone who is just exploring matters of faith.

Both women write in an easy, chatty, friendly style so it feels as though you have a friend alongside you encouraging you as you read. I warmly recommend this book to you, wherever you are in your journey of faith.

Reviewed by Carolyn Lawrence who has a background as a Primary School teacher and has also been a mission partner in South America. She is a former Vice President of the Methodist Conference (2020-2021). She currently lives in Shropshire with her husband Mark, who is a Methodist minister, and is a debt centre manager for the charity Christians Against Poverty as well as part of the leadership team of her local church.

Within the UK, 'Hope Shouts Louder' can be purchased from <https://hope-shouts-louder.sumupstore.com>



BEING THE BAD GUYS: HOW TO LIVE FOR JESUS IN A WORLD THAT SAYS YOU SHOULDN'T

Stephen McAlpine

Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2021
ISBN 978-1784985981 | pp. 144, £8.99

What happened to our 'Christian country'? Why this sudden hostility toward Christians? How do we reach out to a culture that thinks the Church is a bunch of bigots?

If you've ever asked yourself these questions, then this is the book for you.

Stephen McAlpine's 'Being the Bad Guys' addresses exactly what it says on the tin. In this relatively short and intensely practical book, Stephen seeks to help us live authentically as Christians in a world that is increasingly suspicious of us, and now seems to view us as 'the bad guys'. He helps us to understand why and how this has happened, and enables us to respond faithfully through biblical hope and practical strategies.

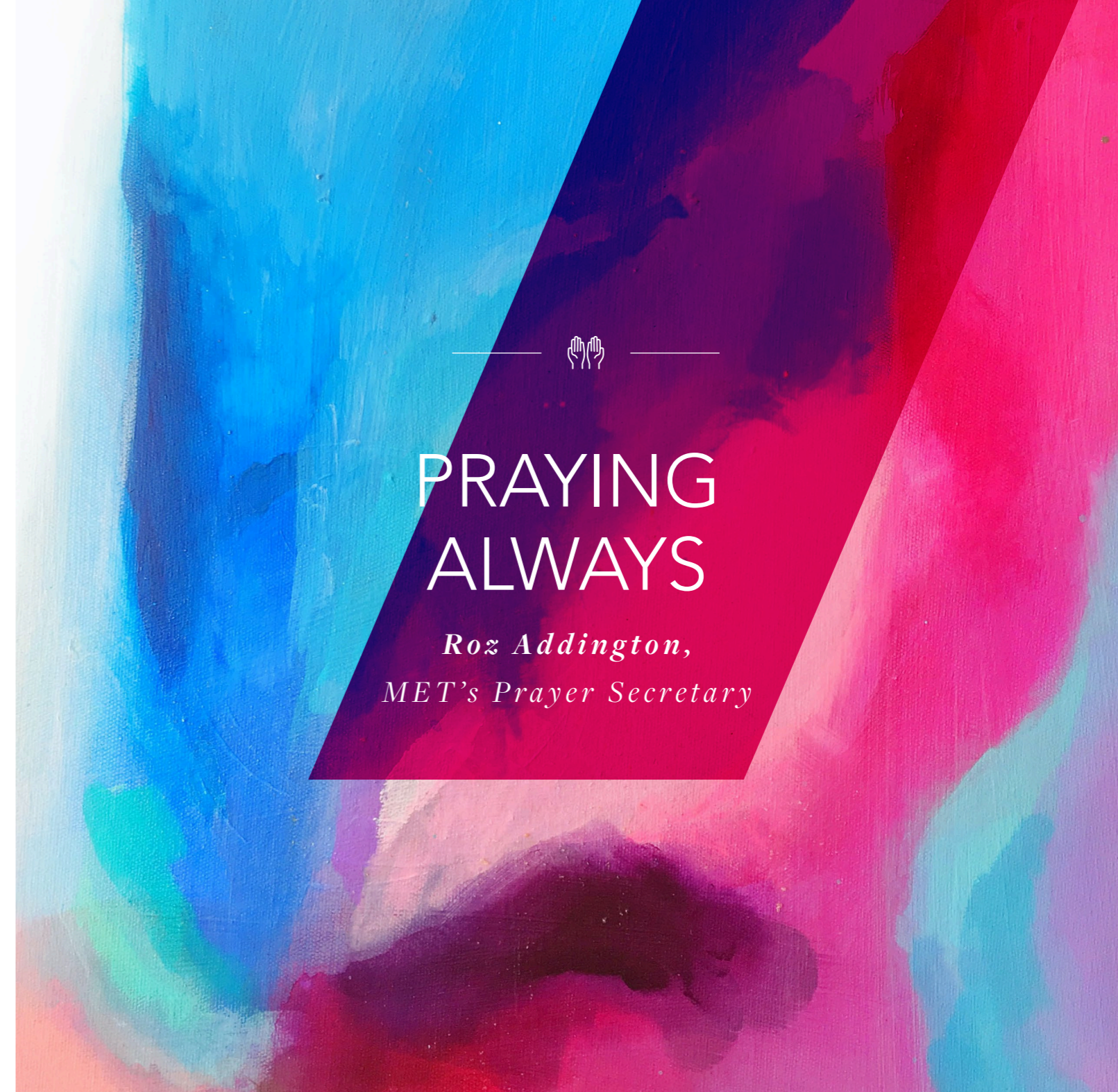
Stephen takes us through a journey of the cultural shifts that have led to this suspicion. In the 20th century, Christianity was merely 'one good option' in the marketplace of ideas. The legal, cultural and political power structures affirmed Christians. Today? Something has changed. Christianity is viewed as the problem. The legal, cultural, and political guns are now aimed toward us. The number of those professing faith

continues to fall, and we no longer have a seat at the cultural table. Christians are allegedly on the 'wrong side of history', obsessed with binaries and self-denial in a world of fluidity and self-actualisation.

How should we therefore respond? Surprise? Discouragement? Stephen reminds us that life on the fringes has been the norm for faithful Christians for most of Church history, and he warns us against a victimhood mentality all too common in our society. He helpfully reorients our expectations in order that they align with those of the Bible, and shows us the hope we have in Christ. He focusses on the local church, showing how it is actually the greatest bulwark we have against the cultural forces against us, and even gives strategies for Christians in the workplace.

If you feel discouraged, concerned, or confused about how we should act in this suspicious world, or you minister to those who do, this book is an absolute must-read.

Reviewed by Nathan Veall, who is the Rising Generation Representative on the MET Executive. He preaches regularly at local churches and currently works in Cyber Security.



PRAYING ALWAYS

*Roz Addington,
MET's Prayer Secretary*

What turmoil and volatility our nation is in. The news is dire - rising food prices and energy costs, strikes, rising crime and violence. Over the summer, parts of the country experienced drought. People are struggling to make ends meet, businesses are finding it hard to cope, leading to increased anxiety. The NHS is struggling, and all coming on top of the Covid pandemic. We seem to go from one crisis to another. We have turned away from God and we can now see the consequences. People are looking to the government

to fix everything. But can the government, on its own, really solve the ills of our nation? We should be turning to God and seeking him. It tells us in Ephesians 6:18 'to pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.' This we must do urgently, praying for repentance and revival as it is only a turning back to God which can heal our nation.

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:** From the move away of Biblical holiness, to a seeking of Godly wisdom rather than human wisdom and science; seeking the power of the Holy Spirit. (Philippians 3:18-19; Psalm 51:16-17).
- 2. Church leaders:** the President and Vice President of Conference, Graham Thompson and Anthony Boateng; Chairs of District, Superintendents, Presbyters, Deacons and lay workers; Local Preachers and leaders of worship. (Isaiah 55:8-9; Matthew 6:33).
- 3. Scriptural Holiness:** a return to Biblical teaching and a true seeking of God; for the centrality of prayer at all levels within the church; for the power of the Holy Spirit to fall, burning up all false teaching and ideologies. (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 7:21)
- 4. Mission and vision:** renewed vision; a seeking of God's guidance for the church connexionally; empowerment of the Holy Spirit; boldness to evangelise our communities in creative ways; revival. (Psalm 118:6-7; 2 Timothy 1:6-7).
- 5. The work of MET:** For the 3R's: re-kindling of the Wesleyan vision, renewing the Wesleyan vision and raising up of a new generation of Wesleys; moving forward into the future; for David Hull as Chair; the Trustees; the Executive; for Derek Balsdon as he moves to a new phase of ministry; for MET members who are taking on new roles of leading prayer and Bible studies; for all those within the Methodist Church who struggle with the God in Love Unites Us decisions and who are seeking a way forward. (Isaiah 41:10-13; Hebrews 10: 22-24).
- 6. Cliff College:** Ashley Cooper as Principal and all the staff; a continuation of the authority of Scripture to be upheld; students to grow in Biblical faith; good opportunities to put their learning into practice. (Psalm 25: 4-5; Colossians 3:23-24).
- 7. Children and young people:** Nathan Veall, seeking to reach out to those at university and those in employment; the initiative of WHOTWAY; all who work with children and young people; clear Biblical teaching; inspiration and guidance through the Holy Spirit. (Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 19:13-14)



WEEK 2 | GREAT BRITAIN

- 1. The Government:** Wisdom and strength for the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss; the formation of a new Cabinet; the formulating of godly policies to tackle the many ills in our nation; courage to move forward, putting the needs of the country first; a return of integrity. (Philippians 2:3-4; Proverbs 11:14)
- 2. Economic situation:** The rising cost of living, particularly energy prices; increased personal debt; those struggling to make ends meet; creative solutions; a deep hunger for God in individuals. (Matthew 6:31-33; Micah 6:8)
- 3. NHS & social care:** Adequate resources, both in funding and personnel; better communication between departments and the various services; children's services; mental health provision; care packages and help for vulnerable people to allow them to return home. (Zechariah 7:9-10; Ephesians 4:32).
- 4. Revival:** An awakening across the country to the need for God; Godly answers to the complex issues facing our country; for the Holy Spirit to convict people of corporate selfishness, pride, greed, arrogance, self-righteousness, and egotism; a turning back to Biblical values. (Isaiah 55:6-7; Psalm 80:17-19).
- 5. Charities and food banks:** Necessary funding; support in reaching those who are struggling with the cost of living; Christians Against Poverty (CAP); those reaching out to the marginalised and vulnerable; the homeless. (Matt. 6:1-4; Proverbs 22:16).
- 6. Gangs, knife crime and County Lines:** Youngsters caught up in gang culture and the related problems of knife crime and drug abuse; those who reach out to these young people; those trapped in County Lines; protection for vulnerable young people. (Psalm 145:17-19; Jeremiah 33:3).
- 7. Christians in the workplace:** Those struggling to stand up for Christian values in their places of work, especially in Parliament and the media; courage and boldness to speak out, without fear of discrimination; protection against false accusations and lies. (Isaiah 43:1-3; Psalm 27: 1-3).



WEEK 3 | WORLD ISSUES

- 1. World instability:** China/Taiwan: for stabilising of tensions; the up-holding of Taiwan's democracy and independence; cessation of military exercises; peace talks. Russia/Ukraine: Russia to stop the invasion of a sovereign country; strength and courage for the Ukrainian people; refugees; necessary resources. (Matthew 5:9; Psalm 32:7-8).
- 2. The Persecuted Church:** Afghanistan and other Islamic controlled countries; basic human rights to be upheld; justice and fair treatment; other countries where Christianity is suppressed; release of those in detention; strength and resilience for those suffering. (James 1:12; Philippians 4:19).
- 3. World poverty:** People living in poverty; compassion and aid from the richer nations; provision for those facing starvation; adequate sanitation and housing; health care. (1 John 3:17-18; Proverbs 14:31).
- 4. War torn areas of the world:** Those who have lost everything; refugee camps; resources to tackle the associated problems of famine and disease; adequate funding for relief and aid agencies; safe access to the most desperate. (Psalm 55:22; Proverbs 11:24-25).
- 5. Those living under repressive regimes:** Nations where there is no democracy, particularly Hong Kong, Russia, Myanmar, Belarus, North Korea and Islamic states; those detained for speaking out; access to basic human rights; exposure of injustices; governments to take action. (Proverbs 31:8-9; Psalm 72:12-14).
- 6. Natural disasters:** People displaced by earthquakes, fires, floods, storms, and drought; those who no longer have land to make a living; financial and mental health support; aid agencies working to alleviate the suffering; finance to rebuild infrastructure, particularly in poorer nations. (Galatians 6:2; Acts 20:35).
- 7. Terrorism:** perpetrators of terror to encounter God; victims to find the peace of the Lord; change to regimes across the world which encourage acts of terror; cyber-attacks. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7; Psalm 10:17-18).



WEEK 4 | THE NATURAL WORLD & CLIMATE CHANGE

- 1. Repentance:** Forgiveness for our abuse of our 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. Britain:** To commit to pledges made to reduce carbon emissions; our 'throw away' society; reduction of plastics; pollution of water ways - legislation to prevent sewage being dumped in our rivers; increase of the public conscience to stop littering the environment. (Psalm 104:24-25)
- 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; Hebrews 11:3).
- 4. Rising sea levels:** Those living in low lying coastal regions; sufficient aid for those affected; climate refugees. (Psalm 82:3-4; Psalm 95:3-5).
- 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. (2 Chronicles 7:14 & 4-9; Jeremiah 32:17)
- 6. Plastics:** Commitment worldwide to reduce, all plastics; for environmentally friendly materials to be found; political will around the world to bring in legislation and funding enabling this to happen; the clearing up of polluted habitats. (Isaiah 24:4-6; 1 Timothy 4:4).
- 7. Changing weather patterns:** Areas where there is hardship due 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. (Psalm 136:1 & 4-9; Colossians 1:16-17).

O FOR A HEART TO PRAISE MY GOD

Charles Wesley

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels thy blood
So freely spilt for me;
A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone;
A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean;

Which neither life nor death can part
From him that dwells within;
A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of thine!
Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above,
Write thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of love.



FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd Dr
David A. Hull*

Dear Friends,

Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has, of course, been much in our thoughts over recent months. I am delighted that we were able to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee in the last edition. It seems strange to be carrying a tribute to her so soon afterwards. I am sure we will all wish to join in continuing to pray for the Royal Family in their sadness and for King Charles as he begins to reign. That is, after all, what the Bible calls us to do, not least in 1 Timothy 2:2.

As I have reflected on the life of the Queen, my thoughts have returned to reports of her coronation 70 years ago. These words were spoken as she was presented with a Bible:

*Our gracious Queen:
to keep your Majesty ever mindful of
the law and the gospel of God
as the rule for the whole life and
government of Christian Princes,
we present you with this book,
the most valuable thing that this world
affords.*

Never mind the priceless treasures on display in the service and all the crown jewels in the Tower of London. If we own a Bible, we too own the most valuable thing that this world affords. As evangelicals, we are committed to reading the Bible regularly and to putting its teaching into practice in every area of life.

John Wesley believed that Bible reading and study was a means of grace – one of the ordinary channels through which God's grace flows into our lives, to strengthen, challenge and change us. We must, of course, do it in the right way and for the right reasons. Rushing through to tick it off a list without any thought of listening prayerfully to the voice of God will achieve little.

Wesley was very critical of those who had only the form of religion and not its power. It seems to me, however, that he also knew that, ordinarily, we cannot know the power without the form. The way to receive the power of God is to engage in the means of grace: Bible reading and study, prayer, Christian fellowship, Holy Communion, fasting, merciful service.

The Lord does, of course, sometimes work in extraordinary ways. We shouldn't, though, sit around waiting for something extraordinary to happen; instead, we should seek his power using the ordinary channels he has given us, the means of grace. This was the reason that Wesley and his friends were called 'Methodists' – they took a methodical approach to the means of grace. I hope this is still an outstanding characteristic of the people called Methodists in our own day, not least amongst evangelicals. It is how we come to know the transforming power of God's love.

It is good to be able to include an article in this edition of MET Connexion written by Derek Balsdon, our former Development Worker. He will be joining us for Revive, our annual prayer conference and we will say goodbye to him formally during the Sunday morning service. I do hope many MET members will be able to join us. Details are included earlier in the magazine.

I wrote in the last edition of Derek having fulfilled an 'Esther role' amongst us, serving the Lord and his people within the Methodist Church 'for such a time as this'. It seems to me that what is needed now is a 'Nehemiah role' – someone who has wept over the state of things, and now seeks to rediscover the foundations and rebuild the walls, encouraging each of us to play our part in the great task wherever the Lord has placed us. You will have received a mailing with

details of an appeal for funds for this new Director of Ministry role. If you are able to contribute, and haven't already done so, further details are given earlier in this magazine and on our website, www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/DoM. Please do join us in praying that the funds will be raised and the right person will be found!

There has been much discussion about the future of MET following the God In Love Unites Us decisions of the Methodist Conference. This was the theme of my address at this year's AGM. It seems to me that the future is two-fold: firstly, continuing our work within the Methodist Church to strengthen and encourage evangelical witness, as has always been our *raison d'être* – surely MET is needed now more than ever – and, secondly, developing our work more widely with other Wesleyan evangelical denominations and organisations to seek a renewal of the Wesleyan vision and mission across the motherland of Methodism. Our discussions with other national leaders about this wider vision have been most encouraging.

I am very grateful, as always, to Marian Izzard for all she does behind the scenes within MET, not only in editing MET Connexion, but also in her tireless and patient work as our administrator. The theme she has chosen for this edition is very fitting for these times: 'The Transforming Love of God'. Surely, it is this transformation for which we need to pray, as fervently as ever. How wonderful it was that the Queen herself chose the words of Charles Wesley for her funeral service, setting forth the transforming power of God's love. May this ever be our continued prayer:

*Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.*

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,

David



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Together

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