

THE NEW MAGAZINE OF METHODIST EVANGELICALS TOGETHER

RE:VIVE

AUTUMN 2024

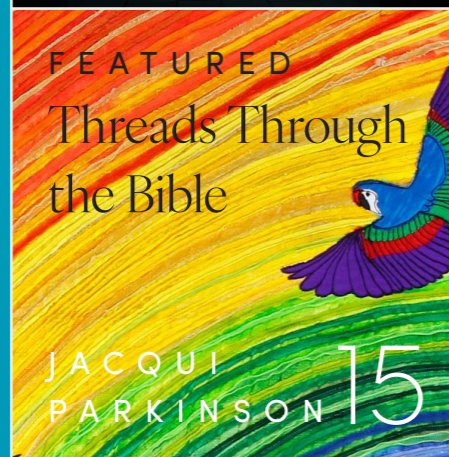
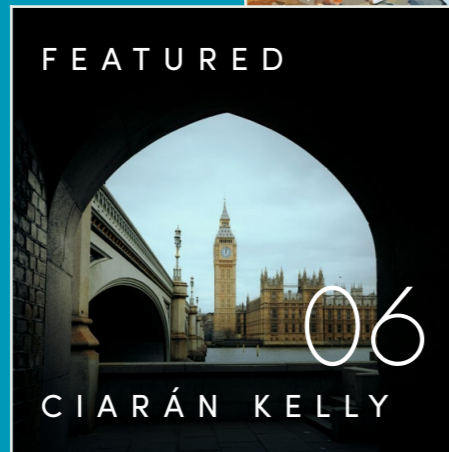
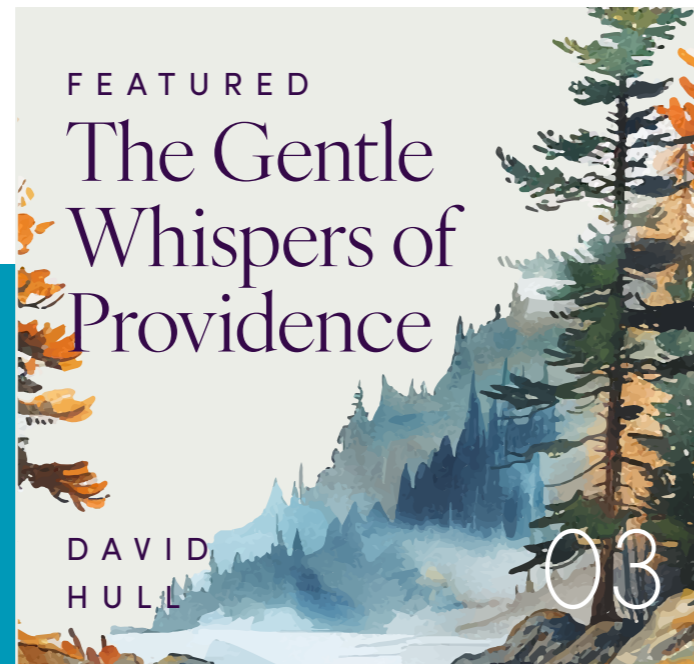
The Big Picture

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AUTUMN 2024

EDITORIAL

This autumn edition features articles that individually and together form part of the bigger picture of our perspective as we consider what God has done and is doing in our land. We take a look at the new political landscape, with Ciarán Kelly, we hear of the legacy from Roger Forster in his inspirational leadership of Ichthus, we read the wonderful tributes to Bill Davies, former Principal of Cliff College, we see the exciting and imaginative work of Jacqui Parkinson in her incredible Threads Through the Bible Exhibition, we are challenged by Steve Uppal in our pursuit for seeking Revival and we are introduced to Faith Sharing Profiles with Andy Frost to help us to share the Good News of Jesus faithfully and powerfully. Amongst all of this we are introduced to the inspiring abstract oceanic artwork of Rossie Henderdson-Begg. And we hear the final word from our outgoing Chair, David Hull who has served us exceptionally and faithfully for the last 10 years. We are immensely grateful to him for his visionary leadership, wisdom and encouragement to MET and MET:Revive.



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The Gentle Whispers of Providence

DAVID HULL



This final letter from David Hull, our outgoing Chair, has been specially moved from the back of the magazine to the front. He reflects on two decades of work with MET (and Headway, our predecessor organisation), looking to the future with hope.

'I have found the Book of the Law'

(2 Kings 22:8)

How formative our early years of life are! When I heard the news that the headmaster from my school days, Dr John Wroughton, had died, I had a strong sense that I should go to his memorial service, and bring with me my wife, Sarah (who had never known him).

The service, held in Bath Abbey, was a fitting celebration, honouring his life, faith and legacy. Afterwards, we crossed the road to the city's Guildhall for a reception and sat down with plates of sandwiches. We were soon joined by an elderly gentleman who, it emerged, was Dr Wroughton's best friend from his own school days. He shared with us the central role 'John' (as he knew him) had played in bringing him to faith.

As we chatted, two others came over and we discovered they were all related. One recognised us and introduced Sarah to the others as a member of the Church family of the East African Revival. The third man, a retired Royal Navy Commander, looked at Sarah and said, 'Joe Church!' She explained that he had been her great uncle, and he told us how Joe Church's son had led his brother to the Lord who, in turn, had led him to the Lord.

We were soon talking animatedly about revival. 'Sadly, they all seem to fizzle out in the end,' the Commander said, and I quipped, 'We're praying for them to fizzle in again!' He lifted his eyes and hands to heaven and loudly said, 'Yes please, Lord!' It was an unforgettable conversation in a very surprising setting. As we said our goodbyes, the older of the men – the schoolboy friend – quietly said, 'I think we have heard the gentle whispers of providence today.'

REDISCOVERY, REFORM & REVIVAL

The school I attended under Dr Wroughton's headship was founded by Edward VI. He came to the throne at the age of nine, and reigned over a period of educational and religious reform – a revival in which the Word of God was rediscovered. For the first time in history, the Bible was made widely available to the general population in English translation.

King Josiah was an even greater boy king who reigned over a period of even greater rediscovery, reform and revival (2 Kings 22-23). Eight years old when he ascended to the throne, he recommissioned the temple repairs and the Book of the Law was rediscovered. Shocked to the core as it was read, he launched a programme of national reform.

DISCOVERING EVANGELICAL METHODISM

Like us all, I testify to my own experience of the gentle whispers of God's providence: my mother led me to faith when I was 7, reading to me the story of Nicodemus from our children's Bible; a Sunday School teacher memorably taught me about the Good Shepherd; our village chapel (established by my great grandparents amongst others), became my spiritual home; the discovery of the life-giving authority of the Bible and the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit came in my mid-teens; and, a couple of years later, I discerned a call to ministry.

I first became aware of Headway (MET's predecessor) at Easter People. Rev Phil Snelson – then responsible for student minister care – later visited the college at which I trained and invited us to the student minister conferences. As I reached the end of my training, Rev Paul Smith, then Chair of Headway, invited me to join the executive committee myself.

In the Autumn of 2004, I therefore found myself at Clifft College, surrounded – somewhat intimidatingly – by some of the great luminaries of evangelical Methodism, for my first executive committee meeting. I succeeded Phil Snelson, taking responsibility for student minister care, later becoming responsible for overseeing Theology and Research. In 2013, I became Chair of Methodist Evangelicals Together (renamed from Headway in 2007).

It has been a great privilege to have been involved in such work over these two decades: the student minister conferences; support for the Methodist Church's Year of the Bible; the development of the Digging for Treasure expository preaching conferences (link.metrevive.uk/dft); producing our WHOTWay series of videos for group discussion (whotway.com). One of the most exciting developments in recent years has been the formation of the Association of Wesleyan Evangelicals (AWE), growing out of a longing for greater cooperation among evangelical Methodist organisations and denominations, seeking nothing less than a rekindling of the Wesleyan flame in the motherland of Methodism.

CONTROVERSY AND CHALLENGE

The last decade has not been unmarked by controversy and challenge. We could not have anticipated the magnitude and pace of change on the horizon in terms of the Methodist Church's approach to marriage and



relationships. Throughout these discussions, we have striven to uphold biblical truth with compassion and conviction, seeking to be a voice for good within the broader denominational debates.

While the debates and their consequences have been immensely difficult, we have nevertheless known gentle whispers of providence throughout. We experienced an unprecedented growth in membership following the decisions of the Methodist Conference in 2021, though we have also said farewell to many who have moved to pastures new, feeling they could not in good conscience remain in the denomination.

NEW SEASON, NEW VISION

In the aftermath of the Conference decisions, we discerned a call to a new vision for a new season – placing prayer for revival 'front and centre' in our ministry once again, as set out in the previous edition of RE:VIVE (link.metrevive.uk/Spring24). Thus Methodist Evangelicals Together has become MET:Revive, continuing as a river flowing with the water of three streams – our founding organisations, Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism, the charismatic Dunamis magazine, and the Methodist Revival Fellowship.

All around us, the church and the world are continually changing. Ancient battles have re-emerged, as I explore briefly in the Bible Study within these pages, and we have much to learn from the early church. Like that of Josiah, Edward VI, and indeed, our founding Wesley brothers, our greatest need today is for rediscovery, reform and revival.

Revival is (as ever) our only hope. It was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that brought the church to birth (Acts 2); the Spirit has brought new life throughout history; such is the heritage in which we stand. Come what may, whatever we discover of the Lord in seeking him, will never be lost. As institutions crumble, faithful local churches will remain standing as pillars (Revelation 3:12).

GOING WITH GRATITUDE

This Autumn, I will pass the baton of chairmanship to Rev Chris Briggs. I do so with immense gratitude – for the privilege of serving in this role; for the support of our members; and for the collegiality of numerous executive committee members over the years. I'm especially thankful for the ministry of those with whom I have served most closely: our administrators, first Hazel Harwood and now Marian Izzard, and our Development Workers, Rev Paul Wilson and then Rev Derek Balsdon.

For me, this journey with MET has been marked by significant milestones in my own family life. Six months after becoming Chair in 2013, I married Sarah, who has served at my side throughout, often at great personal cost. We have since welcomed our three daughters into the world, and have had the unique privilege of charting the growth of our family through the pages of MET's magazine, sharing photos of our newly born children over the years.

TO SERVE THE PRESENT AGE

It is an honour to have been appointed as an Ambassador for MET:Revive from January 2025. I look forward to supporting the ongoing work of our movement, particularly through 'on the ground' ministry. Please do join us, if you can, for my final engagement as Chair: our annual Prayer Conference, 15 – 17 November 2024 in Northampton (link.metrevive.uk/gathering), and my first as Ambassador: the MET SW Conference, 24 – 26 January 2025 in Torquay (link.metrevive.uk/METSW25).

The gentle whispers of providence over all these years still ring in my ears. We cannot choose the times in which we live or the challenges we must face; ours is to choose to serve the Lord faithfully, at his call, in the present age. It is an age calling once again for rediscovery, reform and revival. Let's put our hands to the plough with joyful confidence. 'The best of all: God is with us!'

Thank you for our partnership in the gospel over these years. May the Lord bless you richly in all that lies ahead,

REV DR DAVID A. HULL,

The outgoing Chair of MET, is a Methodist Minister, currently serving as Lead Pastor of Freedom Church Bristol, a Free Methodist Church in Kingswood.



A new political landscape?

CIARÁN KELLY



The Christian Institute's Director, Ciarán Kelly, highlights a few things to look out for from the new Labour Government.

The United Kingdom has a new Government. Sir Keir Starmer swept into Downing Street on 5 July on the back of a remarkable 172-seat majority.

As a quick reminder, Labour won 411 of the 650 House of Commons seats. It received 34 per cent of votes cast on a turnout of just under 60 per cent; that's backing from one in five registered voters. (BBC News online, 5 July 2024, see [bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c886pl6ldy9o](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c886pl6ldy9o) as at 19 July 2024).

At the time of writing, Sir Keir has been Prime Minister for just two weeks. Can we really make any sensible predictions about what he may do with such power? Well, yes. There are some clues, in fact more than clues, from the Labour Party manifesto, (did you read the manifestos before voting?), from senior Party figures, from Starmer himself and of course from the King's Speech delivered on 17 July.

After 14 years of Conservative government, the political landscape is set to change in all sorts of ways that we don't have time to go into here. But for Christians longing to see biblical standards upheld in society, there are areas where it's worth paying particular attention.

'CONVERSION THERAPY' BAN

Labour's manifesto promise to introduce 'a full trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices' made it into the King's Speech. While most people associate the words 'conversion therapy' with abhorrent practices that have long been illegal, a 'no loopholes' ban risks going much, much further. In short, it's a direct threat to gospel freedom. The sort of law being proposed is aimed at preaching, prayer, pastoral care and casual conversation that seeks to help people live in accordance with biblical sexual ethics. Some even want to ban calls to repent. This would extend the criminal law into the ordinary work of churches and to parents raising their children.

Importantly, this will be a draft Bill, which means a public consultation and additional scrutiny. Taking that extra time should make clear what the previous Government realised and what all of our legal advice we have received makes very clear – legislating in this highly controversial area threatens the human rights of responsible parents and faithful pastors. (Human Rights Implications of Proposals to Ban 'Conversion Therapy', Jason Coppel KC, April 2021, available at www.the.ci/jasoncoppel as at 19 July 2024)

“
...legislating in this highly controversial area threatens the human rights of responsible parents and faithful pastors
”

GENDER

The manifesto also pledged to 'modernise, simplify, and reform' gender recognition law. Activists will take this as a green light for legal sex change by self-declaration.

More encouragingly, new Health Secretary Wes Streeting wants to make permanent the temporary ban on dispensing puberty blockers to children put in by his predecessor. This reflects serious concerns raised by the landmark Cass Review about the safety of giving these drugs to under-18s. (The Cass Review: Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people, April 2024)

SEX EDUCATION

Before the election, the previous Government published draft guidance on Relationships and Sex Education for schools in England. Helpfully, it stated that gender ideology should not be taught, that sex education must be age-appropriate, and that teachers should not use materials claiming that 'gender is a spectrum'.

It will now be up to Labour to decide whether to implement the guidance. But they are already under huge pressure to ditch it – from the Methodist Church of Great Britain as well as from pro-LGBT groups like Stonewall. (Joint statement on new draft RSHE guidance, RSHE.uk, see [rshe.uk](https://www.rshe.uk) as at 19 July 2024)

SANCTITY OF LIFE

The Government won't bring in its own Bills to introduce assisted suicide or further liberalise abortion, but it does get to decide how much parliamentary time gets given to backbench Bills seeking to do those things. Sir Keir has promised to make time available for both and is crystal clear that he backs assisted suicide. For Christians and others who uphold the value of all human life, this is very worrying.

“

I've just written to new Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy about reining in the Wild West that is gambling in this country.

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GAMBLING

I've just written to new Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy about reining in the Wild West that is gambling in this country. Disappointingly, the King's Speech was silent on it, but the Labour manifesto did commit the Party to 'reducing gambling related harm'.

Gambling has become an all-pervasive part of life in modern Britain but leaves a trail of personal and social chaos in its wake. The gambling industry profits by making false promises of easy money to those who are desperate to escape poverty, and disproportionately exploits those suffering from poor mental health. It's time for urgent, meaningful action. I hope the new Government is up for the challenge.

PRAY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

After reading this you may feel overwhelmed. First, remember that our God is good, faithful and sovereign over all things. Then join with me in praying for the Government, Parliamentarians, the judiciary, and all those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Finally, do what you can to make your Christian voice count. The Christian Institute (christian.org.uk) is here to help you.

CIARÁN KELLY

Ciarán Kelly joined The Christian Institute in 2014 after a successful career in the financial services sector. He became Director in August 2024 following the sudden death of Colin Hart in March 2024. Ciarán is the author of the Bible study materials for the Living Christianity series (livingchristianity.org.uk).



Tribute to Colin Hart 1963-2024

CIARÁN KELLY

On 13 March, the founder and Director of The Christian Institute, Colin Hart, died unexpectedly aged 60.

Mr Hart had devoted his life to encouraging Christians to grasp that following Jesus transforms all aspects of our lives. He wanted to equip believers to live out their faith publicly as well as privately. As a result he helped shape the UK's legal, political and cultural landscape over the last 35 years.

The Supreme Court victories in the famous Ashers 'gay cake' case and over the Scottish Government's infamous 'Named Person' scheme have become embedded in the public consciousness as well as legal textbooks. But they are only two of many milestones.

These days it is taken for granted that a church can employ only youth workers and other staff who actually adhere to the Christian faith. But this is only the case because of work Colin led to oppose the overreach of equality laws.

In 2006 he helped engineer a rare Blair Government defeat over plans for a religious hatred law which could have been used to clamp down on gospel preaching. The final win, by just one vote, was an important reminder of the sovereignty of God. His unfailing trust in that sovereignty was his source of comfort for those battles which were lost. 'Win or lose', he would say, 'it's important to stand up for the truth'.

But he always placed greatest value on his role in teaching other Christians to 'think Christianly'. This priority was set out in the Institute's first 'mission statement': 'The Christian Institute exists to affirm the universal Lordship of Christ, to challenge humanism, pluralism, and other ideologies, to proclaim biblical truth as relevant to every area of life, and to equip Christians for action.' It is a priority to which, under God, the Institute remains committed today.

To find out more about the work of the Christian Institute, visit christian.org.uk.



PRAYER FOCUS

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: A recognition of the dangers posed by a complete ban on conversion therapy and the 'no loopholes risk'; Protection of children and teenagers from sexual distortions, at least until they are old enough to understand the implications; for the Cass review to be up held; the rights of Christian parents to teach Biblical truth; the reigning in of the excesses of gambolling; For God to reign supreme over all legislation. (Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

CHURCH ISSUES: MET: David Hull as he prepares to step down and Chris Briggs as he prepares to take over as chair in November; David as he moves into the new role as MET's Ambassador in the new year, reaching out to grass roots Methodism; the trustees and executive; wisdom and discernment for the future work God is calling us to. (Colossians 1:9-11; Hebrews 13:20-21).

NATIONAL ISSUES: Government: the newly elected Prime Minister, Sir Kier Starmer and all members of Parliament; the formulation of godly policies; a return of integrity and trust amongst all

politicians; courage for Christian MP's to speak out against any injustices and to stand up for Christian values; a return to our Christian roots. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2; Philippians 2:1-5).

NHS & SOCIAL CARE: Adequate funding to deal with the back log of those awaiting treatment and operations, acerbated by strikes; fair pay and working conditions for all who work in the organisation; understanding and patience on the part of the public towards doctors and nurses; better communication between the various departments - children's services, social services & mental health; care packages for the vulnerable. (2 Samuel 22: 31-33; Isaiah 40:31).

WORLD ISSUES: Persecuted church: Islamic controlled countries; dictatorships and oppressive regimes; justice and upholding of basic human rights; exposure of discrimination and inequalities; strength and resilience for those suffering; protection for church families and for their needs to be met; persecutors to have an encounter with the Holy Spirit. (1 Peter 5: 6-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5).

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Rossie Henderson-Begg

Welcome to Rossie's artistic world, where the beauty of the ocean and abstract expression converge. I didn't realise what a close affinity I had with the ocean until I couldn't stop painting it! I paint how the ocean feels rather than only what it looks like. The ocean is so full of wonder, mystery, depth, diversity, unity, beauty, power, and serenity. To me this also speaks of who God is, and who we are as people. I believe each person is beautiful, deep, significant, and worthy of love and belonging.

I have always loved painting, but after going through some really difficult circumstances a few years ago, I found talking through issues wasn't enough, and somehow painting unlocked a deeper part of me to be able to connect with God, heal, and move on. My faith journey has helped me discover a lot about who I am created to be and I feel especially connected to these truths when I paint.

Using paint pouring techniques, I create intricate patterns and textures, allowing the paint to flow naturally and form unique shapes. Each piece evolves organically, capturing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the sea. I like to manipulate the paint by tilting the canvas and using heat and layering, then adding elements such as gold leaf, ink, pen or additional paint using palette knives and brushes.

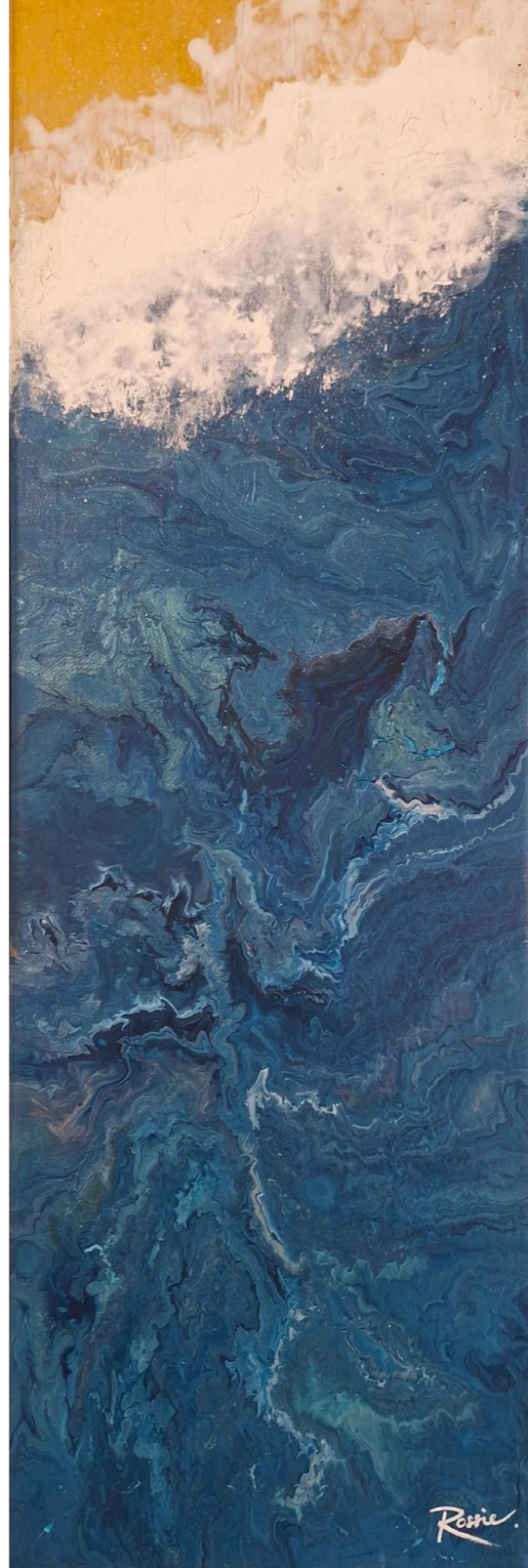
My mission is to uplift and inspire through my art, offering a respite from life's stresses. I create pieces that transport you to a place of beauty and wonder, allowing your spirit to soar and imagination to roam freely. The world has so much pain and darkness, but is also overflowing with beauty and light, and my dream is to bring this beauty into as many lives as I can through my oceanic artwork.

My images appear on these two pages and 'Beneath the Coral Waves' also features on the front cover.

Further images can be found below:

- Website: <https://rossiehb.art>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rossiehb.art>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rossiehb>

Rossie felt led to paint in a professional capacity in 2022. Prior to that she worked with Youth With A Mission, a global Christian missions organisation. She lives in Bristol with her husband and 3 children and currently belongs to a local Vineyard church in the city.



Left: Intricate Shallows

Above Left: Positive Space | Above Right: Beneath The Coral Waves

Below: You Are Loved





Tribute to Roger Forster

HENRY GEORGE

Henry George, leader of Ichthus Christian Fellowship, pays tribute to Roger Forster who died in January, peacefully in his home, at the age of 90. The founder of Ichthus Christian Fellowship, Roger was widely considered to be one of the most prominent figures in the UK evangelical church.

The last six months have been a time of grief, loss, reflection and celebration. Roger's life is truly an inspiration to us all in Ichthus, and his ongoing impact is immeasurable. One of the most significant things I heard him teach was:

“The history of God's great work in the earth has left a 'great cloud of witnesses' (Hebrews 12:1-2) – totally committed believers whose lives were sold out to God and who lived by faith in his promises. Because their eyes were fixed on Jesus they would continually say 'What would Jesus do, say or feel?' and seek to apply that to themselves in their own circumstances. Such believers have invariably suffered for their faith and obedience to him. We call them 'radicals' because they keep returning to the roots of biblical church like we see in the book of Acts (Latin: *radices*)”.

These words were my introduction to church history when I dived into Ichthus leadership training 18 years ago with Roger Forster. He was a passionate, inspirational and educated leader and teacher. He would often joke that his love for church history grew stronger as he became part of that history himself with his increasing age!

Since Roger went to be with the Lord in January 2024, there has been an enormous outpouring of love, gratitude, appreciation and respect from every corner of the UK church. Countless churches, groups and individuals around the world have praised him as a Christian leader who fervently pursued Christ-centred living, teaching and ecclesiology. Not only did he lead by example in his own walk with Jesus, but he was also incredibly fruitful, seeing thousands of people find salvation in Jesus, and becoming true disciples through the transformational work of the Holy Spirit. His training has released radical Jesus-followers, kingdom ambassadors and humble leaders in the UK and world-wide church. All this re-enforces his own place in the radical church history stream of the UK Church.

Roger became a Christian as a student at Cambridge, where he graduated in Maths and Theology. After National Service in the Royal Air Force, Roger worked as an itinerant evangelist until 1974, when he and his wife Faith first gathered a group of fourteen in their home to begin Ichthus Christian Fellowship. The vision was simple – to be a church where believers in Christ became disciples of Christ, right to the very fullness (Ephesians 4:13), living like the book of Acts. Their home was open to people who needed to stay and be discipled into the fullness of freedom in Jesus. Roger's powerful kingdom preaching, his

Relational Arminianism and passion to reach all people of all nationalities meant that this house church steadily grew to become a thriving body of multiple congregations meeting in schools and community centres around London. In the 1980s a leadership training programme was set up which has trained hundreds for ministry. Many have taken Ichthus vision and theology around the world (Lebanon, Nepal, India, Myanmar and more) or into different denominations across the UK. Roger always celebrated releasing people into other ministries, although it was very painful when a number of the London congregations left the movement altogether around twenty years ago. As the number of those receiving from Roger's apostolic leadership grew, many churches became linked to Ichthus and the Revive summer camp was set up for the whole Ichthus family to gather and worship Jesus at Ashburnham Place every August.

Public worship, prayer and preaching are definitive in Ichthus life, making heroes of the Moravian movement, the Wesleys and the Salvation Army as a strong and connected stream of radical church life. Worship leader Graham Kendrick joined Ichthus in the mid-1980s and worked closely with Roger as the 'John and Charles' of Ichthus. As Roger made it his mission to explore and preach from every part of the scriptures, Graham's job was to put the heart, vision and teaching into song. Roger worked alongside movements like YWAM and Pioneer to launch the phenomenon 'March for Jesus' which spread worldwide at the end of the twentieth century. Street Pastors founder Les Isaac also worked as an Ichthus congregation leader in South London around this time. Pete Greig credits his time with Roger in Ichthus as the place where he first heard of the Moravian 100-year prayer meeting which impacted his own view of prayer and eventually led to him starting the 24-7 Prayer movement. The Moravian prayer fuelled the powerful missions push that impacted our beloved John Wesley with the 'strange warming of his heart'.

For me, sharing in church life close to Roger gave me confidence and stability that I was also part of that 'radical' church stream which pursues holiness and authenticity as a Christian in the twenty-first century. Roger's life verse of Philippians 3:12b-14 captures this well: 'I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.'

In October 2021, Roger and Faith handed over leadership of the movement to a team of seven leaders, which I lead. During the season of transition, we have been deeply encouraged at the unity of the Spirit across the movement, and the new salvations we have welcomed through doing 'Church on the Streets', toddler groups and homeless outreach. God has wonderfully enabled us to relaunch RadNet, our signature leadership training course, and Ichthus workers continue to plant new churches in the Middle East and South Asia.

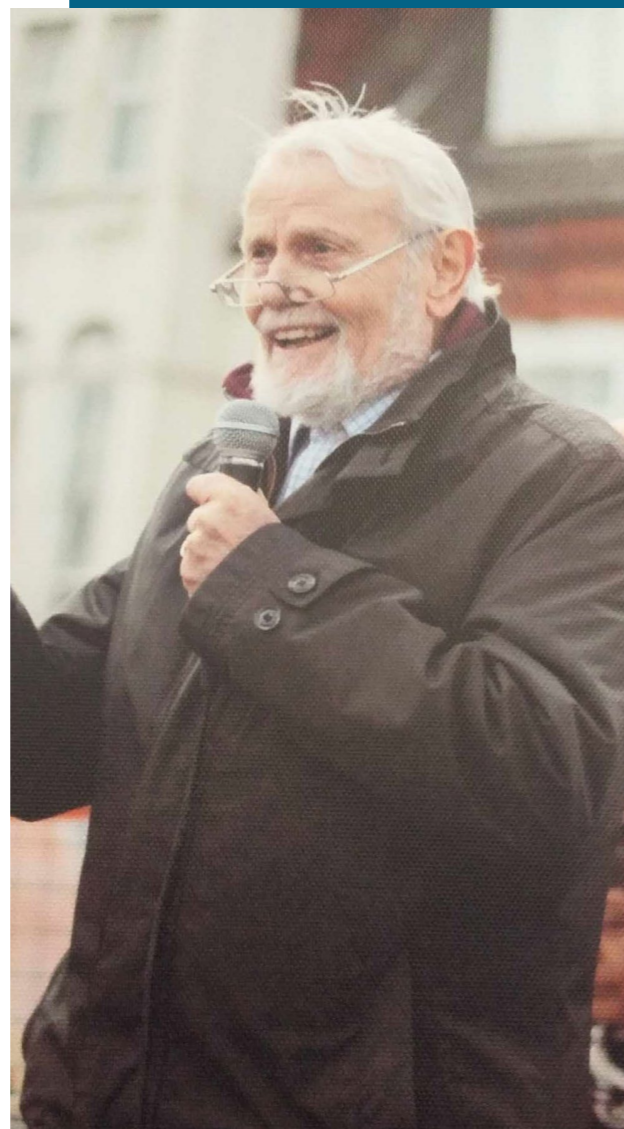
It is amazing that Roger lived into 2024, the fiftieth Jubilee year of Ichthus. This milestone calls us to pray for much more of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' continuing 'Year of the Lord' (Luke 4). Roger's death inspires us to see the gospel of Words (good news to the poor), Works (binding up broken hearts) and Wonders (release for the captives) go into all the world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matt 24:14).

HENRY GEORGE

Henry George leads the Ichthus Ministry Team and heads up the Ichthus Link Church ministry around the UK.

Henry has been a Congregation Leader of Belvedere and Lee Green, and also been involved in Church Planting in Bangkok.

Henry is passionate about Relational Theology 'Worship on the Streets' and reaching those on the margins of society with the gospel.



PRAYER FOCUS

ICHTHUS: Give thanks for the life and work of Roger Foster and the legacy he has left. Pray for wisdom and discernment for the leadership of Ichthus going forward; that the ethos of Ichthus to grow across the nation and the world; unity in the Holy Spirit; the continued reaching out to believers everywhere, and from all walks of life. (Ephesians 4:11-13; Matthew 28:19).

Church Issues:

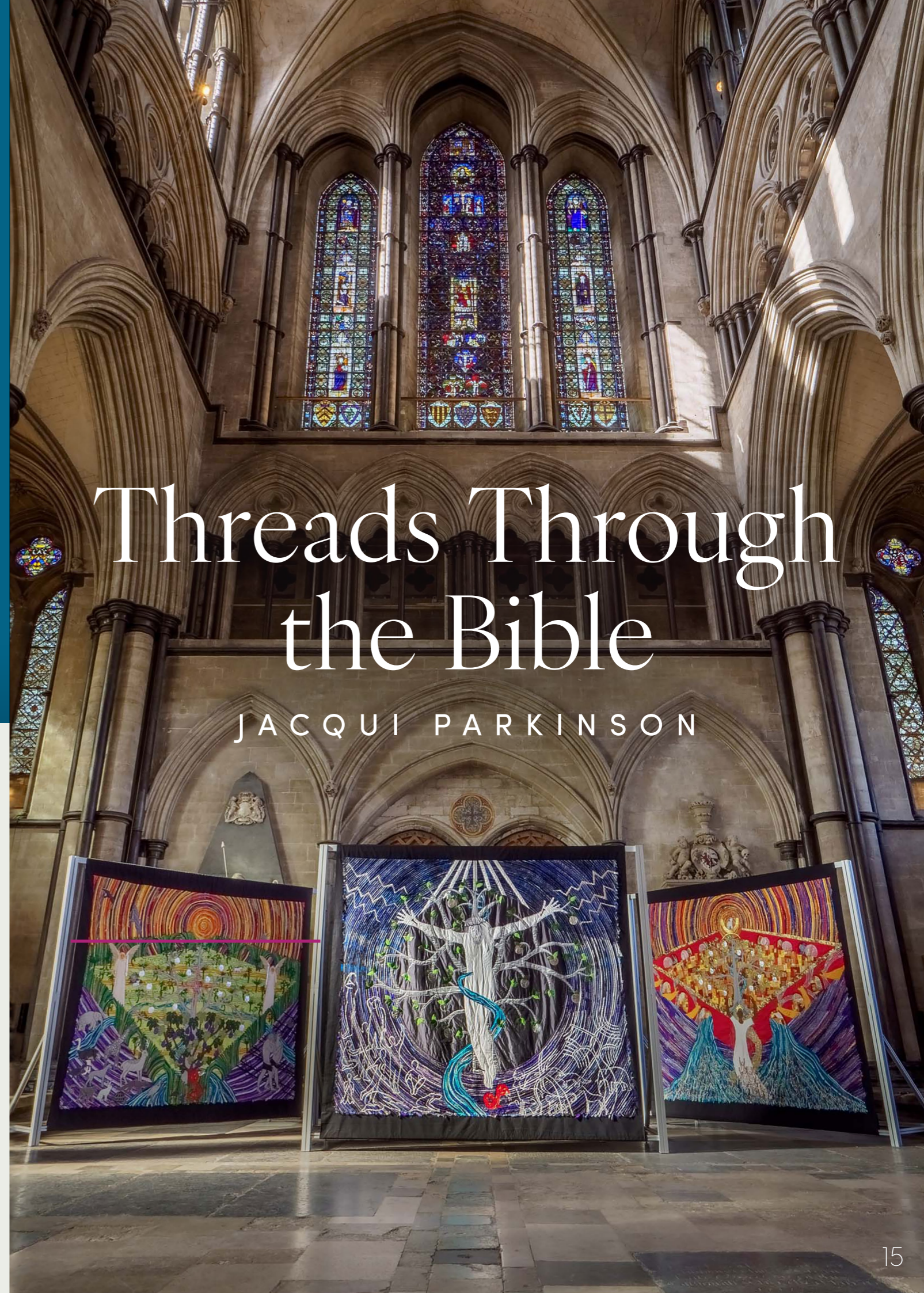
THE METHODIST CHURCH: The newly elected President and Vice President of Conference, Rev Helen Cameron and Mrs Carolyn Godfrey as they take up office; the Secretary of Conference, Jonathan Hustler; all those in positions of leadership; children and young people to receive biblically based teaching; youth and children's workers. (Acts 20: 28; Proverbs 3:1-6).

NATIONAL ISSUES: Gangs, knife crime and County Lines: youngsters entangled in gang culture; knife crime

and drug abuse; County Lines; those reaching out to young people, giving positivity and purpose, especially Christian outreach workers; for the Christian message of hope to reach all young people. (Psalm 145:17-20; Psalm 107:13-16).

CHRISTIANS IN THE WORKPLACE: Those struggling to stand up for Christian values in workplaces, especially in media and education; for their integrity to shine out; courage and boldness to speak out against injustices; protection against false accusations and lies. (2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 6:10-12 & 18).

WORLD ISSUES: War Torn Areas: For de-escalation of the conflicts in Russia/Ukraine, Israel/Gaza, Sudan; wisdom for the peace makers; those in refugee camps; understanding amongst world leaders and the political will to tackle the situations; adequate aid and resources. (Psalm 121; Psalm 55:22).



Threads Through the Bible

JACQUI PARKINSON

Textile artist Jacqui Parkinson shares her story of creativity through the creation of 'The Big Story' from Creation to Revelation.

ALL CREATIVE PEOPLE

'I'm not creative!' So many people say that to me. But I believe, just as we're made in God's image, each and every one of us has a creative spark.

Creative endeavours, for those involved and those on the receiving end, can be inspirational. I think creativity's essential for everyone to live well together, and it can take so many interesting forms: baking is great for those cooking and a blessing to those being fed. Time spent gardening and flower arranging can lift the spirt, and provide others with space and reflection. Drama, film, dance and mime, can extend personal boundaries and delight audiences. Hours of fun can be enjoyed while gaining the necessary skills for different crafts, and engaging others in the practice. If we delight in composing, playing, or listening to music, it can inspire us to live imaginatively, and in singing with others we can discover collectively the joy of blended voices. Then writing books and novels, which stimulate new ideas and thoughts, can open up potential new worlds to hundreds of people.

In our leisure, work, and relationships, we can all aim to be creative. We can also explore the 'arts' as part of our lives. They can please and delight us, interest and intrigue us, challenge and, maybe, even alarm us, leaving us all changed.

MY CREATIVE JOURNEY

My first 'proper job' was teaching theatre studies at a secondary school where I realised the value of educational drama, allowing young people to express themselves through their voices and bodies, and also enabling them to work together as one group to find resolutions in difficult situations. Then, running the Lantern Arts Centre in south London, it was wonderful to see children and adults flourish as they gained new skills and confidence, while working towards performances.

After many years, I turned from drama to stitching, took a degree in Embroidered Textiles, and began a



more solitary creative endeavour. Sometimes we're fortunate enough to be given a moment that, in retrospect, we can see was life changing. Sometimes we're fortunate enough to have several. For me, one such moment was seeing the huge paintings of Marc Chagall in Vence, in France. As I looked at them, I thought 'I want to do large scale, Bible based, work like that.'

My series of relatively small exhibitions, commissioned by the Deo Gloria Trust, had been shown, and enjoyed by many, in lots of cathedrals but I wanted to bring more drama into my stitching. The larger exhibitions I now work on are comparable to set designs and, like theatre plays, they carry a story. My hope is they'll have a greater impact on visitors and will inspire, delight, intrigue, challenge - and even alarm some viewers. My hope is that they will leave us all changed.

FOLLOWING IN A TRADITION

While there's a long tradition of women stitching ecclesiastical embroideries for the church, there's a stronger relationship, for me and my work, with stained glass windows, which I've always found engaging. Although the materials used are very different, the bright coloured glass, captured in-between black lead lines, connects with my textiles. Originally, most stained glass church windows were created to inspire the illiterate with stories from the Bible, in a language that everyone could understand. My aim is also to make easily accessible art for those who might not know the Bible stories.

LIFE-LONG INSPIRATION

My inspiration always comes from the Bible, which I love. When I decided to give my life to Jesus as a teenager, I was given a New Testament which I scribbled all over with questions, associated thoughts, concepts I found difficult, and ideas that inspired me.

For my first large scale project, I decided to tackle the book of Revelation because it's a picture book and I've always enjoyed the idea that the Bible ends with a story and a vision rather than a theological treatise. I didn't realise the minefield I was entering into! Studying the various views on John's visions was both challenging and illuminating but finally I accepted the fact that the Bible ends with a lot of mystery - which is appropriate!

REVELATION

Threads through Revelation, comprises fourteen huge panels, took three years to complete and toured fourteen cathedrals from 2016 to 2018. The book of Revelation isn't exactly high on most people's reading list, yet about half a million visitors engaged with it. I thought this exhibition was going to be the one and only exhibition but, having looked at the end of what I like to call 'The Big Story', I began to think about the beginning of the story in Genesis - another 'picture book'. A little daunting, because I'd never stitched an animal - except for the four mystical creatures around the throne room of God in Revelation - but it's always good to learn something new.



CREATION

Threads through Creation took another three years' work with twelve huge panels re-imagining the creation story. I wanted to start this exhibition with the first words in the Bible, 'In the beginning God ...'. While I think science has a lot of important things to say about the world we live in, I wanted to make it clear that the Bible's emphasis is on a Creator God, who is one but also three, Father - Jesus - Holy Spirit. This panel took ages to design. Originally, I used three circles from a Venn diagram - each of the circles having their 'own space', overlapping in pairs, and then with a focal point together at the centre. But, no matter how I placed the design down, there was always one circle at the top or at the bottom and I wanted to show the Trinity as 'equal'. Each one more than happy to step back or step forward as required. Eventually, I used a spiral for my design which isn't totally satisfactory because, while it never ends, it does have a beginning. It's good enough. The spiral's split into three sections to represent the Trinity and on top of the spiral, stitched in black thread, are outlines of images following the six 'days' of creation. In the beginning just God - everything created, birthed, from inside the Creator.

The creation story is an easily approachable subject for those of all ages, packed with recognisable creatures of all shapes and sizes, and important messages of caring for the world in which we live. The bright, action packed, panels have a big impact on visitors, and thousands of schoolchildren have been involved in related workshops. It'll finish its tour of twenty one cathedrals and great churches at the end of 2024. It's been a real blessing and utter delight to know how many people have been touched by it in so many different ways.

CROSS

Threads through the Cross was essential to complete the Big Story. Another dramatic sequence in fabric connecting the 'all is good' at the start of the story - with the 'all is not good' of the middle - finally to the 'all is good again' at the end of the story. The life and death of Jesus is crucial for the story, and our lives, to make sense.

So I've spent the past two years working on eighteen huge panels covering scenes from the life of Jesus: starting with the birth of Jesus through to his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension - and finally, the day of Pentecost. I've placed together some particular images in pairs to encourage viewers to see the connections, such as the baptism and temptation of Jesus, the ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and the



overthrow of the Temple tables, the woman washing the feet of Jesus and Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.

One of the major challenges of Threads through the Cross has been depicting people. I'd only previously worked with a few figures like Adam and Eve but on the Last Supper panel there are thirteen figures. Then, Jesus is on every panel - except for the empty tomb! But I persevered, and gradually worked out ways that produced a good enough result within the constraints of fabric and stitch. One vital thing has been to go to life classes and, while drawing with a pencil, paying attention to details of human anatomy. I then based the facial features on icons with large, distinctive eyes. You can't be

precise with fabric, but hopefully I've achieved a certain degree of believable accuracy with the cronky figures.

REVELATION - CREATION - CROSS - TOURING TOGETHER

Starting at Liverpool Cathedral in January 2025, we'll be touring Threads through the Bible, all 44 huge panels starting in Genesis, through the Gospels, to Revelation. My passion is to express the story of the Bible, from the start to the end of the Big Story. And there are lots of images that resonate through the whole sequence of panels and connect the three exhibitions: such as the lamb that leaves the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve is seen again at the birth of Jesus. I'm hoping that Threads through the Bible will attract thousands of people to enjoy the story and be moved by it. Perhaps you, with friends, will be some of them!



JACQUI PARKINSON

Jacqui was born in Manchester. Married to Rob Frost for 32 years they had two sons, Andy and Chris. Having lived most of her life in south London Jacqui now lives in Devon with her second husband Andrew.

PRAYER FOCUS

CREATIVITY: Give thanks for God's gift of creativity of all kinds; time and space in busy lives to explore hidden and latent gifts of creativity; people's eyes to be opened to the endless possibilities of creative expression to share the Gospel message in visual and accessible ways, especially to those who have difficulty in relating to the written word and verbal communication. (Exodus 31:1-6; Psalm 149:3).

CHURCH ISSUES: Local Churches: To become increasingly aware of the need to find a greater depth of faith; an urgency to come to God in prayer seeking his will for individual churches, a re-kindling of the work of the Holy Spirit and empowerment and acceptance in the use of the gifts of the Spirit. (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

NATIONAL ISSUES: Social Reform: Creative solutions to deal with the rising crisis in mental health services; the prison system and all who work in it -

especially chaplains & James Timpson, minister in charge of prisons; the criminal justice system; integrity and uprightness of all serving in the police force. (Romans 15:1-2; Proverbs 10:12).

TERRORISM: Perpetrators of terror to encounter God; victims to find the peace of the Lord; change to regimes across the world encouraging acts of terror; cyber-attacks and international espionage. (Psalm 34:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

WORLD ISSUES: Planet in Crisis: Repentance for our abuse of the planet - our ravaging of its resources, destruction of eco-systems, pollution of the land and sea; our 'throw away' society especially in the west and a greater commitment to re-cycling & up-cycling; worldwide commitment to reduce carbon emissions; the pioneering of new technologies to reduce emissions and the political will to make it happen (Isaiah 24:4-6; Jeremiah 12:4).

Tributes To William 'Doc' (Bill) Davies

1932-2024



ASHLEY COOPER

The recent funeral service for Revd Dr Bill Davies, a former Principal of Cliff College, reminded us of a life dedicated to ministry and education, leaving a legacy far beyond the College's walls.

As I sit and reflect on the life and ministry of 'Doc' from the very chair and office he inhabited for so long, I am reminded of sacrifice and service that was unwavering and dedicated to the glory of God.

After his tenure as Superintendent Minister at Bradford Methodist Mission, in 1983, Bill took on the role of Principal at Cliff College, where his leadership brought significant developments, including the construction of new facilities and the introduction of the Celebration Weekend. Known affectionately as "Doc," he was a versatile educator, with a focus on the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. His influence extended through his writing, including the widely circulated magazine *Dunamis* and several books.

Bill's impact continued well into his retirement, as he remained a beloved preacher and teacher. He maintained his relationship with College attending his final Festival in 2023 where he met with many and encouraged all those he spoke to. We honour his memory, confident that his legacy will continue to inspire. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Rev Ashley Cooper, Principal, Cliff College

TIM WOOLLEY

It is hard to think of any one more influential on charismatic Methodism than Bill Davies. As Principal of Cliff College 1983-1994 and President of the Conference in 1987 Bill expressed his deep love for the Lord

through irenic leadership, powerful preaching and sound scholarship: his book *Spirit without Measure* (1996), along with his many contributions to *Dunamis* magazine were so influential on me and many other charismatic Methodists seeking sound theology to make sense of our experiences. Importantly Bill was also able to gain a hearing in wider charismatic circles for the faithful spirit-filled Wesleyan theology from which Pentecostalism emerged, which British Methodism seems still sadly parched of today.

My very first encounter with Bill was at the beginning of Celebration weekend where every year he would lead with gusto the opening hymn, 'Come, we that love the Lord' by Issac Watts: "We're marching to Zion, Beautiful, beautiful Zion; We're marching upward to Zion, The beautiful city of God".

God bless you Bill, you've arrived there now.

Rev Dr Tim Woolley is Tutor and Module Lead for Church Army in the Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership.

BRIAN HOARE

The charismatic movement in the 1960s and the growth of new 'house churches' had considerable influence in Methodism, and it was Bill Davies who emerged as a stabilising influence and advocate, establishing with others in 1972 a new movement called *Dunamis* offering fellowship and support for charismatic Methodists. Bill worked closely with fellow Methodist ministers John Trevena and Ross Peart in the leadership of *Dunamis*, together editing and distributing the magazine and organising its conferences.

At this time Bill was a sector minister at Padgate College of Higher Education, but subsequent appointments as

Superintendent of the Bradford Mission and Principal of Cliff College brought greater prominence in Methodism and widened his influence throughout the denomination.

Bill's scholarship and wisdom is evidenced by some of his publications: *Rocking the boat: the challenge of the house church*; *Spirit without measure: Charismatic faith and practice*; and *the Charismatic movement and Methodism*. All are still worth reading.

Rev Brian Hoare is a retired Methodist minister. He was been a former New Testament tutor at Cliff College.

RON ABBOTT

We mourn the loss of Bill from his place as Principal of Cliff College, former President of Conference and a leading light in the charismatic movement. He came to the college in 1983 to replace Rev Dr Arthur Skevington Wood who had built up the resources of the college in many ways.

Bill arrived from a successful ministry at Eastbrook Hall, Bradford and several years teaching at Padgate College of Education. He was ideally placed to move the college forward in its calling with the motto 'Christ for all; all for Christ'.

He brought to the college dynamic preaching as well as pastoral care. With more resources and additional tutorial staff, outreach from the college was able to expand to cover more ground in spreading the gospel message to more Methodist chapels around the country. Large numbers came to the anniversary weekend in May and the Bible teaching week in July, camping facilities were expanded to cope with numbers. They were golden years for the college. Each year the college was full of students. What mattered at an applicant's interview was not their academic standards but their experience of Christ.

Bill was always an encourager inspiring us to preach, teach and care for the students. For those years I want to apply those words for such a time as this, the college was blessed.

Ron Abbott is a former secretary of the Methodist Revival Fellowship and former Cliff College Tutor.

MARTIN WELLINGS

Rev Dr William R. Davies, who died on 23 June, was a distinguished evangelical scholar and church leader. Born in Blackpool in 1932, Bill Davies was converted at a beach mission and trained for the Methodist ministry at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester. After eleven

years in circuit work, he moved into the education sector, lecturing in Religious Studies at Padgate College of Higher Education, Warrington, before taking up the superintendency of the Bradford Mission (Eastbrook Hall) in 1979. He was Principal of Cliff College, 1983-94, and was President of the Methodist Conference in 1987-88. From 1972 Bill was co-editor of *Dunamis* magazine, and he wrote widely on charismatic renewal and spiritual gifts. In a profile for Bill's Presidential year, Donald English ascribed the positive reception of the renewal movement in Methodism in large measure to Bill's spiritual wisdom, pastoral sensitivity, and trusted leadership. We give thanks to God for a fine scholar, a fervent evangelist, and a faithful exponent of the best traditions of evangelical Methodism.

Rev Dr Martin Wellings is Superintendent of the Barnet & Queensbury Circuit, and editor of the online Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland.



Bill with his first wife, Barbara

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CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:

Jacqui Parkinson | Textile artist and creator of exhibitions: Threads Through Creation, Threads Through Revelation and currently working on Threads Through the Cross

David Hull | Chair of Methodist Evangelicals Together and Lead Pastor of Freedom Church, Bristol

Chris Briggs | Chair-elect of Methodist Evangelicals Together and District Mission Enabler of The Methodist Church Nottingham and Derby District

The weekend will also include a farewell service for David Hull as he concludes his time as Chair of MET.

Book online at metrevive.uk/gathering or complete the form enclosed.

Revival

STEVE UPPAL

Looking back to revivals of the past, Steve Uppal calls us, in our own day, to join in the anthem of Revival.



May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us – so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

PSALM 67:1-7

Psalm 67 is not merely a poetic scripture but a prophetic cry. The psalmist captures God's heart, revealing a deep yearning for every nation, tribe, and tongue to know and worship him. This plea for divine blessing is devoid of self-promotion or self-preservation; it seeks only the glory of God. Our prayer is that believers' hearts will resonate with the anthem of Psalm 67.

In contrast, many contemporary books, sermons, and conversations focus on personal survival, prosperity, and comfort, often neglecting the nations and the glory of God. This, however, is changing. An awakening has begun.

PAST REVIVAL

Throughout human history, the tendency of the human heart to drift from its Maker is evident. From Adam and Eve in the garden to the Israelites in the wilderness, societies that forget God and become self-sufficient invariably end in brokenness and pain. Yet, in his great compassion, God does not forget his people. He uses our brokenness to stir up desperation. Desperate people, gripped by a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo, become gateways for his kingdom on earth. These divine interruptions in our fragmented world are what we call 'revival.'

The pattern of rebellion followed by repentance is clear throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the story of the Jewish people. Psalms 106 and 107 capture the cycle of backsliding and turning back to the Lord:

But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold. In the desert, they gave in to their craving; in the wilderness, they put God to the test. (Psalm 106:13-14)

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. (Psalm 107:19-20)

We must not doubt God's ability to move based on the sinful condition of our world or the brokenness of our societies. These realities should lead us to come to the Father in prayer and repentance. As people turn back to the Lord, he always turns to them. Indeed, some of the greatest moves of God have broken out amidst profound darkness in society. This truth gives us tremendous hope that, in these unprecedented, challenging times, a heavenly story is unfolding.

While theological definitions of 'revival' are helpful, immersing ourselves in historic revival accounts is far more enriching and energising. Consider the Hawaiian Revival of 1835, where nearly the whole population



“Revival is not just about emotional experiences or increased church attendance; it is about a profound transformation of individuals and societies.”

turned out to hear the gospel preached, or the Welsh Revival of 1904, where all of Wales was aflame. The Second Great Awakening, sparked by Charles Finney (theologian and anti-slave activist), crying out to God in the woods, and the Hebrides Revival of 1949, where churches were packed and sinners lined the streets to repent, also stand out. These stories of mass conversions, societal transformation, and great spiritual renewal reveal divine moments in history that few in our generation have witnessed. The Holy Spirit uses such stories to stir faith and awaken hearts to the fact that the Lord can do it again. Nothing else can meet the needs of our world apart from a genuine Holy Spirit revival that brings transformation to our communities.

THE HEART OF REVIVAL

Revival is not just about emotional experiences or increased church attendance; it is about a profound transformation of individuals and societies. True revival leads to deep repentance, a turning away from sin, and a turning towards God. It results in a renewed passion for holiness, a zeal for evangelism, and a commitment to social justice. Revival reorients our priorities, aligning them with God's kingdom purposes.

Historically, revival has been marked by several key characteristics. First, there is a pervasive sense of God's presence. People are acutely aware of God's holiness and their own sinfulness. This awareness leads to deep

conviction and repentance. Second, there is a powerful move of the Holy Spirit, resulting in signs and wonders, healings, and miracles. Third, there is a hunger for God's word. People flock to hear the preaching of the gospel, and there is a renewed interest in prayer and personal devotion.

Revival also leads to significant societal change. During the Welsh Revival, crime rates dropped, and pubs closed due to lack of business. In the Hebrides Revival, entire communities were transformed as people turned to God. Such changes are not just the result of human effort but are the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work.

PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

For revival to occur, there must be a recognition of our need for God. This recognition often comes through a sense of desperation and holy dissatisfaction with the status quo. We must acknowledge our own spiritual bankruptcy and our inability to bring about change through our own efforts. This humility and dependence on God are the foundation for revival.

Prayer is central to revival. Historically, every major revival has been preceded by fervent, persistent prayer. We must cry out to God for his intervention, acknowledging that without him, we can do nothing. Prayer aligns our hearts with God's purposes and prepares the way for his Spirit to move.

Repentance is also crucial. We must turn away from sin and turn towards God. This involves not only confessing our sins but also forsaking them. It requires a commitment to live a holy life, set apart for God's purposes. Repentance prepares our hearts to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Unity among believers is another key factor in revival. Jesus prayed for his followers to be one, just as he and the Father are one. When believers are united in love and purpose, it creates an environment where the Holy Spirit can move powerfully. Division and strife hinder the work of God, but unity and love among believers pave the way for revival.

THE PROMISE OF REVIVAL

God has promised that if his people, who are called by his name, will humble themselves, pray, seek his face, and turn from their wicked ways, he will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14). This promise gives us hope and assurance that revival is possible.

We must hold fast to this promise, believing that God can and will move in our generation. As we look back at past revivals, we see a God who is faithful to his word, who delights in showing mercy, and who longs to pour

out his Spirit on all flesh. This same God is at work today, and he desires to bring revival to our churches, communities, and nations.

Revival is not something we can manufacture or manipulate; it is a sovereign work of God. However, we can position ourselves to receive it by praying, repenting, and uniting in love and purpose. As we do so, we can trust that God will be gracious to us, bless us, and make his face shine upon us, so that his ways may be known on earth, and his salvation among all nations.

In conclusion, let us cry out for revival, not for our own sake, but for the glory of God and the salvation of the nations. Let us pray that the hearts of believers will beat with the anthem of Psalm 67, and that we will see a transforming revival in our generation. May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.



Rev Steve Uppal is the Senior Leader of the All Nations Movement which is a growing family of churches and ministries across the UK and beyond. Together with his wife Esther, Steve leads All Nations Church, Wolverhampton.

PRAYER FOCUS

REVIVAL: A recognition across the nation of our need for God; Acknowledgement of our own inability to bring about change; repentance of our rejection of Godly values; a passion to seek holiness in individuals, the church and across the nation; a crying out for God's intervention in our broken society and a transformation of every aspect of life across our land. (Matthew 6:33; James 4:7-10).

CHURCH ISSUES: Repentance: An acknowledgement across the Connexion of the move away from Biblical holiness; the admission of sin and the need for repentance; denial of the Holy Spirit's power; going our own way rather than seeking God's vision for the church. (James 4:4-10; Proverbs 3: 5-7).

NATIONAL ISSUES: Immigration: Minister in Charge of Immigration, Yvette Cooper; wisdom on the way forward; good working relations with European nations to tackle the issue; those fleeing persecution in

their own countries; the exploitation of those crossing the channel in small boats; bringing to justice of the criminal gangs perpetrating the exploitation and suffering of vulnerable people. (Leviticus 19:33-34; Zechariah 7:9-10).

ANTI-SEMITISM: Protection of relationships between Muslims and Jews in Britain; protection for the Jewish population in Britain; those intent upon violence towards Jews to find the peace of the Lord; Ephraim Mirvis Chief UK Rabbi, Tzipi Hotovely Israeli Ambassador to UK, Zara Muhammad leader of British Muslim Council. (Romans 10:12-13; Acts 10:34-35)

WORLD ISSUES: American Elections: For unity amongst the people and for campaigning to be peaceful; an end to the vitriolic language between the parties; for the candidates, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris to have respect for each other; God's outcome. (Romans 14:19; Hebrews 12:14-15)



Bible Study

A COLOSSAL CHALLENGE: DO NOT BE DECEIVED!

REV DR DAVID A. HULL

A whole-book overview of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Read it as an article, or use it section by section for personal study or group discussion. Please have the biblical text open for reference as you read; this article is based on the NIV UK.

CHAPTER 1: FRUITFULNESS

As I read Paul's letter to the Colossians, I imagine eavesdropping on a pastor's prayer meeting in a prison cell. Paul had not visited Colossae nor met the Christians there. It was Epaphras who shared the good news of Jesus with them (1:7). Anxious that Paul, now imprisoned, should hear of this gospel growth, Epaphras seems to have travelled to Rome to share the news in person.

Both men were devoted to prayer, as is evident throughout Paul's letters and his description in this letter of Epaphras 'always wrestling in prayer for you' (4:12). It is not difficult,

therefore, to imagine them praying together as the news was shared.

Paul opens with the customary greetings (1:1-2) before recording his prayers for these new Christians in Colossae. He gives thanks for their faith, hope, and love (1:3-5, echoing 1 Corinthians 13:13), and longs for them to 'live a life worthy of the Lord' (1:10).

In my imagined prayer meeting, they soon turn to praise. Paul includes the words of one of the most ancient hymns of Christian faith, describing the supreme greatness of Christ (1:15-20). Whether Paul wrote the words himself, or quoted others, he

enables us to join the worship of the earliest Christians.

Paul concludes this opening chapter by turning from prayer and praise to proclamation (1:25-28). This is the reason for his suffering (1:24) and motivates his longing to 'present everyone fully mature' (1:28), which is only possible through the power of Christ (1:29) – a longing that is the central concern of this letter.

SELAH: PAUSE AND PONDER

The Hebrew word 'Selah', commonly found in the Psalms, may be an invitation to pause and ponder. In that spirit, Selah interludes are included in this study.

🔥 *'We have not stopped praying for you' (1:9). How consistently do you pray for fellow believers? Use Paul's prayer here to guide you in praying for yourself and others. Aim for consistency and persistence!*

🔥 *Reflect on the fruitfulness of the gospel (1:6, 10). Take comfort in the innate life force of its seed and celebrate its fruitfulness in your own life; pray for its growth around you.*

🔥 *Identify and meditate on each of the descriptions of Christ in 1:15-20, and worship him!*

CHAPTER 2: FULLNESS

Paul reiterates his goal of Christian maturity (2:2, see also 1:28) and states his purpose in writing to the Colossians: 'so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments' (2:4). He urges them not to depart from the gospel (2:6), warning them – from his prison cell – against being taken captive by 'hollow and deceptive philosophy ... human tradition ... elemental spiritual forces ...' (2:8).

Paul's counter-arguments offer insight into the earliest doctrinal battles faced by the Christian church, confronting an early form of Gnosticism, which taught:

- The physical world (and therefore the human body) is evil; Paul counters: 'in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form' (2:9).
- Spiritual fullness comes through secret knowledge; Paul counters: 'in Christ you have been brought to fullness' (2:10a).
- A greater divine being exists over the Lord God of the Bible; Paul counters: Christ 'is the head over every power and authority' (2:10b).

The false teaching led, paradoxically, both to severe asceticism, e.g. circumcision (Paul

counters, 'you were circumcised by Christ', 2:11) and to sensual indulgence (as Paul highlights in 2:23). For more on Gnosticism and its modern resurgence, see N.R. Needham's excellent, brief booklet: link.metrevive.uk/gnosticism.

Paul then refocuses his readers on Christ's triumph through the cross (2:13-15) and describes ways in which false teaching robs believers of freedom in Christ (2:16-23). He warns of those who 'have lost connection with the head' (2:19), characterised by false humility, the worship of lesser beings, and sensual indulgence. His great concern is that, having been qualified by Christ (1:12), these new Christians should not be disqualified by others (2:18) who live in the shadows and miss the reality found only in Christ (2:17).

SELAH: PAUSE AND PONDER

🔥 *Compare Paul's concerns with today's issues in church and wider culture (2:6-12). How, according to Paul, can we avoid being deceived?*

🔥 *Meditate on Christ's accomplishment on the cross (2:13-15); worship him, and open yourself to his continuing work, changing you from glory into glory.*

CHAPTER 3: FAITHFULNESS

Paul wonderfully summarises the gospel: Christians are raised with Christ (3:1), having died with him (3:3), and will appear with him in glory (3:4). Consequently, Paul calls his readers to faithful Christian living. The NIV translation of 3:1-2 is a little repetitive, unlike Paul's original Greek. He first calls his readers to 'seek the things above', echoing Jesus' call to 'seek first his kingdom' (Matthew 6:33), and then to be 'above-minded', or 'heavenly-minded'. Despite the common dismissal ('so heavenly-minded to be of no earthly use') Paul taught the opposite: greater heavenly-

mindedness leads to greater earthly usefulness for the Lord.

Continuing the imagery of dying and rising (3:5), and then adopting the metaphor of changing clothes (3:9, 12), Paul emphasises that conversion to Christ must produce changed life, involving a lifetime of hard work. Having described the beautiful virtues with which Christians clothe themselves



(3:12), it becomes clear that Paul is primarily addressing relationships within the church ('as members of one body', 3:15). Participation in the body of Christ is to be characterised by the word of Christ and by the sound of his praise (3:16).

Paul then pens one of his most controversial passages (3:18-4:1), addressing faithful Christian living within the home. The words were controversial then,

as they are now, though for the opposite reasons. The submission of wives, and the obedience of children and slaves, were taken for granted. It was Paul's insistence on husbands' Christlike love, fathers' encouragement, and masters' fair treatment that was radical.

As wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters explored their freedom and

equality newly-found in Christ, Paul presented a vision for faithful Christian living marked by submission and love, obedience and encouragement, wholehearted integrity and fairness (3:18-4:1, see Ephesians 5:21 on mutual submission).

SELAH: PAUSE AND PONDER

🔥 *How would greater devotion to 'the things above' change your life? (3:1-2)*

Identify strategies and pray that it would be so.

🔥 *What do you need to 'take off' and 'put on' (3:5-14)? Again, identify strategies and pray for help.*

🔥 *How might the beautiful Christian virtues of 3:15-4:1 be more fully developed through your life, in church, home and workplace?*

CHAPTER 4 – FRIENDSHIP

Paul emphasises friendship in this final chapter, asking for prayer for an open door for his message (4:3) and clarity in proclamation. Strikingly, Paul the prisoner prays for an open door, not for himself, but for his message. He urges readers to live in ways that open doors for their own clear proclamation of Christ (4:5-6).

Paul closes the letter by naming some friends (4:7-15), a reminder of our dependence on the prayers and support of others. I like to give nicknames to four of them:

- **'Locked Up'** (Aristarchus) – He may have voluntarily submitted to imprisonment to be alongside Paul (4:10a).
- **'Made Up'** (Mark) – who was reconciled with Paul after a significant disagreement (4:10b, see Acts 16:36-40).
- **'Turned Up'** (Justus) – This is his only mention in the Bible; seemingly, he turned up in the right place at the right time and helped Paul when he needed it most (4:11).
- **'Gave Up'** (Demas) – who, Paul would later write to Timothy, sadly gave up on the faith (4:14; see 2 Timothy 4:9)

Thus, even in this list of warm, friendly greetings, there is a stark and sobering reminder of the seriousness of Paul's colossal challenge. In the subtle storms of

false teaching, Christians must guard against deception. No one is immune. Like the Colossians, and their great pastors, we must 'devote ourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful' (4:2). Paul's concluding challenge to Archippus comes to each Christian in every age and place: 'See to it that you complete the ministry you have received from the Lord' (4:17).

SELAH: PAUSE AND PONDER

🔥 *Inspired by 4:2-6, join these early Christians in praying for open doors for the gospel and clear proclamation, especially through your own daily life.*

🔥 *To whom could you be a 'Locked Up' friend, supporting them in great need, even at significant personal cost? With whom could you be a 'Made Up' friend, seeking reconciliation and restoration? For whom could you be a 'Turned Up' friend, helping because you are in the right place at the right time? Let's be a 'Locked Up' friend to some, a 'Made Up' friend to others, and a 'Turned Up' friend to many!*

🔥 *Pray for yourself and fellow Christians, that none would be known as a 'Gave Up' friend. What lessons from Paul's letter will help you to avoid being deceived, and to complete faithfully your God-given ministry (4:17)?*

Rev Dr David A. Hull, our out-going Chair, is a Methodist Minister, currently serving as Lead Pastor of Freedom Church Bristol.





Peter Castle, Local Lay Pastor in the Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit in the Southampton District, shares how new shoots of opportunity are emerging from the old and familiar which had been laid to rest.

On the last Sunday in May 2022, the small Chapel at Canada Common, part of the Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit (WER) held its last service as a Methodist church.

The decision by the remaining members to cease being an active Methodist meeting place was a painful one and not everyone agreed. There was the genuine feeling that we had let our Father God down and also the saints who had set about building the chapel.

I had become the Local Lay Pastor for the WER Circuit in October 2021 and it quickly became apparent that, owing to the chapel's position on the border of the New Forest National Park and also with a graveyard which is still in use, that it would be difficult to sell the site.

I contacted my interdenominational colleagues in the area (Anglican, Gospel Hall and Elim Pentecostal) and asked if they would consider forming a Joint Churches Together in Wellow (JCTW) and to use the Canada Common Chapel as an outreach venue for the area.

They agreed and JCTW was born with WOFF (nothing to do with dogs!) but Worship, Outreach, Fellowship and Finance as our linked strategy.

It was decided to hold a monthly reflection service on the last Thursday of the month at 1.00pm. When we closed the chapel the attendance of the congregation had dropped to five. On Thursday June 27th 2024 we had a congregation of fourteen.

JCTW are holding joint services in the chapel for special events. Rev David Hull brought the Revive Me UK Tour to the chapel in May and we had an open-air service on the last Sunday in July.

We have found working together as JCTW with the support of the circuit has been a real blessing to us all. We also hold a Christmas Community Carol Service in the Wellow village hall.

During July and August, JCTW ran a 'Coffee on the Common' every Thursday morning, free to the community with any donations going to supporting the Men in Sheds community project which are building a new shed in Wellow.

Going forward, we want to grow in wisdom, stature and knowledge of our Lord who has blessed us through the Holy Spirit in every venture we have undertaken in his Name.

Please note, this is not my doing, but our Lord's and the wonderful teams of people willing to work for the kingdom in the New Forest area.

Peter Castle is Local Lay Pastor in the Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit, and Acting Chair of Joint Churches Together in Wellow.

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Shine Your Light!

JONATHAN OLOYEDE

Jonathan Oloyede, Convener of the National Day of Prayer and Worship, shares the vision behind a rapidly expanding Christmas initiative for churches in every part of the country.

Imagine 100,000 Christians on the streets at Christmas singing carols and sharing the gospel everywhere!

A nationwide Christmas campaign called Shine Your Light, will be taking place this year over the weekend of 13 – 15 December 2024.

This UK and Ireland grassroots movement saw over 75,000 Christians from over 700 churches take their carol services and nativity events into shopping centres, town halls, high streets and public spaces last December. This was suggested by many leaders to be one of the largest Christmas outreaches on behalf of the UK Church.

Shine Your Light is a united collaboration of many Christian Denominations, organisations, local churches, and networks; including The Salvation Army, Bible Society, Evangelical Alliance, Methodist Evangelicals Together, and hundreds of local congregations in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Many church and national leaders endorsed the event including the then Prime Minister and politicians. The weekend was highlighted by many media outlets including Good Morning Britain where hundreds of thousands heard that Shine Your Light was about proclaiming Christ at Christmas!

To see Christians recognised for taking the message of hope and joy to our communities from 10 Downing



Street was so encouraging. We are praying that the new Prime Minister and his Government will equally get behind this campaign.

As a result of Shine Your Light last year, we heard stories of people coming to faith and churches welcoming in new people. It showed that when Christians come together for the gospel, whole communities can be reached!

This Christmas, the vision is to mobilise over 100,000 Christians outdoors to reach 1 million people in the streets and public places with the gospel. Last year, we heard of hundreds of flashmob style carol events, open air Christingle services and nativity events from the small to the large including some in castles, country parks and housing estates.

This year, the vision is to see how the united church can put CHRIST back into Christmas so that the whole nation can hear the bold proclamation of Good News and why we sing 'Joy To The World!'

All our Shine Your Lights events are solely focused on enabling the true message of Christmas to be heard by those outside the church. While it is acknowledged that church attendance increases during the Christmas season, there will be many who will not darken the door of a church.

The church has a unique opportunity this year in towns, villages and cities to bring Light and Joy to many through our boldness and unity.

Put the date of Shine Your Light in your church's diary now! Friday 13 – Sunday 15 December 2024.

We encourage you to register today to join the movement of believers responding to this gospel call!

If you would like to connect Shine Your Light to the programme of events you are already planning, explore some of our great resources and to register, please visit: www.shineyourlight.org.uk or to speak to one of the team, please telephone: 07429 379 777

DR JONATHAN OLOYEDE

Born in Britain and bred in Nigeria, Dr Jonathan Oloyede is a medical doctor by profession who now serves as a full-time missionary and minister in England and Europe. Radically converted from Islam to Christianity within the wake of a revival that hit Nigerian Universities in the 1980s, he now serves as Senior Pastor of City Chapel, London and is Convener of the National Day of Prayer and Worship (ndopw.com).



An Introduction to Faith Sharing Profiles

ANDY FROST

In the face of common tensions in evangelism, Andy Frost introduces the newly-developed Faith Sharing Profiles and explores how they can help us to share the good news of Jesus faithfully and powerfully.

In the face of common tensions in evangelism, Andy Frost introduces the newly-developed Faith Sharing Profiles and explores how they can help us to share the good news of Jesus faithfully and powerfully.

Over the last 25 years, I have been working with local churches and individual Christians who want to share their faith. What I have discovered in that time is that many of us can feel pressured to share Jesus in a certain way. And when we fail to do so, we can end up feeling really guilty!

I believe that faith sharing is not a 'we-have-to' but a 'we-get-to'. We get to share Jesus with our friends, family, colleagues and neighbours. I also believe that each of us has a unique personality and temperament, and that God uses these as we share about him.

At SJI (Share Jesus International) we have conducted a piece of research in an attempt to understand better how different practicing Christians share their faith. We conducted some quantitative and qualitative research that helped us identify

four underlying tensions that exist when it comes to faith sharing.

These tensions are not just theory, but start with the everyday attitudes and behaviour of real people. It's important to note that these tensions do not give us an idealistic theology, or a projection of where we want everyone to be. Looking through the New Testament, we see an array of different styles of faith sharing.

It's important to state that, although some tensions need to be resolved, these are tensions to be held, and they help us better understand how one another approaches faith sharing.

1: MOMENT VS JOURNEY

Do people come to faith in a moment or is it a journey? Some people approach faith sharing by looking for a moment where people will say yes to Jesus. They are looking for a 'Paul on the road to Damascus' moment. Others approach faith sharing as a journey. They look to help people make the next step, such as Paul in Athens when some state, 'We want to hear you again on this subject.' (Acts 17:32)

2: PERSONAL VS CORPORATE

Is faith sharing something I do by myself or is this something we do together? Some people look to share Jesus with their friends and feel they are responsible for their faith journey. Others see sharing Jesus as something we do together. Responsibility lies with the local church and their role is to help people connect.

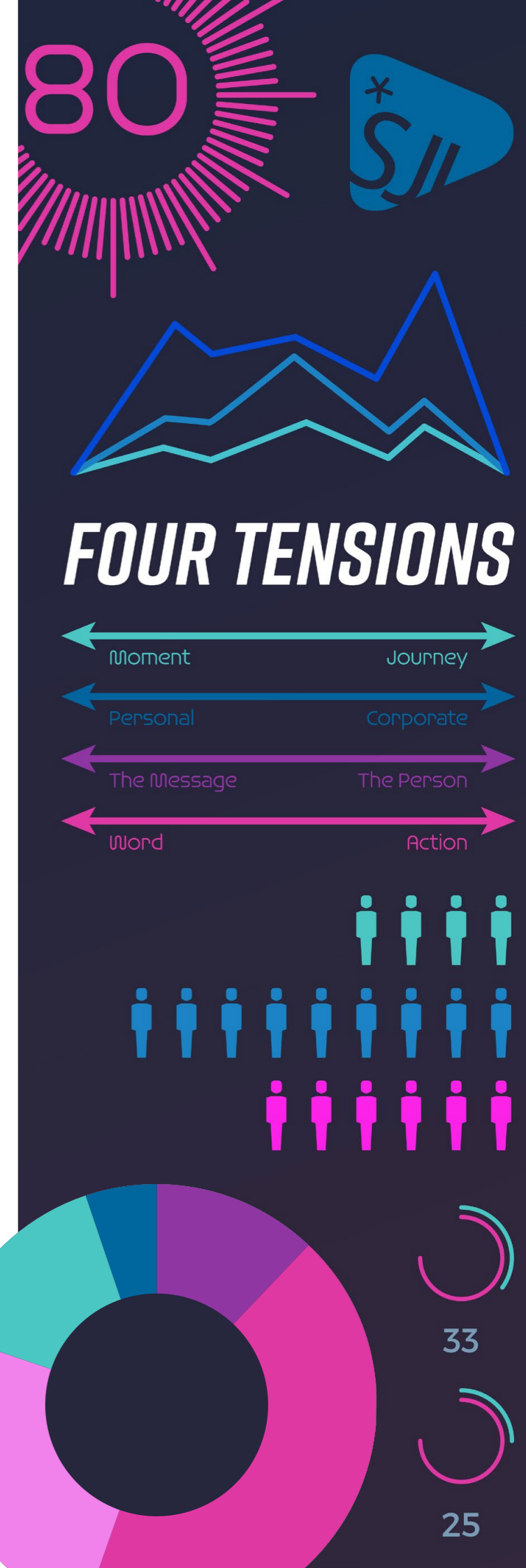
3: THE MESSAGE VS THE PERSON

Do we begin a faith sharing conversation thinking about how we can communicate the message of Jesus as quickly and effectively as possible, or do we look to the person we are talking to, to take the lead. At one end, some people know what they want to share and look for how best to do this. At the other end, people look for what God is doing and wait for the right time to share.

4: WORD VS ACTION

Is faith sharing done primarily by what we say or what we do? For some people, it's all about the words we share, but for others, actions speak louder.

As you look through these tensions, you may be aware that you will behave differently in different settings, but we all have a leaning to one end of each tension. We might like to think that we sit perfectly in the middle, but we all have leanings!



These tensions have formed the underlying basis of six Faith Sharing Profiles that we have created to give some broad brushstrokes as to how we share Jesus. A short online quiz can now be completed online to help practicing Christians discern how they tend to share their faith. With the caveat that our approach will change according to context and situation, these profiles help us discern our natural tendencies.

We are finding that these profiles are helping Christians to understand one another better. Over the last few weeks, I have done this quiz with church leadership teams who have been able to recognise how they approached faith sharing from different perspectives.

And we have also seen, these profiles give Christians a greater confidence in sharing Jesus their way. Having completed the quiz, each profile has some attributes to celebrate and some ideas to help us all stretch ourselves.

You can take the online quiz here:
sharejesusinternational.com/sj-quiz

...and you might like to reflect on these questions afterwards:

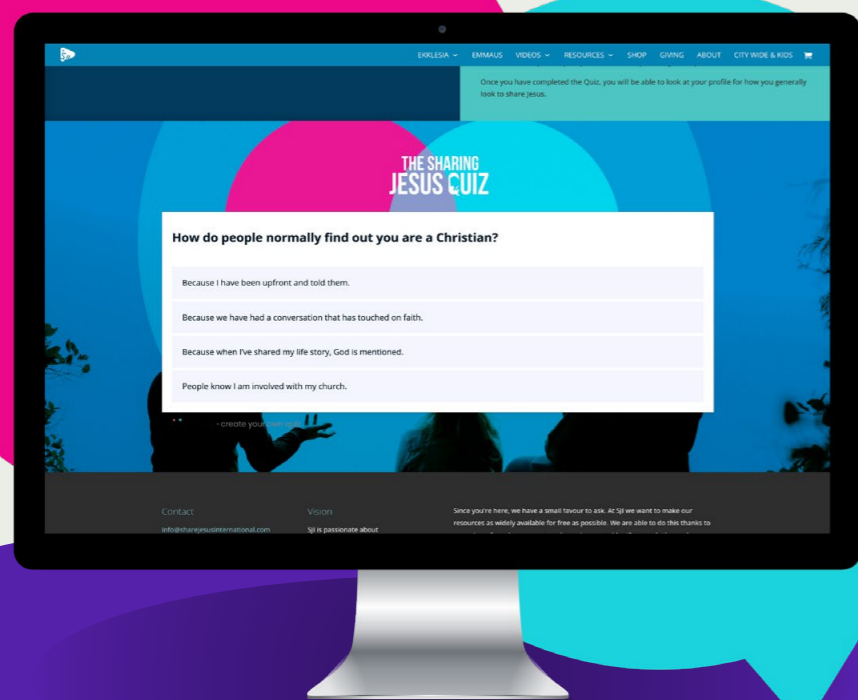
- Do you agree with the Faith Sharing Profile you received?
- How does it make you feel?
- What might you do having taken this quiz and seen your results?
- What do you want to keep doing and what you might you want to tweak?

And if you wanted to do the quiz as a local church, SJI can create a bespoke QR code for your congregation. You can then invite the congregation to do the test online (even during a service). With a unique QR code, we can then give you the profile of your church. This will help you to see not who got which result, but the overall shape of your congregation.

Our hope and prayer is that this resource may help us all share the good news of Jesus faithfully and powerfully.



Andy Frost is the director of Share Jesus International, the chair of the London Mission Collective and joint CEO of the Gather Movement. He has an MA in Applied Theology, has authored a number of books and presented the Jesus Series.



'Tis Mercy All

NATALIE WILLIAMS

London SPCK (2024)
ISBN:9780281089185
pp.208
£11.99

We live in a world where cancel culture, polarising politics and social media virtue signalling are the norm, and mercy is rare. But followers of Jesus are called to be different – to 'love mercy' in a world that hates it.

In her new book, 'Tis Mercy All – The Power of Mercy in a Polarised World', Natalie Williams takes us on a deep dive into the mercy of God, urging us to live lives of mercy that point people to Jesus.

Jesus called his disciples to be merciful, just like our Father (Luke 6:36), so our starting place needs to be developing a rich theology of God's merciful heart towards us.

'Tis Mercy All explores why that is harder for Christians than we might imagine. If we are honest, we wrestle with the idea of God's mercy because it's not fair, it seems at odds with some of his other attributes such



as holiness and justice, and we struggle to reconcile it with our suffering and wilderness seasons. Dealing with each of these objections in turn, Natalie works through the scriptures to persuade us that God really is more wonderfully merciful than we might dare to dream.

Only once we are convinced that God's dealings with his children really are 'mercy all', can we begin to align first our attitudes, and then our actions, with our Father's. As we are transformed by His mercy, we become mercy-bringers to a world that desperately needs it.

www.amazon.co.uk/Tis-Mercy-All or our website

<https://spckpublishing.co.uk/tis-mercy-all>

Natalie Williams is Chief Executive of the Christian charity Jubilee+ (@jubileeplus), which equips churches to change the lives of those in poverty in their communities, and embed mercy and justice into the DNA of the local church.



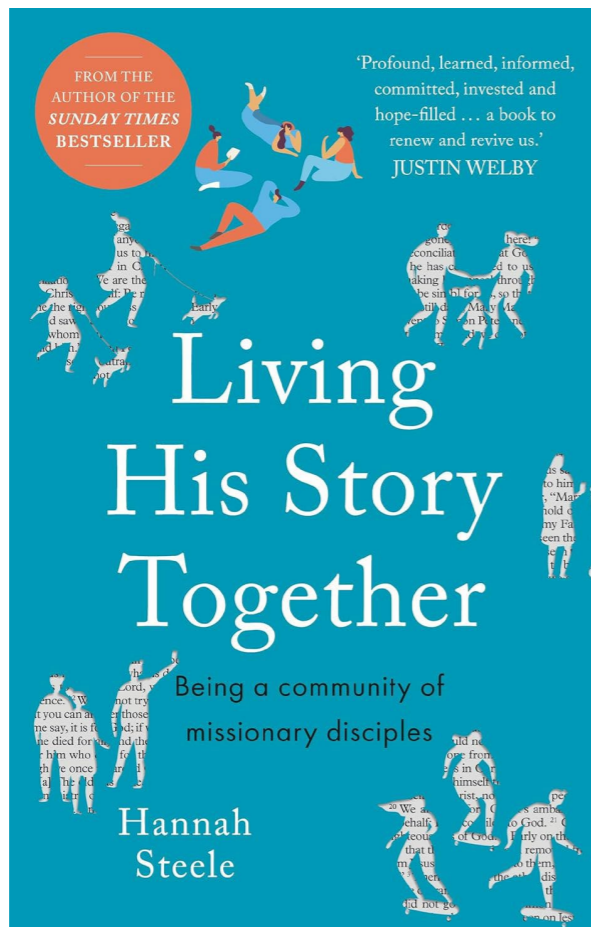
‘Living His Story Together: Being A Community of Missionary Disciples’

HANNAH STEELE

London: SPCK, 2024
ISBN: 978-0281085170
pp. 178
£10.99

It is often said that the Church in the West is at crisis point. Newspaper headlines tell us that institutional Christianity is in decline in the UK and that in our increasingly secular culture religious faith should be a matter of personal preference, rarely seen and certainly not heard.

However, to borrow from Mark Twain, reports of the death of the Church in the West may be greatly exaggerated. The church I am part of in Peckham has gone from near closure to bursting at the seams in two decades. Through my work at St Mellitus College, I have come to see that this story is not an anomaly, a freak story that bucks the trend of decline. Up and down the country, signs of renewal and revival are growing up in the most unlikely places: a gathering of mums after the school drop off in Essex that became an established worshipping community, a church plant in Oxfordshire on a new housing estate that became a pivotal connection point for the local community, a



well established church in Reading providing a place of home for refugees and asylum seekers.

I write about these stories and more in my latest book ‘Living His Story Together: Being a Community of Missionary Disciples’. The image of missionary disciples suggests movement and flexibility, an outwards orientation and a commitment to learning together. My intention has been to write a love letter to the church, not chastising us to pull up our socks and do better, but reminding us of the privilege to which we have been called. The fact that God has entrusted the living out of the gospel of Jesus to people like you and me is both humbling and challenging. Who knows what God might

do next? I, for one, am expectant.

Revd Dr Hannah Steele is the Director of St Mellitus College London where she is also lecturer in Mission and Evangelism. She is the author of ‘Living His Story: revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways’ which was the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book in 2021 and a Sunday Times Bestseller.

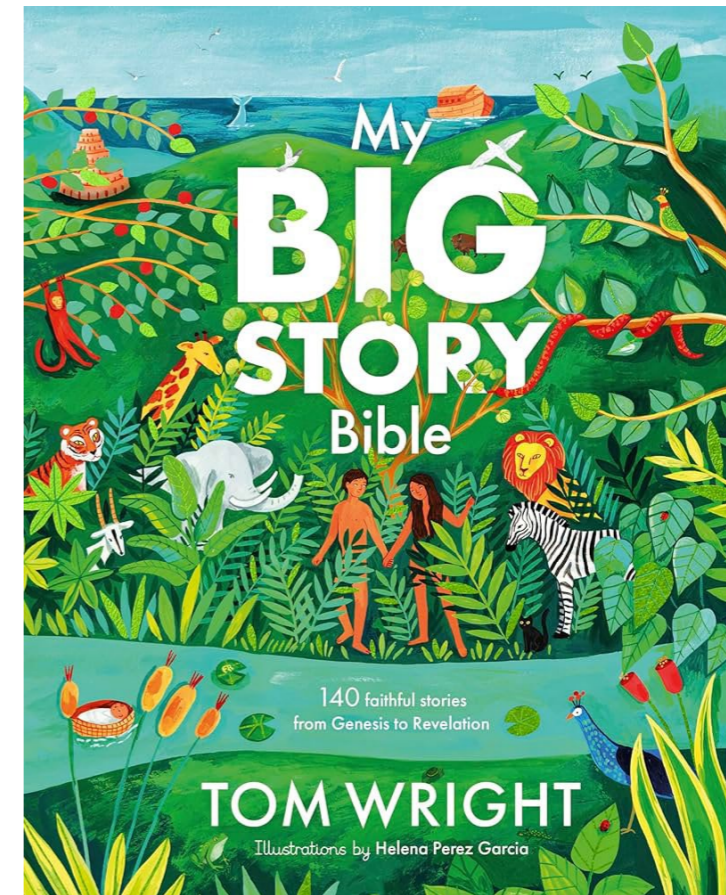


My Big Story Bible

TOM WRIGHT

SPCK Group (UK) and Tommy Nelson (USA), 2024
ISBN: 0281085613
pp. 288
£16.99

My Big Story Bible takes the adventure of reading a children’s Bible to a new level with lively storytelling and vibrant illustrations. Written by theologian Tom Wright, this book is perfect for readers aged 7-12 years. It offers a faithful and engaging retelling of major Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments and invites children to discover the surprising connections between stories and how they form the BIG STORY of God’s plan to make everything right and unite heaven and earth when Jesus returns. Beautifully illustrated by Helena Perez Garcia, this children’s Bible unlocks creativity and imagination, helping young readers to vividly visualize the historical events of the Bible.



My Big Story Bible highlights familiar characters and events and includes often-overlooked passages from the Psalms, Proverbs, the Prophets, and Paul’s letters. These elements help explain the overarching story that God wants all people to hear. Whether reading alone or aloud, children and adults alike will enjoy spotting the visual and narrative connections that weave together God’s enduring story, a story that invites readers to participate.

My Big Story Bible is available worldwide from Amazon and all major bookstores.

The Rt Revd Prof NT Wright is senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford. He is ordained in the Church of England and, among other roles, served as Bishop of Durham between 2003 – 2010. He is much in demand as a lecturer around the world and the author for the bestselling For Everyone commentary series and the New Testament For Everyone Bible translation.



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