

Issue 6 • Summer 2016

The Methodist Church 

the connexion



Inspiring stories from the life of your Methodist Church



David Perry
Editor

Authentic partnership

As you pick up this magazine we are all living through the most disturbing and uncertain of times.

In the wake of the EU Referendum and the death of Jo Cox MP, and in the midst of so much that is fragmentary, broken and vexed in our national life, we find ourselves challenged to summon up all of the resources of our faith so that we can work together for the common good. This issue of *the connexion* focuses on one of the key tasks ahead, that of demonstrating the power of authentic partnership.

Arising from the heart of God's inclusive love, authentic partnership is the antithesis of hatred, prejudice and discrimination. Authentic partnership is the real-time expression of God's intention that everyone should live life in its fullness. When Jesus tells us to love one another he is putting that imperative into our hands and drawing us out of our pre-occupied self-concern to discover the gift and blessing that we can be to each other. God's love does not construct barriers, it builds bridges and births hope. So when we engage in authentic partnership, especially with those beyond our immediate circles of belonging, we are expressing God's passion for connexion.

This wonderful word 'connexion' is pivotal to our Methodist understanding of how grace is to be encountered and experienced in practice in the manner envisaged by Jesus. When he says "love one another", connexion is the outcome. Where ecologists might use the word 'ecosystem' to describe an interdependent web of relationships amongst species, we use connexion to describe an equally interdependent network of relationships that characterises the reality of our own Methodist community.

Furthermore, connexion is at the heart of our vision of a society that is bound together in dignity and respect too. And the building blocks of connexion are made from authentic partnership. This issue provides a wealth of examples of what such connexion looks like in practice. We hope that it will encourage and inspire you to give good attention to the gift of authentic partnership where you are.

Love and peace,
David

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To send us your comments about this issue, or if you would like to re-use any of *the connexion magazine* articles in your own church magazine, please email theconnexioneditor@methodistchurch.org.uk

the connexion

Issue 6 • Summer 2016

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Cover picture

A diversity of hands reflecting every spectrum of human need at Selby Street Methodist Mission, Hull

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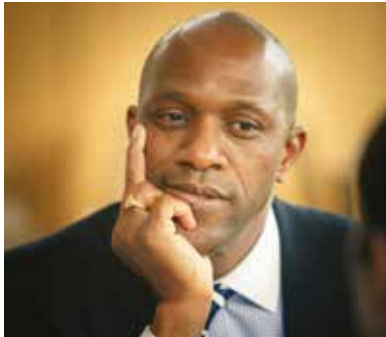
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“People of faith usually get human rights” - Chakrabarti

Prominent lawyer and human rights campaigner Shami Chakrabarti captivated a packed audience as she gave the 2016 Beckly Lecture, *On Liberty: Conscience and Belief*, at this year's Methodist Conference.

The evening turned into a wide ranging discussion which covered multiple identity, the art of disagreeing well, mutuality, and the need for decency in politics.

A question and answer session followed the lecture.

The Beckly Lecture is an annual fringe event at the Methodist Conference organised by the Joint Public Issues Team. To watch and listen to the lecture and question session please visit:

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

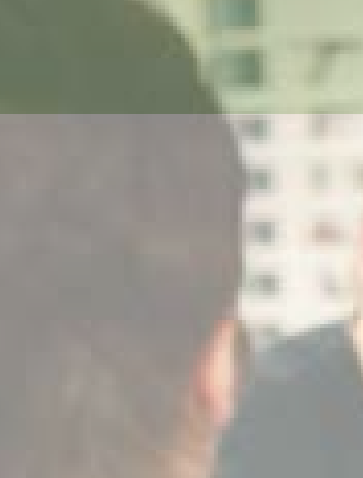


Conference follow-up

For a recap of all that happened at the Methodist Conference 2016, and to read the new *Conference Business* digest, visit www.methodist.org.uk/conference.

Available from Methodist Publishing are *Minutes* and *Constitutional Practice and Discipline Volume 2*, both published on 1 September. You can order this year's Presidential prayer card, along with *Holiness and Justice* – a booklet presenting the theme Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard have taken as the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, reflecting on Micah 6:8. Brightly coloured wristbands are also available for a constant reminder to “do justice, love kindness, walk humbly...”. Order your follow-up materials from: www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

The search is on for candidates for the position of Methodist Youth President for the 2017/2018 connexional year. Interested applicants have until noon on Friday 26 August to apply. Elections for Youth President will take place during 3Generate, the annual Children's and Youth Assembly. This year, 3Generate again takes place at the PGL Centre in Liddington from 25-27 November.



Authentic partnership in **God's mission**

A compelling vision of the Church's calling is made by the Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel, Director of the Wesley Study Centre and Academic Dean of Cranmer Hall.

One of the theological concepts that I have found liberating is *Missio Dei* (God's Mission). The idea that mission is primarily a description of the activity of God and only secondarily an activity of the Church is liberating in a number of ways.

First, to be reminded that God has a grand missional plan of reconciling all creation to himself is encouraging, especially if one's local church context seems disengaged from active mission to its community.

Second, that mission is primarily the mission of God means that Christian mission needs to be wider than the Church context. God is not merely interested in Church; but in God's kingdom – all creation.

Third, if God is a God of mission, then any human engagement in mission is joining the primary activity of God. Wherever the Church might go on mission, we discover a holy God always ahead of us, seeking to draw creation back to its first vocation of loving its Creator.

Fourth, such an understanding of mission requires the Church to be interested in more than making new Christians. God has a





What might be God's preferred social media platform?

broader mission than making new disciples. God is interested in the redemption of the entire cosmos. God is, therefore, deeply concerned with justice, profoundly interested in human flourishing, and longs for creation to become all that is divinely intended. A Church seeking to partner with God in mission, then, is committed to evangelism, and to justice, human flourishing and the care for all creation.

With such an understanding of mission, what might it mean for Christians to be authentic partners in God's mission?

1. Authenticity

To me, authenticity captures something of today's public mood, our values. Whatever we do, or aspire to, we want it to be the real deal.

The world needs to encounter Christians who are deeply in love with Jesus Christ, who understand that the whole of their life's energies are to be spent in seeking his praise and glory, and who have discovered that a human who has truly encountered the living God is one who is fully alive. Those who seek to be partners in God's mission need to be authentic.

2. God's media

Social media is now the primary means by which we reveal our thoughts and opinions. Delving through peoples' tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts reveals a great deal about their interests and passions, the issues that matter to them and the causes they support.

It raises the intriguing question of what might be God's preferred social media platform. God's formal media is the Son, the Living Word meditated through the Bible, the written word. However, God's social media is God's creation. What God has made is God's media for self-revelation.

As humans created in the image of God, seeking to be authentic partners in God's mission requires that we see ourselves as

God's media. This means that alongside the concept of *Missio Dei* we place the concept of *Imago Dei* (God's Image). The Church interested in partnering in God's mission faithfully seeks to reflect God's image.

3. God's grace

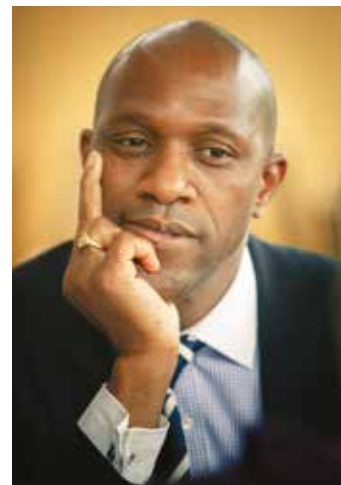
Perhaps the most important strand of partnership is also the most obvious: God's far reaching grace. God loves all that God has made. God's grace is made evident in God's willingness to partner with us in his mission. However, it is also evident in God's reaching out to a broken world.

I write this in a week that began with the shocking news of the murder of 49 people in a LGBT nightclub in Orlando. The week ended with the murder of British MP Jo Cox, outside her constituency office in Yorkshire.

More than proximity in the calendar links these crimes. They are both hate crimes, which reveal as much about polarising views in our communities as they do about the individuals who perpetrated them.

God's grace reaches into the brokenness of human community; it invades our spaces and can break down our walls of division and mistrust. Nothing and no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. A Church seeking to partner in God's mission therefore reaches out to all, even those whose views and rhetoric we find repugnant.

Authentic partnership in God's mission is what the Church is called to; I long for us wholeheartedly to answer that call.



Cranmer Hall and Wesley Study Centre are part of St John's College, Durham University, www.dur.ac.uk

Together for justice



*Partnership
requires trust.*

The Vice-President of the Conference, Rachel Lampard, explains how justice flourishes through denominational partnerships.



Selection of campaigning publications produced by the Joint Public Issues Team

The Methodist Church has spent the last ten years working in partnership with the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union, and more recently the Church of Scotland. As part of the Joint Public Issues Team, I helped our four denominations to speak and work together on issues of justice and peace.

Working together has increased our Churches' profiles and effectiveness. Campaigns such as *Rethink Sanctions* have hit the national media, and church members from all four denominations have raised issues with their MPs.

But it's not just about having a louder voice. Authentic partnership requires, and also creates, high levels of trust. We have represented each other in the media,

spoken at each others' governing bodies. Whilst it's not always easy, I have learnt much from the insights and traditions of the other Churches.

Ecumenical partnerships like this are a visible sign that our Churches, working together, are part of the same body of Christ.

The presidential theme for 2016/2017 is holiness and justice. John Wesley spoke about "social holiness", but this is not an eighteenth century synonym for social justice. Rather 'social' is the antonym of 'solitary'. We need both God's grace and the support of honest companions – authentic partners – on our journey.

I am inspired by our Church's deep commitment to justice. Around the country people generously support charities, run foodbanks, work with young people, write to MPs. Working for justice has to be a partnership too, a partnership with those who are experiencing injustice. If we fail to listen to people who are oppressed or living in poverty and fail to learn from them, then we risk assuming we can speak for people. I hope we can have the audacity to work *together* for justice in the world we share.

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk
www.methodist.org.uk/nationallife



Partnership = relationship



The President of the Conference, the Revd Dr Roger Walton, reveals how partnership is at the heart of the presidency.

One of the exciting aspects of becoming President of the Conference this year is being in partnership with the Vice-President, Rachel Lampard.

Of course, when the Conference votes for the President and Vice-President you have no idea who will be paired together. It is not like the US presidential election where you have a running mate, someone chosen in advance, so you are a team before the voting starts. Rather, Conference votes on the separate list of candidates for each role and only when each outcome is announced do you know who you will partner.

This means you have to begin a partnership from that day. You need to work out what theme or themes you will adopt, what material you will produce and how you will approach the task of supporting the Connexion and representing the Methodist Church in public.

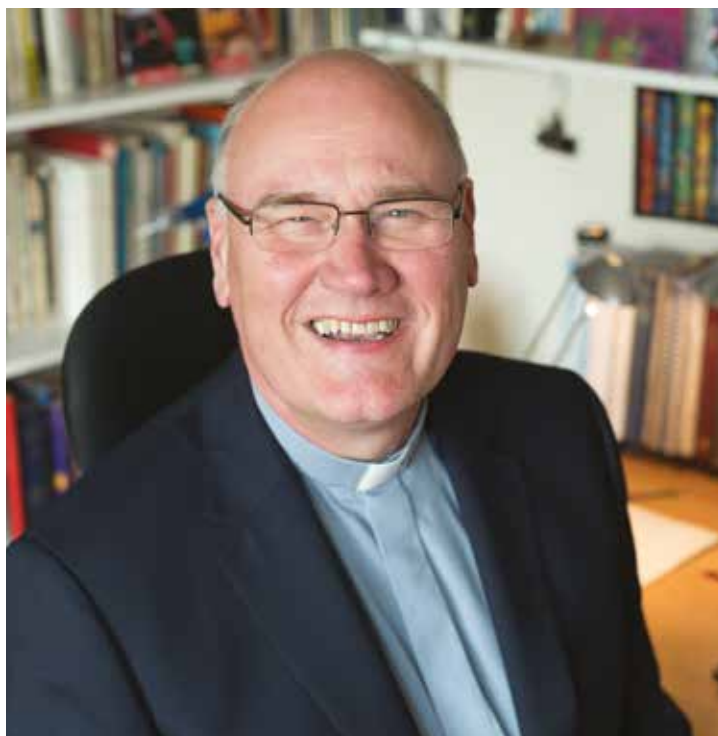
What we have discovered this year is that if you are going to be partners you need to spend time together, you need to communicate regularly, and you need to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, so you can help and support each other in your calling. These are surely some of the marks of authentic partnership. At their heart is relationship.

Partnership is always relational. It must have purpose and structure but can only be successful if partners recognise the need to build and maintain relationships. This not only 'oils the wheels', but it also builds deeper understanding and

expands our horizons. God invites us into partnership, not simply to save us and for us to participate in the transformation of the world, but also to know and be known – to be in an ever expanding and deepening relationship with God.

In one sense, every partnership holds the potential for us to encounter God in and through others and grow deeper into the amazing love of God in Christ. It is holy ground and we must tread sensitively, being open to the possibilities partnership brings and expecting that we will change and grow.

Partnerships succeed with time, communication, knowing and supporting each other.





Reaching out together



The Revd Elaine Lindridge, Newcastle District's Evangelism Enabler, is excited by encouraging the Church to reclaim and rediscover what evangelism really means.



The Together team includes Elaine's husband, the Revd Steve Lindridge (second from the right), Chair of Newcastle District

During my time working as an Evangelism Enabler I've noticed that there's often a lack of confidence with mission. I don't think it's low self-confidence, but more about a confidence in God. So, if people have not seen God working in recent years then their expectation that God will work today is low. If they've not experienced the transformational power of God for themselves... then they're unlikely to believe it will happen for others. If they've not personally been involved in mission opportunities... then their confidence that God will work through them is limited.

I don't think it's low self-confidence, but more about a confidence in God.

With that in mind, I've been working with



Finding faith

A team worked on an estate in Sunderland. One of the teenage team members found that for the first time, faith made sense to him. It was only when he started to step out in mission that he realised that God was real and calling him. When he returned from his mission week he asked to be baptised, and is now one of our youth reps to Conference this year.

a team to facilitate 'Together Missions'. These are mission weeks that took place during October in 2013 and 2015. For 2016/2017 we are launching Together

A shop for stories

One team leased a shop in their precinct for the week and creatively used the space to encourage people to think about their story and God's story. Each day around 150 people visited this community space and many took the opportunity to share their stories with team members. Nadira came to the shop and shared about seeking asylum after fleeing a dangerous situation in Pakistan. Team member Pauline listened to her, prayed and offered practical help. The local church has continued to pray for Nadira and support her, and they had the joy of helping her and her children move into their own home. Nadira sees her visit to the shop as special and Pauline seems to have acquired an adopted daughter and grandchildren!



Mission Weekends to take place at strategic times in the year. Volunteers from around Newcastle District are linked with volunteers from a local church to engage together as one team in mission. I help the team leaders consider what kind of mission activities would work well in their context, bearing in mind the gifts and abilities of their members. So what happened?

In many ways this might sound dated; old-fashioned missions from a bygone age. Yet I've found it to be the single most fruitful thing I've been involved in for many years. Time and time again team members have found their confidence grows when they've stepped out as part of a team, and put their trust in God. My absolute favourite thing to hear as I visited teams was "I didn't think I could but..." It's been a joy to see people grow as disciples while they work together, taking seriously the commission to go and make more disciples.

Team members have found their confidence grows when they've stepped out as part of a team, and put their trust in God.

In reflecting on all this I can't help but feel a sense of delight as I've seen Methodist people released into action and encouraged to join in the mission of God. For many of the teams their main activities were not groundbreaking or new – youth work, children's clubs, coffee mornings and the like.

Yet there was an excitement at seeing how these things still work. Not only did the weeks themselves go well, but team members returned to their churches energised, enthusiastic and with their passion for Christ re-ignited.

Never underestimate the potential of a group of people who put their confidence in God... because in God, all things are possible.

www.togethermission.co.uk

Methodists are released into action, joining in the mission of God.

Church to community to church



A church invited all the community groups using its building to come together where each group (including church members) shared about who they were and what they did. Such a simple act of welcome was warmly received. One man said: "churches would be fuller if they did more of this kind of thing", whilst a woman from the Slimming Group responded: "well, after tonight you've got one more church member; I'm going to start coming here".

From nerves to God-confident



One team set up a stall on the High Street offering to pray for people. Judy was particularly nervous about this, and admitted that she really didn't think she could do it. With encouragement and support from her team, she stepped out in faith and was delighted to find people responsive and appreciative of her offer to pray. What a delight it was to see Judy on the last day so confident in talking with people and praying.

Fiona at the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – after a local police inspector, Vaughan, talked her into making the climb. She admits: “Having said I didn’t know where God would lead me, I would never have dared climbing here if it hadn’t been for Vaughan! He is not a Christian and I felt I needed to put ‘my money where my mouth’ is and prove that my faith in God was real and I could overcome my fears!”



Partnering beyond Church

Deacon Fiona de Boltz transforms loitering into listening as she partners with the police in serving Northamptonshire.

Like many Methodist deacons, much of my ministry involves working in partnership with people and agencies beyond the Church. When I felt God’s call to be a deacon, I knew I was drawn especially to those outside church life, but I had no idea where that would lead me! Today I am privileged to serve as the Deputy Lead Chaplain for Northamptonshire Police, having been a police chaplain for nearly ten years. The journey began when I was stationed in the South Derbyshire Circuit in 2007 for my first appointment. For part of my ministry I was asked if I would continue the previous deacon’s work as chaplain to the police in Swadlincote. Following stringent Home Office vetting, I began going into the police station once a week for a couple of hours and ‘loitering with intent’ – intent on building relationships with police officers and staff. I simply took in

biscuits, did the washing up, and was a listening ear to any who needed to talk.

When I moved to my next appointment in Corby, I continued working as a police chaplain. Another part of my work was setting up initiatives for Street Pastors in Corby and then Kettering. I experienced the beauty of working in partnership with police, local councils, and churches across denominations in order to effectively serve our communities.

I also saw at first hand the challenges facing the police, who continue to live with the twin pressures of reduced budgets and increased threat of terrorism.

As a police chaplain, I have huge respect for the people I encounter who are often dealing with incredibly stressful situations. Chaplaincy is ‘being there’, as a visible sign of the God who is with us and who loves every person passionately and unconditionally. For me, chaplaincy is a privileged partnership – partnering with God, with the church who sent me, and with the police.

Methodist deacons work in partnership with people outside Church.

Deacon Fiona de Boltz



Cherished and affirmed; a partnership full of hope



For the Revd Keith Underhill, minister of Alton Methodist Church, ‘authentic partnership’ runs through the story of Anna Chaplaincy like the name Blackpool runs through a stick of rock!

Anna Chaplaincy, named after the faithful older widow in Luke’s Gospel story of Simeon and Anna, is a blend of advocacy and pastoral work in partnership with others. This partnership proudly proclaims “Older people matter”.

From initial conversations between Anglicans and Methodists around tables in a church hall in Alton, through to the exciting collaboration with The Bible Reading Fellowship, Anna Chaplaincy is now an established national initiative called The Gift of Years. Working with, and alongside, others has played a pivotal role in this pioneering and innovative ministry.

Being an older person can be isolating and challenging. In a society and Church increasingly made up of older people, there are more and more people who feel themselves to be beyond the interest and concern of the wider community. Anna Chaplaincy seeks to accompany older people at this stage of their life.

Anna Chaplaincy has, and always will be, an ecumenical, community-based, chaplaincy approach to promoting the spiritual welfare of older people. Anna Chaplaincy is a person-centred, non-judgmental ministry for people of strong, little or no faith at all.

It is a way of offering spiritual support to older people, especially to those living in residential and nursing homes and sheltered housing complexes. The ministry also includes their relatives and carers.

Such a spiritual focus may be in helping people to reflect upon their life’s journey (both the joys and challenges). It may, where appropriate, enable the healing of memories and the celebration of life’s experiences – and so foster hope and resilience.

Anna Chaplains also have a wider role to play within the community as advocates and champions. They draw attention to the contribution older people make to both Church and society.

What started in a Hampshire market town is spreading fast as others grasp its potential and seek to work in partnership with one another. From Lytham in the North West to Rochester in the South East, in cities and in rural settings, Anna Chaplaincy is rapidly growing. Churches, circuits, dioceses, individuals and groups are working together in active, authentic partnerships – recognising that there is a story to tell, a way of engaging to emulate and a ministry to fulfil.

www.thegiftofyears.org.uk



The Revd Keith Underhill

ABOVE LEFT Enjoying the benefits of Anna Chaplaincy

Older people matter.

A regular at Equipping Calling Going (ECG), Elaine Watkinson explains that this is not just a conference behind closed doors, but an annual partnership offering practical help.

Putting what we believe into practice

From ECG conference to cleaning Rainbow's windows

Two sides of Scarborough: Rainbow Centre and seaside Spa



ECG is a predominantly Methodist event that takes place each year in the week after Easter. Consisting of five days' teaching, worship and refreshment for all the family, ECG partners with a local charity in order to support the local community.

ECG happens at Scarborough Spa. Also in Scarborough is the Rainbow Centre, which has now worked with ECG for two years.

Every week the Rainbow Centre supports more than 200 of Scarborough's most deprived people. With its focus on community action and practical witness, the Centre aims to uplift and encourage all who need help within Scarborough's Urban Priority Area of Castle Ward. An initiative of St Mary's with Holy Apostles Anglican Church, the Centre tries to be 'Jesus at work' in the community. It offers the homeless support: accommodation, a shower room, laundry, television lounge and community café, and benefits assistance.



BELOW
Gardening volunteer

BELOW MIDDLE
An ECG volunteer at
Rainbow's clothes bank



The Centre also provides rough sleepers with practical aid such as bedding, clothes and blankets, while for people in crisis, the Centre offers food parcels, rehabilitation from physical and sexual abuse and meets medical needs.

Partnership is hands-on mission.

Because the Centre opens daily, there is little time to do any 'housekeeping'. Gardening, clothes sorting, food sorting,

foodbank cleaning, washing, sweeping and painting are just some of the tasks put on hold as Centre volunteers meet people's needs. So, during three afternoons of the ECG conference, delegates get into teams to help do Rainbow's sorting, tidying and organising. It may not seem like much, but for the Centre volunteers and staff our small amount of service gives a real boost. As we clean and help out, we are acknowledging the tremendous work the volunteers do in changing the individual worlds of deprived, hurting and homeless folk supported at the Centre. So, ECG is doing 'mission' in a very practical hands-on way. We talk to clients and share our faith and are a visible witness in the community.

ECG also collects for the Centre food bank, and this year managed to bless the Centre with a gift of over £1,000. It was given by people at ECG to help meet the Centre's accommodation bills for rough sleepers over the winter.

Mission is happening – ongoing annual support, making a difference in a small way to help bring lasting change for people in need: nothing huge, nothing flashy, an almost unnoticed humility of service gladly given, and gratefully received.

www.therainbowcentre.org



ECG volunteer
ready for cleaning



ECG volunteers
in the Rainbow
Centre's garden

Holguin evangelistic campaign, Cuba, endorsed by the Communist party

Sandra Lopez,
Partnership
Coordinator for
Latin America
and the Caribbean



Unlikely partnership

For God all things are possible! Sandra Lopez witnesses the Holy Spirit partnering for mission with the Cuban government.

The Methodist Church in Cuba is thriving. On an island of over 11 million inhabitants, 40,000 of them are Methodists. The Church there is experiencing the fastest rate of growth in Methodist churches across Latin America and the Caribbean. It is used as an example all over the world of hope for Methodism and for Christian revival.

Autonomous since 1968, it seems to me that the Holy Spirit has given the *Iglesia Metodista en Cuba* incredible wisdom in how to develop a good working relationship with the Cuban government. Some may be surprised by this, given the stories we often hear about Cuba in the media.

Examples of this partnership are the *Cristo Vive* (Jesus is Alive) evangelistic campaigns that the Church hosts around the country. Religious activities on the street or in public places are normally not permitted. So for many years the Church has had to hold these types of campaigns inside church buildings, on a small scale.

Street Pastors, Cuban Methodist style!

This all changed when representatives of the Communist Party in Holguin, Cuba's fourth largest city, began to notice the fruit of the Methodist Church's work among young people. The Church was bold and brave enough to send out small groups of young people to preach on the street to disaffected Cuban youth congregating in local parks to smoke, take drugs and drink alcohol. Many of these young people were touched by God through the testimony of the Methodist youth. As local youngsters began to accept Christ and become part of local Methodist churches, crime rates in these neighbourhoods began to decrease.

As Holguin Communist party members took notice, it allowed the Methodist youth to host a massive evangelistic campaign – attended by more than 6,000. Many people accepted Christ during this event. It shows how the Church has worked with the government in such a way that has allowed it to grow so exponentially.

I can just imagine our Cuban Methodist brothers and sisters quoting the words of our Lord Jesus, "...For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26 NRSV).

City leaders
encourage
church work.



*Bishop Christian Alsted
of the Nordic and Baltic Area
preaching at The United
Methodist Church General
Conference 2016*

Therefore, go

**The Connexional Team Secretary,
Doug Swanney, reaffirms our
partnership with our global
cousins.**



In 1968, on the eve of the creation of the United Methodist Church (UMC) – which traces its roots back to early Methodism in the newly independent United States of America – the Methodist Church in Britain agreed a concordat with this growing expression of Church in the States. The concordat was much more than a desire for partnership: it was a signal of the importance for two of the leading Methodist denominations to be united in carrying out God’s mission.

The details of the concordat ensured that each Church would have appropriate representation at each other’s Conferences (the UMC General Conference meets once every four years, whereas the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain meets annually), as well as encouraging both denominations to cooperate in new and life-giving ways for the sake of the gospel.

There are many fascinating aspects of our relationship with our now ‘global’ Methodist cousins. If part of our decision making over the last forty years was to give autonomy to our former overseas districts, it has been the desire and work of the UMC to protect the unity of the denomination. This difference in approach could be seen as negative, however we could actually see it as being the beating heart of our engagement and partnership.

It is through the ways we have chosen to be different that we can continue to learn the most. By understanding the call and gifting of each Church as unique, we truly have the ability to engage with mission in

more effective ways.

It was the unity of the 13.8 million UMC members throughout its annual and central conferences in Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America that was at the centre of deliberations at the 2016 General Conference. Dealing with issues of human sexuality, the nature of oversight and accountability, and a budget of over \$6m in diverse cultures is no easy task.

But our concordat partners stayed focused on the Great Commission of Christ to “therefore, go” and make disciples.

A task we can partner in without question.

***A concordat
for unity and
partnership.***

Doug Swanney



ABOVE Bishop Sally Dyck of the Chicago Area delivers the sermon during morning worship at the General Conference 2016

BELOW UMC Conference delegates consider legislation





*in our villages,
towns and cities*

Growing together

Roy Crowne outlines the partnership between HOPE and the Methodist Church.

In Burslem, local churches and civic bodies held a street party for 2,000 people for the Queen's birthday

When Steve Wild, Ex-President of the Conference, called on Methodist churches to reach “one more for Jesus” we were delighted. HOPE is passionate about mission. Since its inception, HOPE has encouraged churches to do more mission together.

When we began in 2008, Hope08 was a focused year of mission in villages, towns and cities. Methodist churches all over the country responded, and many asked us to continue afterwards. In 2014, our second year dedicated to mission together, more churches caught the HOPE vision. And now, as HOPE works towards 2018’s massive countrywide year of mission, with churches of all denominations taking part, we are thrilled to see the Methodist Church has mission firmly on its agenda.

Jude Levermore, Head of Discipleship and Ministries for the Methodist Church, is part of the HOPE Leadership Team. She said: “Partnering with HOPE supports and encourages our focus on authentic discipleship. Although discipleship is always a personal call, it is never a private one. God calls us to be with others, and ... HOPE helps us to serve people where we are.”

HOPE is a catalyst to mission. We aim to give churches inspiration, tried and tested ideas and top-quality mission resources – whether for large, city worship centres or smaller rural churches. The HOPE–Methodist partnership has developed as we have sought to understand what churches need to help make more followers of Jesus.

HOPE is a catalyst for outreach.

Prayer undergirds all we do, so there’s a daily, seasonal, prayer diary from HOPE. We recognise that mission fatigue can set in, so we encourage local churches to work together in a rhythm of mission around the Christian calendar. Christmas, Easter, summer festivals and Harvest become opportunities to reach out.

And HOPE watches out for key dates when churches can take their place at the heart of their communities, bringing people together. The Diamond Jubilee, the First World War Centenary commemorations, and the Queen’s 90th Birthday Celebrations are when HOPE helped churches point people to Jesus.

Together

For example, in 2012, Evangelical, Methodist, Anglican and Catholic churches in Bilton, near Rugby, worked together to hold a huge street party and Jubilee lunch. All churches pitched in and everyone received a Diamond Jubilee New Testament. Then 750,000 copies of the specially-produced New Testament were distributed



throughout the UK. Four years on, and stories are filtering back to HOPE of people who became Christians as a result.

This year, churches took the opportunity provided by the Queen's 90th to distribute a million copies of *The Servant Queen and the King She Serves*. The aim is for these books to be conversation-starters. We trust that, in time, we will see the fruit of those conversations as people draw closer to Jesus.

Words and actions

Our resources seem to be a hit with many Methodist churches. SwanBank Methodist Church in Burslem, Stoke on Trent, worked with local churches and civic bodies to hold a street party for 2,000 people for the Queen's birthday. The local MP and members of Port Vale Football Club attended, with all guests receiving *The Servant Queen*. The afternoon's festivities finished with an open-air service in the town square.

Words and actions characterise HOPE's mission. Methodist churches identifying with the HOPE vision mirror the powerful, practical Christianity John Wesley preached as he left church buildings and took faith to the people.

Sandylands Methodist Church uses HOPE's rhythm of mission, making a significant difference to the local community. Kendal's MP Tim Farron, now leader of the Liberal Democrats, joined churches, Cliff College students and local residents to treat Sandylands in Kendal to a make-over as part of an Easter mission during Hope14. Volunteers painted over



graffiti, spruced up gardens and hosted children's and adults' film shows. The ten-day festival ended with a Big Breakfast on Palm Sunday.

Community engagement and outreach, like that modelled in Kendal, is soon to be on the Cliff College curriculum. HOPE is thrilled to partner with Cliff College for developing a new course on 'word and action mission' coming off all that we have learnt since Hope08. We have models of best practice that we will bring to this course drawn from hundreds of churches around the country reaching out, sowing the seeds of the gospel, and – in time – bearing fruit.

We love to hear from churches and individuals about how we can support you in mission. How can we serve you as you prepare for 2018's year of mission? What can we do to help you reach "one more for Jesus"?



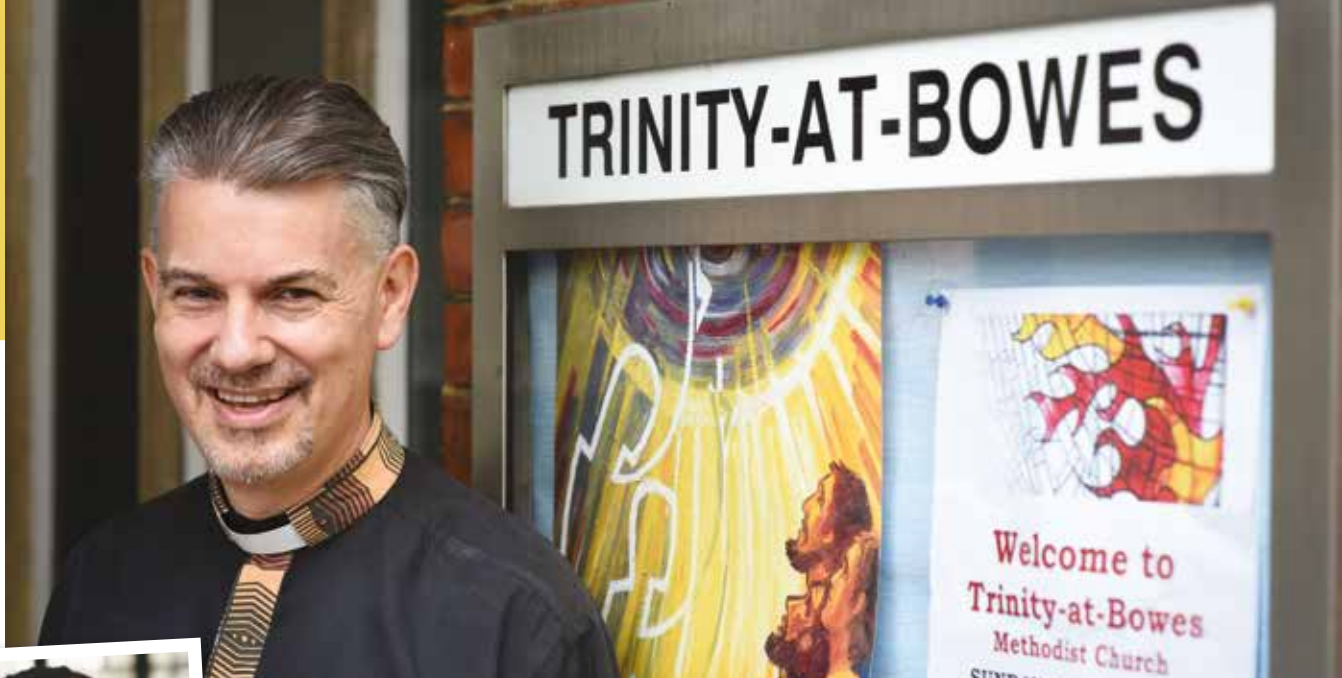
Roy Crowne is HOPE's Executive Director. He serves on the ECG Executive and is part of Navigating Change. Contact him at roy.crowne@hopetogether.org.uk or www.hopetogether.org.uk



Partnership team for HOPE at Sandylands with Kendal MP and Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron (centre)



Cliff College provides education and training with a particular focus on mission and evangelism www.cliffcollege.ac.uk



The Revd Mark Davenport and Andrea Joseph convey the vital, transforming power of partnerships in multicultural Enfield, north London.

Over forty years ago Wood Green, New Southgate and Bowes Park Methodist Churches came together to form Trinity-at-Bowes Methodist Church (TaB). From that day, partnership with the richly diverse community of Enfield has been integral to the Church's vision. Our relationships with local congregations, organisations and individuals foster a community of care – where the hungry are fed, the poor and needy receive good news and people are empowered on their journey towards a free and better quality of life.

Our **Church Community Centre** is open seven days a week from 9am to 9pm with volunteers dedicating over 752 hours a week. We welcome over 1,000 visitors weekly attending events and activities hosted together with our key partners, who share our vision in transforming people's lives in the community by offering an inclusive and safe environment where the diversity of God's people is embraced and enriched.

Our **Cafe** is a part of the Church's ongoing mission to engage with the local community by providing a free meal once a week. It attracts new families and individuals to share in food and fellowship; often leading them to engage with other church activities. Our partnerships with Sainsbury's, Morrisons and referrals from local homeless and housing organisations are essential for sustaining our Cafe as it provides hot meals for those who may otherwise go without.

Our newly developed **Children and Families** work, in partnership with Enfield Temporary Accommodation Play Project, supports families to flourish by offering a safer space for children to learn, grow and play together. It is a hub where family advice is available.

The appointment of the volunteer co-ordinator, funded by the London District, ensures partners and volunteers work together to enrich the local community practically and spiritually as part of the



“We can make a difference; it gives us hope for a better community.”

Centre Manager,
Andrea Joseph



Ordinary people doing extraordinary things together

Church's vision. We have established an environment that encourages volunteers of different abilities, ages and cultural backgrounds to share in our common goal of enriching our community.

Volunteers speak of a sense of belonging. They are therefore willing to give back; striving to meet community needs. Each volunteer brings different gifts and a passion to serve despite many facing their own personal challenges. This makes their contribution even more beautiful as they appreciate being able to develop their skills, break patterns of negative behaviour, as well as reduce isolation and poverty.

Throughout the year, we ensure that we come together for events that actively celebrate our community's diversity with contributions from partners such as the Enfield Caribbean Association, Asian Women's Group and members of the Bulgarian community, to name a few. Many of our other community events aim to draw together and unite our partners in celebration of our relationship with God and one another.

Our partners recognise the significance of volunteering as an act of drawing closer to God through helping others as each of us follow Jesus' way of life and service.

www.trinityatbowes.co.uk

Hear from our volunteers

"I have been volunteering at TaB for about two and a half months and it's been very interesting. It has impacted my faith as I have learnt to be more patient and willing to accept all who come to use the services."

Roderick, TaB volunteer

"My son started Boys' Brigade (BB) here six years ago and I started off as any other normal parent. Then one Christmas, I was asked to step in and help. That led to Youth Leader's Training for BB and here we are three years later! Now I have a job running three sessions a week for babies and toddlers, and Messy Church. We've had lots more families through the door and I also trained and manage four volunteers which is new for me! My confidence has grown and after many years I am exploring my faith and attending church activities."

Angela, TaB volunteer

"I joined the church as a single mum, newly arrived in Enfield. People at church were welcoming and we began to make friends and felt part of the church community quickly."

"My daughter and I have received lots of support, people praying for us and helping us practically when we needed it. I know that without them I would not be able to look forward to a hopeful future. I have learnt that God is real and when we pray he answers us in ways that I would never have imagined. I am confident and happier than I have been in a long time; I enjoy being valued as part of a community that cares for all."

TaB church member and volunteer

Volunteers' contributions are beautiful.

1. Computer club
2. Community meal
3. Childrens' volunteers Faith and Nicole
4. Mark with volunteer Lorinda
5. Children's activities
6. Playgroup
7. Volunteer Roderick
8. TaB volunteers





The Revd Canon

Billy Kennedy is the leader of the Pioneer network and is currently serving as one of the presidents of Churches Together in England.



Nigel Bailey is a Methodist local preacher in the Southampton Circuit and partnership development director of Pioneer Network.

A Spirit-inspired partnership

Partnering as authors, Pioneer leader the Revd Canon Billy Kennedy and Methodist preacher Nigel Bailey tell how our churches are partnering for renewal and mission.

Mosaic Church, Hull



Billy

In February 2009 I took on the role to lead the Pioneer network, a movement of new churches formed over the last 30 years. I then asked the question: "is the future more of the same for Pioneer, or does the Holy Spirit have a fresh focus for us?"

This led to many fascinating conversations both within our movement and with other churches and ministries. The result of these conversations was that we saw the importance of sharing together for mission with partners from across the denominational spectrum.

Pioneer became a member of Churches Together in England, sponsored by the former General Secretary of the Methodist Church the Revd Martyn Atkins. We began our first tentative steps partnering with the Southampton Circuit in a number of missional activities.

Word about our partnership quickly spread across the Connexion and before long we were discussing potential partnerships in all sorts of places from Hull in the north-east, to Dartmouth in the south-west.

Such mission partnerships are marked by mutuality, each willing partner making their contribution. This enables our witness to be more confident and allows the light of the gospel to shine more brightly.

Nigel

We felt that these initiatives needed an identity and decided to use the name PioneerConnexion to reflect its Pioneer and Methodist roots. Started in 2010, it exists to encourage and enable partnership between willing partner churches for renewal and mission. We cover a range of activities including the IGNITE Discipleship

The Holy Spirit is centre stage.



Program, missionary placements, property sharing and shared missional activities. Today, PioneerConnexion partnerships function across nine Methodist districts.

Such partnerships take many forms; but to be 'authentic' what each must have in common is that it is born out of a shared desire to hear from God, and respond to his word and direction. In the best examples, a sense of prophetic vision has driven the parties together – spiritually hungry people, unsatisfied with the scraps left under the table of a tired or weary Church, are striving to bring new vigour, life and hope.

I have been involved with the partnership since its very early days and there have been some wonderful, privileged moments when we have glimpsed a little of heaven breaking through: Like the story of 81-year-old Barbara, from Flavel Church in Dartmouth, who found physical healing and a whole new spiritual dimension to her faith just a few months before she passed into glory.

I remember, too, interviewing an enthusiastic member of the team at Mosaic Church in Hull, who was beaming as some lively worship was starting up behind us – and exclaiming, "...here I go to church, here I go home and I'm hoarse from singing, I'm high as a kite, I'm inspired – no matter what state I come in, I go out absolutely singing and dancing!" What a wonderful testimony to the work of Mark and Deana Button who lead this pioneering ministry at Mosaic.

I believe the greatest potential comes from the IGNITE course, which takes the form of an evening each week for ten months and is built on three pillars; Who is God? Who am I? What am I called to? I attended the course in 2013 and my

life has never been the same since. It's running in twelve centres around the UK and we are planning to add more pilot locations from September 2016.

Ken McKenzie, a Methodist lay worker on the Newcastle IGNITE course said this, "IGNITE has brought together people of like mind who thirst for God, who love Jesus and believe in spiritual gifts. IGNITE is bringing the Holy Spirit centre stage – or rather the Holy Spirit is using IGNITE to point spiritual people back to their spiritual first love. Every Wednesday 'I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene'."

At the heart of IGNITE – and PioneerConnexion – is a culture of positivity, earnest seeking and spiritual risk-taking. We are still developing it, but if we can get it right, we can equip a new generation of leaders and followers to believe for more and multiply that culture across the Church.

www.pioneerconnexion.org.uk

Leaders of Mosaic, Mark and Deana Button

Taking part in the IGNITE course



CONNEXIONALISM

Our constant, enriching,
challenging way of living

The Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Gareth J Powell, reflects on connexionalism as an authentic partnership that benefits and challenges all Methodists.



How is connexionalism expressed and experienced in your local church?

Paying attention to the experience of connexionalism in each local church is important in understanding how the people called Methodists can give expression to being in connexion with each other.

The question is not just about how a circuit might function, and there is more to connexionalism than the structure of a district. Connexionalism as a reality of our life in the body of Christ requires us to think about our being connected with those whom we do not see.

The question should, in theory, be simple to answer. If you read about the basic principles of connexionalism, you are left with the view that all of the Methodist people are one interrelated body with an accountability under God. We are all a part of this Connexion, wherever we live out our discipleship. However, my travels around the Connexion, coupled with some of my correspondence, suggest that the impact of being connexional is not always clear.

There is sometimes a view that the Connexion is elsewhere, that it is about other people who will do things for us, or are not doing enough for us, or telling us what to do. In other cases, ambivalence to connexionalism comes from not really feeling as if it has any impact.

Shaping and nurturing a body of people is a constant task.

Paying attention to this question of experiencing connexionalism in each of our local churches is not to avoid our missionary obligations. Rather, it is to ensure that we are properly equipped, shaped and nurtured for mission.

We are all more likely to be faithful to our task when we engage in reflection together. Our learning from, and with, each other has the possibility to enrich and challenge us; to comfort and reassure us. We learn more of the complexity and breadth of God's creation when we are with others.

Shaping and nurturing a body of people is a constant task as we are reshaped and reformed for the tasks to which God calls us. Change and development, which are as natural in the gospel narrative as anything else, require the community of God's people to be changed and transformed. Consequently, the shape of connexionalism needs to evolve. To be faithful in our evolution we will have to be willing to help each other, even those whom we do not see, but who with us share in the mission of God's Church.

I am sure that in this will be a challenge for each and every Methodist and local church. If we are serious about being Methodists we need to address this question, and be willing to accept and share some searching responses.



Authenticity is key

The Revd Julie Coates journeys with Rosehill Methodist Community Primary School to discover authentic partnership goes beyond her roles of chaplain and governor.

When I arrived at Rosehill in 2010 the role of school chaplain was already well established and supported by the Ashton-under-Lyne Circuit. Volunteers from circuit churches come into school to help readers, run clubs or lead collective worship. Others exchange pen-pal letters with pupils. Another member of the circuit and I serve as Foundation Governors.

Pupils come out of school to visit Hurst Methodist Church for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest 'experiences', and the school choir takes part in café church at Mossley Methodist Church. While the Executive Head Teacher is a regular speaker at Stalybridge Methodist Church fellowship groups, the school itself is used by the circuit for community Fun Days.

So is this authentic partnership?

Yes, because authenticity is a key element of chaplaincy – what you say and do, and how you journey alongside others as they explore the big questions of life has to be genuine.

Yes, because it is two-way – both the school and circuit benefit from this relationship. Under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools pupils are required to have an appreciation of the ministry of John Wesley and what it means to be a Methodist today. Church members help teachers explore these topics.

In return, the work I'm privileged to join at Rosehill feeds my ministry in local churches and community. Here's what I mean...

Godly Play is included in the RE curriculum. I share a story with a couple of staff who then pass it on to a group of pupils. Part of the sharing is to 'wonder' together about the story. The open-ended questions used for this begin with the words "I wonder...". For instance, "I wonder what you like best about this story?" and "I wonder which is the most important part?"



Sadly, the father of one of these members of staff died recently. She asked me to take the funeral and suggested I include an "I wonder" question, just before the prayers. It's hard to describe how moved I felt by this. I usually encourage a moment of quiet for people to think about their own memories of the deceased, but this time I prefaced it with the words "I wonder what your favourite memory of your loved one is?" Many people came up to her afterwards and told her what they had been thinking about.

Pupils dressed as John Wesley experiencing a 'warmed heart'

I'd shared something precious with this staff member – and she showed me a whole new meaning to it. That's authentic partnership.

Rosehill Primary School governors' committee meeting



Go-between chaplains



As chaplains in two Birmingham universities, Sally Rush and the Revd Andrew Brazier create opportunities for students of different faiths to form friendships.

Imagine interfaith encounter as a potential friendship. You know how well people could be getting on but instead they hide nervously in the corners of this unfamiliar world. So Higher Education chaplains become the go-betweens trying to create the opportunities to meet.

Before such a gathering begins there is nervous expectation. Will anyone actually show up? Perhaps the idea is to have a shared meal and then pray together, as far as folk feel able. Perhaps you have invited all the faith societies. What, though, if only the Christians turn up? What if praying together feels awkward?

Then slowly people start to gather in the room. The Sikhs arrive with the little harmonium that they use for worship. Clearly they are comfortable with your plan. The Christians from the Christian Union arrive with their nervous smiles; then the Muslims with their information booklets and more confidence. It might feel like bribery but students will always turn up for food, so that must come first.

The buffet is revealed with the halal and kosher cuisine and pots and plates labelled with every dietary requirement you could think of. Soon everyone is relaxing and so are you. The Buddhist chaplain is chatting with the Pagan chaplain. The Catholics find common ground with the Jews to discuss their festivals together.

We are supporters and translators; introducing everyone and giving this opportunity for students of different faiths to meet. As each person round the circle leads their part of the prayers, it becomes apparent that this is what life and world peace should look like – a good relationship.

So what does a chaplain do? We remind people of what they already know: that they respect and appreciate each other. Oh, and offer to tidy up the mess after the meeting.

See the variety of activities in which chaplains are engaged at: www.methodist.org.uk/mission/chaplaincy

MAIN PICTURE: Food first at interfaith encounters

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Member of Sikh Soc; University of Birmingham main building; the Revd Andrew Brazier; Sally Rush; Shahin (the Muslim Chaplain) with a young cantor from the mosque



Ecumenism changes rural life

As National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (URC), Elizabeth Clark witnesses rural partnerships growing the kingdom.

“All we want to do is continue worshipping in our village” said one of my first congregations. A faithful few were struggling with a building they could no longer maintain. The answer was obvious – to unite and worship together in the Anglican parish church. So began a journey to a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), and much later a shared community centre in the old Methodist church. Village life changed considerably: for some it meant they could ‘just go to church’ without worrying about past family loyalties, people across denominations worshipped together, a community hub formed for socialising and support.

This experience, coupled with my own memories of worshipping in an Ecumenical Congregation, mean I am now passionate about working together. I would go a stage further and say that ecumenism is now a ‘mission imperative’ in rural areas. It is a great strength for me that my post is funded ecumenically and I gain immensely from



Germinating new life in the countryside.

both the Methodists and URC. I am part of an ecumenical team at the Arthur Rank Centre and we are convinced this is the way forward for the rural Church.

As I travelled around the Connexion I have been privileged to see first-hand what a difference working with partners makes. From LEPs to Ecumenical Areas, congregations and communities become stronger as they learn to work together. That is not to say it is always easy; there are barriers to closer ecumenical working that must be overcome at a national level. Locally, it frequently requires effort, grace and a good sense of humour!

However I am convinced that in an increasingly post-denominational world, especially in the countryside, it is essential that we learn to work together. We are called as Church to be one, “so that the world may believe...” (John 17:21). Ecumenism is not about keeping the show on the road but growing the kingdom.

www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk



Wolds Valley Methodist Chapel is also a post office



TOP, LEFT AND RIGHT Celebration of village life

BELOW The Revd Elizabeth Clark





The Untold Story

*The press release lay open on the table...
a good news story of mission
undertaken by X and Y and Z.
Jointly pursued (so they claimed)
to the glory of God.*

But God knew a different story

*Of how the public language of
“we together” was still,
in private of
“us and them”*

*Of how the originator of the scheme
was still in love with the genius of its genesis
whilst the other two remained alert
for any flaw in the rock from which it was
hewn.*

*And of how all three believed
it could have been so much better
had all the decisions gone their way.*

*Of how it was remembered
down to the last penny
what each had put on the table
with no consideration for “the widow’s mite”.*

*Of the jealous eyes watching
for signs of growth:
Better that the fruit wither on the vine
than be gathered only in
another’s garden.*

*The press release lay open on the table
and the God of truth
so longed to take up the editor’s red pen...*

I’ve worked on many joint projects. But whatever the strategic challenges a project brings, I’ve found that the biggest obstacle to authentic partnership is my own internal resistance to the life of cooperation and sharing to which God invites us.

Working together calls me to face my own desire to retain control; my lack of openness to other’s people’s ideas and ways of working; my covetousness of the fruits of mission.

The partnership projects you’ve read about in this edition are seeking to transform communities and churches, and demonstrate that one of the most important fruits of authentic partnership can be the way we ourselves are transformed.

Lord Jesus Christ
for my sake
you emptied yourself
of all but love.

Through your self-giving
teach me what it means to put my own
desire aside.

Through the Spirit’s power
transform my selfish ways.

Free me to work
wholeheartedly
with others in pursuit of the kingdom.

Amen.

The Revd Rachel Parkinson is Chair for the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District from September 2016.

Recommitting to the common good



The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) reflects on what's next after the EU referendum.

The people of the United Kingdom have made a significant decision to leave the EU. Across our communities, including in churches, some will face this with dismay; others with celebration. Those differences should not become the tools of division, but spur us to find the common resolve and respect to overcome them.

Whatever view we hold, fairness and justice for all were never going to be the automatic consequences of being inside or outside any institution. They only become realities if, as a country and as citizens, we intentionally pursue them both at home and abroad.

After months of sometimes damaging debate we must recommit ourselves to work together for the common good. We believe that every human being is made in the image of God. Any narrative that undermines this, or promotes division and discrimination, runs contrary to the values of God's kingdom. We now face an inevitable process of change, and with that will come uncertainty. As a people of faith, we can draw strength from recognising that God's purposes prevail beyond any political alliance or union.

As the implications of this historic decision continue to emerge, we call upon those who lead us to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly in the ways of God's kingdom.

Read the full statement at: bit.ly/jpit-common-good

**“HE HAS TOLD YOU, O MORTAL, WHAT IS GOOD;
AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU
BUT TO DO JUSTICE, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS,
AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?”**

(Micah 6:8, NRSV)