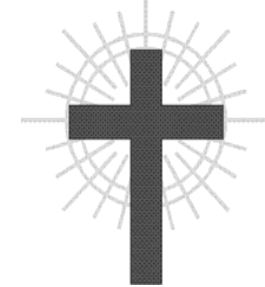
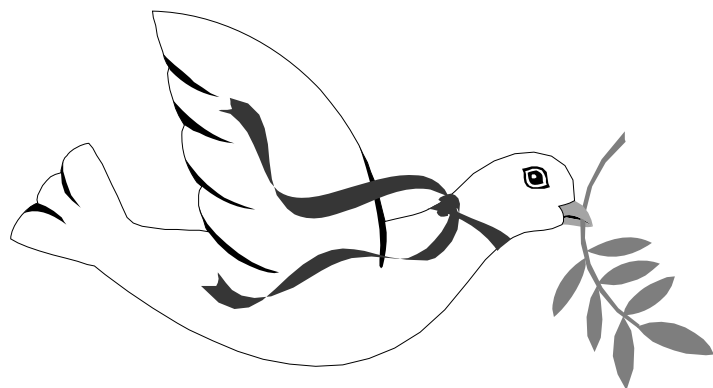


THE MESSENGER



Monmouth
Trellech
Broad Oak
Gwern-y-Saint
Llancloudy

March/April 2010



But even as a separate church we shall have to continue with our commitment to co-operate with others in mission wherever possible and to whatever extent it is possible. Whether co-operating with others or allowing a wider expression of the universal church to come into existence will require a lot of working together in mission locally. Doing that will throw up some obstacles that will have to be removed and some issues that will have to be resolved if mission is not to be hampered. Some of those include matters of interchangeability of ministries, common decision-making structures, the role of women in the church, and how oversight is embodied. Much work has been done on these and some people will have to be asked to keep working at them on our behalf. When we signed the Covenant we committed ourselves to working to remove any obstacles to visible communion so far as our relationship with the Church of England is concerned. Any solutions will have to be agreed by all of us in due course and by due procedure. But in the interim we must all keep striving to engage as effectively as possible in worship and mission.

We have found the Methodist people in good heart, and an increasing sense of the energy of God's love being released amongst us. We are a people of one book, the Bible. We allow the gospel to both comfort and challenge us. We let the love of God both confirm and transform us in the body of Christ through the Spirit.

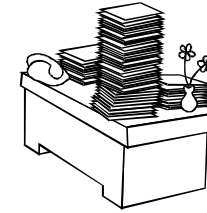
We are yet alive. We shall be alive in the future in whatever form God wills. God has not finished with us yet!

The Revd David Gamble
President of the Conference
Dr Richard M Vautrey
Vice-President of the Conference
The Revd Dr Martyn D Atkins
General Secretary

be prepared to move forward together and to leave some things behind in the process for the sake of the Kingdom. So it is not a question of Methodists being submerged or absorbed in the Church of England or any of our other partners. It is not a matter of Methodists returning to the Anglican fold, but of seeing whether together we are prepared to become a 'new fold'.

This is not just true of our relationship with the Church of England. We have also signed a Covenant with other churches in Wales, and recently a partnership with other churches in Scotland. We have many local partnerships with other churches, the United Reformed Church in particular. And we are all part of wider denominational groupings. For example, the world-wide Methodist communion is over 70 million strong and the world wide Anglican communion about 78 million. Both are faced with questions of how they cohere in the 21st century, and how they deal with situations where there are competing and even contradictory convictions within them. In addressing these we have a lot to share with each other.

When we addressed the General Synod it was only the second time that the President of the Conference had done so; the first since the Covenant between the Methodist Church and the Church of England was signed in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen in 2003; and, importantly, the first time the Vice-President and the president had been invited to address the Synod together. What we were saying to the General Synod was that Methodists have always been committed to unity in order to create greater effectiveness in worship and mission. We said that thinking like this comes naturally from our spirituality. We approach our Covenant with the Church of England in the light of the Covenant Service in our Worship Book which we pray each year. We were gently but urgently asking the General Synod whether the Church of England was prepared to make the same commitment and allow itself to be transformed for the sake of the gospel. And what we say to the Church of England we say to our other partners. So what happens if other churches are not prepared to be changed in order to become more effective in mission with us? Rather than being groups of Methodist people in a new and wider church, we shall continue as a Methodist people in a separate Methodist Church faithfully trusting in God's continuing leading of us. We could do that, and we currently do.



From the Minister's Desk

Friday 19th Feb and the sun is shining yet as the very cold winter continues there is snow on the ground. Through the snow peep about a dozen yellow crocuses and two clumps of snowdrops and in the church front garden there are daffodils out(late this year, they were out at Christmas last year). We are in Lent with Easter just round the corner.

The appearance of the spring flowers reminds me that the cycle of life as promised in Genesis 8 v 22 continues:- "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

God fulfils His promise in the natural order which he has created and sustains.

Easter holds other promises to us. The promise of sin forgiven, the promise of abundant life and the promise of a place with Jesus in eternity.

Do we deserve them? No, because we have let God down.

Can we earn them? No, they are free gifts from God.

Do we want them? We should, but so many people do not seem to see the need for forgiveness or a saviour.

One of the great parts of Stainer's Crucifixion is " the appeal of the Crucified" Here Stainer writes "From the throne of His cross the King of grief cries out to a world of unbelief". Stainer suggests that in a way Jesus is asking the question " O perishing souls why, why, will you die?"

There is a real sense that if Jesus came today to this “ World of unbelief” he would ask the same sort of question. Why, after two thousand years of the gospel message do people still not see the truth? The difference, I suspect, is that Jesus would not be asking the question of the crowd but of the Church?

We still have the task of telling people about the love, grace and mercy of God as seen in Jesus.

Easter is not just the excuse for the first holiday of the year, or an opportunity to celebrate the end of winter. We need to show people that it is the celebration of rich life, abundant life, eternal life and this is a gift they can have from God. But as James Seddon wrote “ How shall they call if they have never heard the gracious invitation of His Word”.

I wish you all a joyous Easter

God Bless

Barry

Easter Dates for your diary

Maundy Thursday 1stApril , 7.30 p.m., Holy Communion. at Monmouth

Good Friday 2ndApril ,10.00a.m., Meditation Monmouth
Afternoon walk of witness Monmouth
7.00 p.m. Service Trellech

Easter Day 4thApril 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion Monmouth

been about. We best honour those who have gone before us by doing the equivalent in our time and our circumstances of what they did in theirs. It is our DNA as a people to be a group of disciples who are committed to glorifying God in worship, to holiness and to being obedient and active in mission. We are therefore delighted to see an increasing interest in and commitment to discipleship amongst us.

We believe that God has a role for us in this mission, and we are increasingly embracing it. We have about 265,000 ‘card-carrying’ members, and that number has been decreasing because of the age-profile of our members. But more churches are making more members each year; a quarter of our churches are growing; the numbers worshipping with us on Sundays and, increasingly, mid-week is rising; fresh expressions are starting to flourish; we have regular contact with over 800,000 people; and we are part of a growing worldwide Methodist communion of over 70 million. There is a growing self-confidence amongst us accompanied by an appropriate humility about ourselves, and a releasing of energy for mission.

But we are not the whole of the church, and we cannot do it all by ourselves. So we have voted consistently over the years for unity schemes that are designed to increase the whole church’s effectiveness in mission. This is not a death wish, but a desire to be obedient and a willingness to be transformed. We can countenance ceasing to exist as a separate Church because we know that we will still be the Methodist people within a wider Church.

As our major statement on the nature and mission of the Church *Called to Love and Praise* put it in 1999 “the British Methodist Church may cease to exist as a separate Church entity during the twenty-first century, if continuing progress towards Christian unity is made”. Methodism will still contribute some of the riches of its own distinctive history and mission to any future church. We know from that history that we can be the Methodist people either in our own separate church or in some wider expression of the universal church. Helping to create a wider expression of the universal church and becoming part of it will require not just us but other churches to

**A Pastoral Letter to the Methodist People from the President
and Vice-President of the Conference and the General
Secretary**

(following the address of the President and Vice-President to the
General Synod of the Church of England on 11th February 2010)

And are we yet alive? Our answer, despite some recent press speculation to the contrary, is a resounding “Yes!”. We have seen the evidence in various ways through our complementary roles. As President and Vice-President we have represented the care, oversight, authority and support of the Conference as we have visited local churches and situations in different parts of the connexion. We have seen the Methodist people being faithful and the Spirit at work in them and through them. We mentioned some examples in our address to the General Synod. As General Secretary, Martyn is responsible for leading the development of the mission of the Methodist Church. He too has seen evidence of energy being released amongst us.

We are all convinced that God is not finished with the people called Methodist yet. We began as a discipleship movement within the wider church, a society of people seeking holiness and engaging in worship and mission. In Wesley’s time and through succeeding generations we have continually adapted to circumstances to fulfil that calling as effectively as possible. It is still Our Calling today. And mission has never been more needed than it is now. We live in a world ravaged by war and poverty, and torn apart by questions of how we care for the natural environment and the morality of financial systems. We live in a world where people need to hear the word of God in a language they can understand, where they need to see the love of God through people like us and experience it as good news for themselves. We live in a world where not enough people are being attracted and formed into disciples of Jesus Christ, responding to the promptings of the Spirit.

Responding to situations like this, allowing God to transform us so that we can be most effective in doing so, supporting each other in that through our interconnections, is what Methodism has always

WOMEN’S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 

Let Everything That Has Breath Praise God

A Service Prepared by Christian Women of Cameroon

Friday 5th March 2010

ALL WELCOME – MEN WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This Service will be held at

Monmouth Methodist Church

St. James Street, Monmouth

at 11.30 am

Speaker: Dr. Stella Mills

*To be followed by a
Bread and Cheese Lunch*

Cost: £1.50p



**CIRCUIT SERVICE FOR THE INDUCTION OF
MRS CATHERINE LEWIS AS A FULLY ACCREDITED
LOCAL PREACHER**



***Please come and join us at Caldicot Methodist Church
for this wonderful occasion.
Caldicot Methodist Church March 7th
Buffet from 12.30pm – all welcome
Service and worship from 1.45pm***

Easter Offering 2010

The Easter Offering envelopes will be available from Palm Sunday.
Information about the Easter Offering.

1. The Offering is organised by the Women's Network of the Methodist Church.
2. All proceeds go to the fund for World Mission. The money raised enables, among other things, the following to be funded:

- Grants for partner churches overseas
- Training for Mission partners
- World Church in Britain Programme
- Mission live programme

Please give generously to make possible the work of sharing the love of God throughout the world.

Easter Offering Dedication Service

The Circuit Offering Dedication Service will take place at
Monmouth Methodist Church on

Sunday 2nd May at 10.30am

Speaker; Reverend D. Lloyd Williams.

Leader; Mrs J. Morgan

Ann Smedley

SAINTS ALIVE!

The first meeting about this exciting musical, about the events leading from just after the resurrection to Pentecost itself was enjoyed, by everyone who came. For some, it was an introduction to the presentation, and for others a revisiting of it, but Jennifer soon had everyone singing. Thanks to everyone for coming and for your enthusiasm.

This musical has narrations and bits of drama between the songs, and so as well as more singers, it's important that we have people for those too. In fact, for both the songs and the spoken word, the more, the merrier. Jennifer and I would be delighted to receive calls, emails or even face to face conversations from any one who is interested in being involved. We're hoping to hear from folk all over the circuit of all ages. Even if you would like to be a part of this presentation but would prefer not to sing or speak, there will be a place for you.

So if you want to sing, act, help with costumes, or just look decorative, please contact us. Jennifer is looking after the music, Ann the drama.

It's all taking place on **Friday 28th May 7pm** at Monmouth Chapel.

Jennifer Copestake can be contacted on 01594 836405 after March 12th.

Ann Mills is on 01594 530690 or email at annamills1@tiscali.co.uk. Or just talk to us when you see us.

The first choir rehearsal will be on March 19th, 7.00pm at Monmouth Chapel. The drama rehearsals will be arranged once the characters have been decided. We look forward to hearing from you.

Ann Mills

PASSOVER

THURSDAY 25th March 7.00 PM.

AT

ST. JULIAN'S METHODIST CHURCH

LED BY

DAVE WALKER A MESSIANIC JEW

The evening will consist of the PASSOVER CELEBRATION, a light two course meal which, by tradition, will contain no dairy produce and be eaten without the use of a knife, and close with HOLY COMMUNION.

There will be no charge for the evening but we will ask for donations to cover the cost of the meal and we hope to have enough left to give a donation to an organisation

In order to give us numbers for catering will those wishing to come please contact Pam Smith 01600 714951

Women's Fellowship Programme

March

- 2nd Mrs J Newman: Music from the Shows
- 9th Beetle Drive and Sale of Easter Cards
- 16th Rev. J Lloyd Williams
- 23rd Mr A Isaac
- 30th Rev. B Smith: Holy Week Communion

April

- 6th No Meeting
- 13th Mrs M Allen: Listening to God
- 20th Rev. Dr.A Green: Ancient Sacred Sites
- 27th Rev. D Lloyd Williams: American Pie

“The Lady of Christ’s”

In a previous edition of the Messenger, I wrote about Charles Darwin, one of the most distinguished alumni of Christ’s College, Cambridge. The college has also recently been celebrating the life and work of another former student. The year 2008 marked the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of **John Milton** who studied there from 1625 to 1632. It was his fellow students who nicknamed Milton “the Lady of Christ’s” for his effeminate ways and youthful looks, although he in turn was deeply scornful of the majority of his peers, disparaging their buffoonery and carousing.

Christ’s has a website dedicated to Milton, where one contributor admits that you might well think that the life of a middle-class, well-educated, religious poet born four hundred years ago would be duller than a blunt spoon. Certainly his poetry and prose have a reputation for being hard work and it is true that for most people Milton remains unread. The story of Milton's life, however, is a fascinating and inspiring tale - a tale of the frustration and rebellion of a genius.

Milton was a poet, an author, a polemicist and a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England. He served under Oliver Cromwell as Secretary of Foreign Tongues to the Council of State. He wrote at a time of religious and political flux in England, and his poetry and prose reflect deep convictions, often reacting to contemporary circumstances such as his treatise condemning censorship, *Areopagitica*.

He once wrote: “A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy”

Post script to the debate on Darwin/evolution

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that humanity had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell God that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, “God, we’ve decided that we no longer need you. We’re to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don’t you just go on and mind your own business?” God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, “Very well, how about this? Let’s say we have a man-making contest.” To which the scientist replied, “Okay, we can handle that!” “But,” God added, “We’re going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam.” The scientist said, “Sure, no problem” and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God looked at him and said, “No, no, no. You go get your own dirt.”

So the case could be made that God created the raw materials, and that evolution took over from there. As Carl Sagan said in *Cosmos*, “To really make an apple pie from scratch, you must begin by inventing the universe.”

John Lloyd Williams

GAZA - THE HUMAN COST

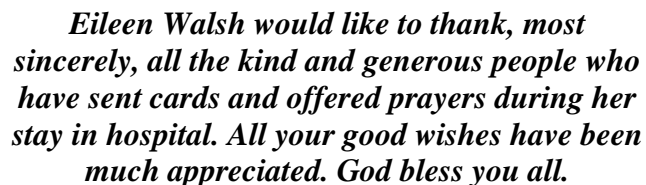
Jill Evans, MEP, has been to Gaza as part of an EU delegation, her most recent visit being in January 2010. She will be speaking on

FRIDAY 19th MARCH AT 11am AT MONMOUTH PRIORY

to update people on the current situation in Gaza, and any progress towards a peaceful solution. Cost is £2, payable on the door. A soup and bread lunch will be available following the talk at a cost of £3.

Event organised by
MONMOUTH CHRISTIAN AID COMMITTEE.

Vivienne Casson



Eileen Walsh would like to thank, most sincerely, all the kind and generous people who have sent cards and offered prayers during her stay in hospital. All your good wishes have been much appreciated. God bless you all.

Milton was a staunch republican, and two weeks after the execution of King Charles 1 in 1649, he committed himself to that cause by publishing *The tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in which he argued that all sovereignty lay with the people, who could depose and even execute a monarch if he betrayed their trust.

Terry Eagleton, writing in *The Guardian*, describes Milton as an architect of the modern liberal state. As a militant ideologue in the defence of liberty, he assisted in the revolutionary upheaval that brought modern Britain to birth.

Milton is best known, of course, for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, which is still regarded as perhaps the greatest long poem in the English language.

The poem concerns the Christian story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton's purpose, stated in Book I, is to "justify the ways of God to men", and to describe what the Christmas Eve service calls "the loving purposes of God from the beginning".

Professor J R Watson points out in an article in the *Methodist Recorder*, commemorating the fourth centenary of Milton's birth, that John Wesley wanted his followers to read *Paradise Lost*, and Charles Wesley often borrowed from it in his hymns. They both knew, he says, that it was a poem that spoke to the human condition, which addresses itself to our ideas (and ideals) of what the world might be, and to the mess of history and politics that we find around us.

Paradise Lost was the greatest of many writings in which Milton fought stubbornly and consistently for what he believed to be right, losing his sight in the process, and Professor Watson concludes that

his poetry and prose need to be heard, perhaps even more than ever before, in this dangerous and cynical 21st century.

Milton died aged 65 on the 9th of November 1674, and was buried at St Giles, Cripplegate. He left behind some of the greatest works in the English language, and the memory of a man devoted to moral goodness and to liberty, with the strength to stand firm where others fell.

It would be fitting to end with Milton's own words from the conclusion of *Paradise Lost*.

The angel Michael has been sent by God to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. They have shown remorse for their actions, and begin to be reconciled with each other. God accepts their regret, but they still cannot stay in Paradise.

Michael then explains, however, what else is to come, including the story of Nimrod building the irreligious Babel, and the faithful Abraham who is promised land by God to start a new community and whose work is continued by Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Michael also reassures Adam that Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, will overcome Satan and Death through his own crucifixion, and redeem man's wrong. Comforted, therefore, about the future, Adam and Eve are led out of Paradise:

*"They looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way."*

John Lloyd Williams

Monmouth Social & Catering Committee (Events)

Our thanks to all who contributed in any way to the success of the 60th Birthday Celebrations for Barry. I think you will all agree it was a very successful evening masquerading as a Valentine Party, and was enjoyed by all.

Further programme events

13th March: Fair Trade Coffee Morning - 10.30 to 12 noon. There will be a Fair Trade Stall selling all things under the trade mark of Fair Trade, a Bring & Buy stall and, of course, coffee/tea and biscuits. We invite you all to come and share fellowship and to support the Fair Trade cause.

24th April: Victorian Afternoon Tea from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. A "special" tea to replace the Spring Fair.

28th May: "Saints Alive" a musical by Roger Jones for Pentecost - at 7 p.m. at Monmouth Chapel

26th June: Beetle Drive at 5.30 p.m. with finger buffet.

Various activities will also take place during the summer and details will be available nearer the time.

Also, on November 13th, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. we are organising a Craft Fair. More details will be available soon.

Pat Evans & Jean Morgan