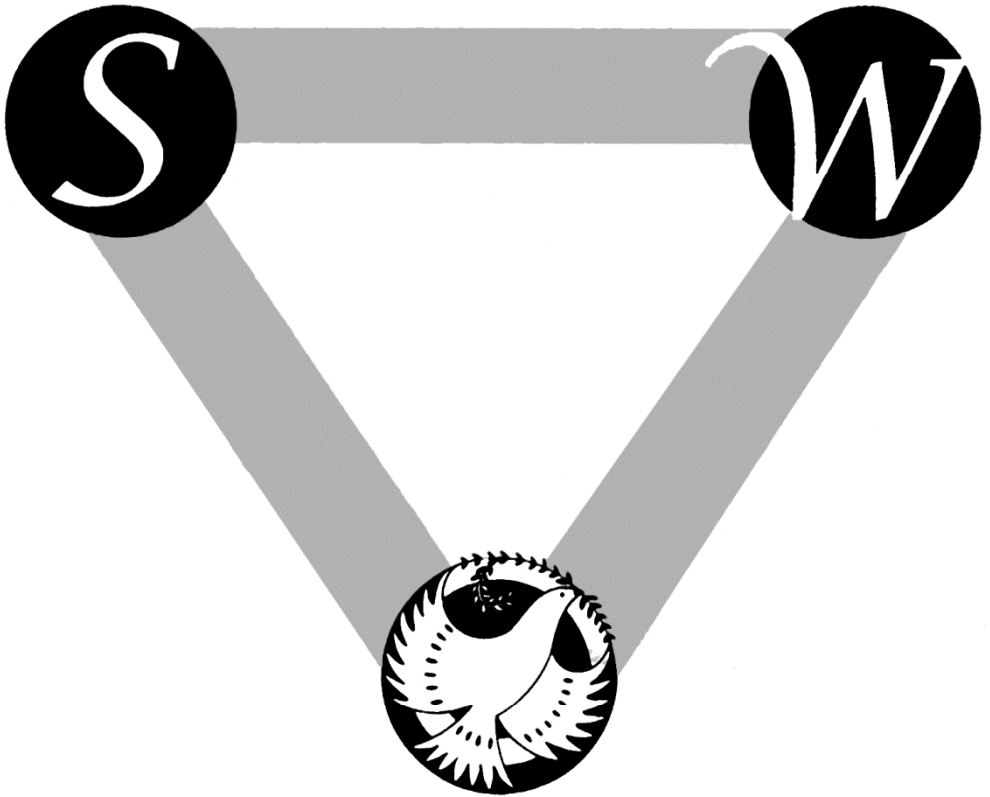


Triangle



The quarterly magazine of the
Methodist Churches of Springdale
and Wombourne

Autumn 2013

Welcome

David Hotchkiss, editor

Hello and welcome to my first attempt at editing Triangle. Before all else I should put on record not only all our thanks to retiring editor Helen Cooper for her work in producing this magazine until now, but also my own appreciation for the help and guidance she has given me in taking over the role, without which I would still be floundering in a morass of digital confusion! Thank you Helen.

In September, Pauline and I were part of a group mostly from local churches who visited the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. It was a wonderful, uplifting and educational experience, and we hope to share some of our stories with you, perhaps in the next edition, when we have fully come down to earth.

But I can say that at one charming gift shop we picked up a painted stone that simply said “Everything happens for a reason”, which I suppose has always been my motto. And as we mourn the loss of Gospel Ash as a regular venue for worship, we trust in God’s purpose and know he has his own reason.

How could we have a Triangle without Gospel Ash? That was the question, and we asked people to think of an alternative title. Perhaps we could have a competition to come up with one. Point to Point was suggested, along with Springbourne.

But our new minister, Chris Collins, had an idea of his own. There could still be a triangle – the churches of Springdale and Wombourne would still be at two of the corners, and the third . . . well, that could be God, or ourselves, or the wider community – we could fill that gap in many different ways and it could be reflected in a changing artwork on the front cover.

We shall see! In the meantime, thanks to all who have written for this edition. I think readers will agree there is a very interesting mix of contributions. Please feel free to send in your own – it doesn't have to be via a computer, by the way, as we can easily type-in written material (see the panel below).

The deadline for the next edition of Triangle is

November 24th

Articles can be given to me or your stewards, or emailed to:
triangle[at]springdalechurch.org.uk

And it's hello from him . . .

Christopher Collins

Well I am finally here! After nine months of waiting, praying, thinking and anticipating, I am finally here! I must say everyone has made us feel very welcome and we feel very at home already. If you saw the summer edition then you will already know a bit about me and you will get to know much more of me over the coming years. However there is health warning – my jokes don't improve!

One of the things of being the new kid on the block is the need for me to ask hundreds of questions as I seek to understand our neighbourhoods and churches. I appreciate your patience! One of the projects I am required to do as part of my continuing studies is an "orientation project", which is all about asking questions and listening to the narratives of our communities. I hope what will come out of it will not be a presentation from me saying "this the answer", but rather "this is my perspective", because I am come to you with different eyes which might look at things differently.

As I have been pondering how to go about this I have noticed that "seeing through different eyes" is a theme running through the Bible. The nation of Israel was told to live differently. God spoke through the prophets to give an alternative perspective. Jesus challenged the perceived

norms of the religious establishment and the Roman Empire. And so I think our role is to try to see the world differently and ask the questions which challenge the status quo. In the summer edition of Triangle, you may have read about the “Lies about poverty” report which was seeking to do just that and certainly brought a different perspective on poverty, a perspective seeking justice, not blame, into the mainstream media.

However I am challenged, and I encourage you to be too, to see our communities and our churches through different eyes. What must it be like to be new in our churches? What must it be like to live down the road, to be a young family, to be retired or to be a carer in our communities? What do we see if we walk down the road on a different day? What do we notice if we take a different route to the shops? And among all of that, we must open our eyes to see God’s presence and where God is calling us to serve.

So I hope you will share with me in this journey of discovery.

With every blessing,

Chris

A teddy bears' picnic

Cynthia Lane

Thanks to all the families who brought along their teddies to enjoy themselves at the Teddy Bears' Picnic at Springdale. It raised £70 for Alz Café and its work supporting families living with dementia.

Keeping cool, Penn Puppets and the puppeteers chose a position next to the door to tell the story of a rather wetter July picnic, after which the children were transfixed by Becky's story about a very grumpy dog, joining in with all the actions and sound effects.

A search to find Teddy's friends who were playing hide and seek got everyone rushing about, so we were all relieved to sit and join in with the songs led by the Reverend Jean Pratt from Penn URC. Although her guitar decided it couldn't stand the heat, everyone sang enthusiastically, while copying the words and actions. Some of the tunes were probably more familiar to those of us of advanced years, with new words bringing the Christian message to life. More stories about modern "Good Samaritans" and Story Bag tales by Rev Jean ended the entertainment.

Everyone enjoyed their picnic tea and attempted to win all the items on the tombola stall or guess the birthday of Eileen's teddy bear. The PEC would like to thank everyone

from the four churches who helped to make the afternoon fun.

The Lay Witness Movement

Carole and Eric Walker

“Ordinary people sharing the extraordinary love of God.” This statement describes well the members of the Lay Witness Movement, and who it is they serve.

Their threefold aims are:

1 – To bring individuals into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ;

2 – To bind the church family into a loving, caring community;

3 – To encourage prayer and fellowship groups.

The movement began 37 years ago, and for the past seven years, since our first experience of a Lay Witness weekend in Wombourne, we have been privileged to be prayer members.

We would ask now for your prayers for the movement to be able to continue, as at the moment the number of churches asking for weekends is declining, with just two involved this

autumn, although one is being planned for the Scilly Isles in March of next year.

My first Greenbelt

Emily Cook, aged eight months

I'd wondered why Mummy and Daddy had been putting me in a new little camping cot to sleep – so that I could get used to it. Now I knew, because it was to be my first experience of camping, and not only that – my first Greenbelt Festival!

It was a bit strange at first – going to sleep in a tent with a strong breeze buffeting the sides was a bit unsettling, but I soon got used to it. The fresh air and sunshine meant I slept all through the chatter and music surrounding me at night.

Not to mention bath time – what fun I had in Mummy's washing up bowl. Much more fun than our big bath at home.

Some of the time, I sat on my rug and played with my toys, but I often got distracted because there were just so many children and grown-ups to watch. Other times I got carried to the Festival site. So many exciting things to look at and reach for!

I even got to meet a man called John Bell who Mummy seemed to know. He thought I was very cute. When we went to The Big Sing to sing songs with him, I just had to join in! While the grandparents went to something called "such

interesting talks”, I had a great time playing in the ball pool and going to some children’s shows, but when I went to see The Good Samaritan Puppet Show, I just fell asleep. (Well, it was my nap time, and Grandma, Mummy and Auntie Helen enjoyed it anyway!)

Thank you, Mummy and Daddy, for taking me. It certainly won’t be the last time. I think I will enjoy it even more next year. Why not come along and join me?

(With help from Mummy Lesley at Springdale)

Springdale vestry news

Sheila Sanders, senior steward

After such a hard winter and very wet spring we have been blessed with a lovely summer and I am sure we all feel better for it.

Well, we did it! With the Lord guiding us along the way, and the wonderful support of our ministerial friends and congregation, we survived the year without a minister, but what a joy it was to welcome Christopher and Jenny on September 1st. The whole community at Springdale wish Christopher every blessing as he works for the Lord and, as was said at the circuit welcome service, "We will work with you and pray with you". We welcomed Chris and Jenny on the evening of September 21, our Harvest weekend.

We have had a busy summer with several baptisms (Jane will report). The Christian Aid service was held this year at Penn URC. Our Junior Church anniversary in May was, as usual, very meaningful and our thanks, as always, go to the staff who nurture these young people week by week. The ecumenical Teddy Bears' picnic was held at Springdale this year and, judging by the number of children and teddies participating, I am sure that it was a great success.

Hotpot/Messy Church has started again after the summer break. What a privilege it is to welcome the children each month. Hopefully it will continue to be as successful as in previous years. All the usual activities have started again (listed on the back of the notices) and a warm welcome awaits all.

Helen Cook led the Ecumenical Summer Bible Study and we are grateful to Helen for all she does for ecumenism in Penn. We continue to support the food bank initiative and several of our members help out at the Good Shepherd Centre in Darlington Street.

A reminder that the circuit Just Fayre will be held at Springdale on October 5th, 11am-3pm.

Nick and Annette Gould, who had celebrated their marriage in Australia earlier in the year, had their marriage blessed at Springdale by the Reverend Ken Collins. It was a very happy occasion for parents Richard and Wendy Gould.

Ten years of fundraising have come to an end. The railings and gates have been installed and we now have a wonderful church building to serve the community for many years to come. We approach the weekend of October 19th and 20th with great excitement as we celebrate more than 60 years of Christian witness in Penn. Church members will take part in a concert on the Saturday evening – all welcome. Sunday morning worship will be followed by lunch hosted by our Scouts and we hope to be joined over the weekend by several of our past ministers.

With every blessing . . .

Wombourne vestry news

Louise Wright, senior steward

Haven't we had a lovely summer. I hope you all enjoyed the sunshine! We seem to have had quite a busy time here at Common Road. It started with a barbecue with the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, which went very well. About 70 hot dogs disappeared in no time. Indoor activities were taking place as well, and it was followed by a parade service led by Lawrence Wallace.

On June 16th the Music Festival took place at St Benedict's Church. The Wombourne Musicmakers took part and did very well, with Doreen conducting the choir and Alison playing the piano.

We had a skittles evening on June 22nd to start our Church Family Week. Our thanks to John and Val Philpott, who organise this event every year, and thanks to Pauline and David for organising the quiz night.

On June 20th, our Church Anniversary, Mark Haynes preached in the morning and celebrated Holy Communion in the evening. It was a real pleasure to have Mark to conduct our two services and also to have the whole family there, as they had all come to celebrate the golden wedding of John and Val.

We said “thank-you” to Lawrence on July 18th with a bring-and-share lunch and a gift from the congregation. We have appreciated the guidance and help he has given us in the past year.

Now we are looking forward to the future with Christopher. We gave him and his wife Jenny a warm welcome on September 15th with a lunch, and we pray to God that He will bless them and guide them in their ministry here at Wombourne and Springdale.

One more bit of good news is that Charles Clowes has joined the vestry team once again. We are very grateful to him and Sandra.

Conference reflection

Helen Cook at the Methodist Conference 2013

When I was asked to put myself forward to be a potential rep for the Methodist Conference I thought “why not? It’s a week off work and a week in London”. Little did I know that I was to have a brilliant week, spent with some lovely people and even some surprise encounters with God.

Before you go to Conference two fat folders arrive on the doorstep which contain the agenda. You also receive books of memorials, notices of motion, reports, other legal documents and lots of other stuff to read before you go. I can’t say that I read most of it or understood much of it! But after an evening at John Howard’s my mind was put at rest when I was assured that everything would become clear when we got there – I wasn’t so sure.

The Conference itself was in Methodist Central Hall but we all stayed in Imperial College Halls of Residence in South Kensington. It was lovely accommodation with a lovely bar to relax in after a long hot day at Central Hall. (It was incredibly hot that week).

The first two days of Conference were probably the most enjoyable as there isn’t much business. On Saturday was the opening of Conference. This began with the ringing of a bell at which everyone stood up to sing “And are we yet alive?” I didn’t know this hymn, but it was an incredibly emotional

moment. As you all know, Methodists can sing, but this was unlike anything I had heard before. Not only that, there was a real sense of God's presence in the room and a feeling that his blessing was with us.

The new president and vice-president were then presented. This year the Reverend Ruth Gee is the President and Dr Daleep Mukarji is the vice-president. I have to say I felt proud that we have a woman president again. The world partners were then introduced and the ecumenical guests were welcomed. It felt a real privilege to be part of this. We are part of a worldwide Methodist Church and we should be proud of this.

The new president then made her presidential speech which had the theme "Waiting expectantly for glimpses of glory". It was all about how we can see the glory of God in any situation, wherever we are and whatever our circumstances, and how we should be expectant of that. After lunch was the vice-president's speech. It was truly amazing. He got a standing ovation which I am told is unheard of at Conference. He talked about how mission should be integral to our faith and to our churches.

On Sunday morning there was Conference Worship – another amazing experience. The theme was John 1 with Applegate doing a sketch all about this. But for me, the most emotional moment was when all the ordinands were accepted into full connexion. I felt really proud to be a Methodist when I looked over at them all.

Which other denomination would have so many different types of people standing there? In the afternoon we went to Wesley's Chapel to watch the ordinations.

On Monday the business proper began. It was quite confusing to begin with, but I soon got the hang of it. I will admit that there were some sessions which were pretty dull but on the whole it was fairly interesting. Topics of discussion included: MHA, the Anglican/Methodist covenant, mission, supporting ministers with ill health, alcohol and same-sex marriage. For the most part there was a sense of the Methodist Church moving forward, especially in mission, but I would be lying if I said that everything was positive. For me there were two disappointments – the apparent lack of interest in Interfaith relations and in the Israel/Palestine conflict.

One of my highlights was the visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury. He made a speech which was pretty good. He apologised for Anglican pride and congratulated us on our inclusion of women. The focus of his talk was about our covenant with them. He seemed very much in favour of being united and admitted that Anglicans need to be more pro-active in this. His comment that "visible unity equals treasure" really spoke to me. Something for us to think about in Penn maybe?

As a new member of Conference you get a first-time speaker card. This means that you can skip the queue and ask your question first. I used mine to ask the Archbishop a question.

It was incredibly nerve-racking, but I had to take the opportunity while it was on offer.

Overall, the experience of Conference was brilliant and it was a real privilege to be able to represent the district at this important event.

That's my boy

Jackie Neilson on two special fathers

In the same week two proud fathers in the news, with similarities.

Firstly Simon Weston, Falklands hero. His son James, aged 21, received his

degree from Cardiff University. Father and son were seen both cap and gowned (Simon is an honorary fellow there). The hugs and smiles show a happy pair, and a very proud

father with his son. Incidentally, Simon was 20 when he received 46 per cent burns when The Sir Galahad was bombed in 1982. It was a miracle he survived.

Secondly Prince William, also in the armed forces as an RAF search and rescue helicopter pilot in Wales. He too has had to deal with tragedy at a young age, when he and his brother lost their mother. He now knows the joy of a full family life

with Kate after the birth of their son Prince George. A hands-on dad already, brimming with love and pride.

Who says men don't show their emotions. Two men from different generations showing their feelings for all to see.

50 years of Guiding at Springdale

Gill Banks on the end of an era

It was a very difficult decision to make and one that gave me lots of sleepless nights – to give up my leadership role in Guiding.

I started my Guiding here at Springdale in May, 1963. I had just moved house from Darlaston and had started at the Municipal Grammar School. I knew no-one and felt very lonely, but Linda Griffiths (now Lambah) was at the same school and having befriended me invited me to join her Guide unit at Springdale, where “Cappy” Davies was the Captain. I joined, becoming a member of Elizabeth Race's patrol.

50 years on, I would like to say a big thank-you to all the people who have been on my Guiding journey, either as girls or helpers. Judy Staley has to have pride of place, as it was she who asked me, when I was her lieutenant, to take over the unit from her while she left to have Heather. We have had some laughs over the years as it was only supposed to be

for a few weeks! However without this opportunity I would not have had the joy of all the times I have had in the unit.

The memories from Guide camps are so many, but Kibblestone always come out on top. This was when I was doing my first camp as quartermaster. Judy came out for the day and offered to help me. I gave her a knife and within a minute she had cut herself badly and had to go to hospital! Katherine Green had her birthday there and an item of her underwear of course had to go up the flagpole! The leaders joined all the tent zips together so that when the whistle went for the girls to come for breakfast no-one could get out! We do take Guiding seriously, but without a bit of fun it wouldn't be the same.

My main role had been with Guides over the years, but when the Rainbow unit and then the two Brownie units didn't have leaders I was to stand in temporarily, although more than 15 years was longer than I'd anticipated!

I feel privileged to have seen some girls go through Guiding, from when they joined at five until they became leaders themselves. Recently, at my grandchildren's dancing show, a lady came over to me. I didn't recognise her immediately but when she told me her name I realised that she had been one of my Guides more than 25 years ago. It was lovely to talk to her after all this time and it was nice to know that her children were now Brownies.

There are still lots of ladies here at Springdale who were in Rainbows, Brownies and Guides at some time. I hope you too have fond memories and that you feel that Guiding did something for you.

In February 2014 we will have had a Brownie unit here for 60 years. Please let us know your memories of the unit and what you have done since. You can email 3rdpennbrownies@talktalk.net or write something down and give it to Sue Beck. I still meet up with Margaret Parsons (Cappy's daughter) and on every visit we go down Memory Lane, so I hope she will have a lot to say of her time as a Brownie Guider here.

It is with sincere thanks that I hand over the reins to Sue Beck. She is new to Guiding and has added a breath of fresh air to the Rainbow meetings since she came as a helper three years ago, and as she joins Jo Cook with Brownies I know the units will flourish.

I am so pleased to be "retiring" on a high, having been able to visit Our Chalet in Switzerland (the first World Guiding Centre), being chosen to attend the Thanksgiving Service at Westminster Abbey for Guiding and Scouting and receiving the Midland Commissioner's Award during these past two years. A wonderful finish to a wonderful time in Guiding.

I thank everyone who has been in Rainbows, Brownies and Guides with me over 50 years as a girl or helper. I wonder

how many that adds up to. You all have a special place in my heart.

Wombourne pastoral news

Pauline Hotchkiss, pastoral secretary

When you read this magazine we will be in the season of Harvest. It is a time of gathering in and giving thanks for all that God has given us through the past year. It is a lovely time of year when the trees are just changing colour to give us the beautiful red and orange, copper and bronze.

This is also the time when young people are off to university or college. Congratulations to June Horton's grand-daughter, Sophie, who has gained a place at Wolverhampton University and will be reading for a degree in Child Studies. Well done Sophie, your family must be really proud of you for doing so well.

Not forgetting our younger children for whom school started at the beginning of September. For those who have just started school and those who have moved into high school, we ask that Jesus will be with you in all your new experiences. Congratulations to Jakob Slater who has gained a place at Harper Adams Grammar School in Shropshire.

Robyn Walker, Carole and Eric's grand-daughter, is to be congratulated on her recent graduation from

Wolverhampton University. She has spent three years studying for a nursing degree. God bless you Robyn. Your hands will be in the hands of God, ministering to those who need his healing power.

Our prayers are with those who are in hospital, or have been in hospital. We remember especially David Slater. We pray that God will continue to care for him. Our prayers are also with Amanda and the children. Our prayers are also with Amanda's mom, who is not well, and her dad.

We are delighted to tell you that Peter Moyle, who had surgery for a triple by-pass, is doing really well. At the moment he is attending the gym twice a week, which he really enjoys. Val Philpott is recovering from having a hip replacement in August. We pray that you gain new strength each day. May you both continue to grow in strength and will soon be fully recovered.

Two meetings of the prayer circle have been held since the last Triangle. We prayed for the families of those who had lost loved ones. We remembered especially Sara Maxwell, Gill Worrall's daughter, who died in August. Our prayers are with Gill, Scott (Sarah's husband), and her three lovely children and ask that Jesus will be their comfort and strength at this sad time.

More recently, June Dickens' husband Charles died in hospital. They have been married for 65 years. June, our prayers are with you and with Margaret, Bryan, Debbie and

Peter, and all your family. God grant you peace and comfort as you come to terms with your loss.

We also remembered all those who are sick and in need of God's healing hand. We always remember our older loved ones who are no longer able to care for themselves and are in residential care. God bless them all.

There have been some special celebrations during the last month. Graham and Susan Sinnett celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Walter and Pat Earham celebrated their silver wedding anniversary. Russell Pike, John and Doreen's son, celebrated his wedding to Alison in August at Lichfield. Still with John and Doreen, Edward celebrated his 18th birthday on October 4th. Last but not least John Philpott had a big birthday recently. He won't mind me saying that he is now an octogenarian, because we all know he is 80! Congratulations to all of you. If I have missed anyone off this list I sincerely apologise.

We continue each month with our ministry to The Maltings sheltered accommodation in Wombourne. It is always a delight to share with this wonderful group of people. They love to sing and always appreciate the message given each month. We shall be celebrating our second birthday at the December meeting with a Christmas party after the meeting.

We also visit Himley Mill nursing home each month and minister to the residents in two of the units there. They always appreciate us being there and join in with the singing.

Many thanks are due to Denis, our lay pastoral worker, and all the pastoral group leaders, for all the work they carry out in caring for us all in many ways.

I would like to mention here the work of those ladies from church who are actively involved in the Luncheon Club at the Hand in Hand. Thank you to those who lead a team and those who help in any way to produce a delicious meal and especially those who wash up. Thank you for this very special ministry for people in the village who are housebound or who need company. God bless you all.

Another group of people who offer friendship and kindness to one particular lady is the Wombourne Music Makers. May Griffiths, who we all know and love, celebrated her 90th birthday recently. The choir visited her with songs and laughter and of course a great big cake. The choir visit May quite regularly and as she is not able to get out as much these days I am sure she just loves it. Thank you Music Makers.

If I have failed to mention anyone with a need or with good news then I apologise.

Finally, I would like to share these few words which I think will help us to think about the way we are with people. Some words written by Edgar Guest:

I'd rather see a sermon, than hear one any day.

I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way . . .

It's a reminder that we should aim to be the sort of person who gets chosen as a walking companion, rather than the one who merely likes to give out directions!

Springdale pastoral news

Jane Rawlings, pastoral secretary

Well, I am looking out of the window and it appears summer is over, as it is dull and raining. I hope you all had a good summer and had an opportunity to enjoy the nice weather we experienced.

Since my last message we have been busy at Springdale with five baptisms. Tyreece Marcel and T'Leah Louise Tulloch on February 24th started us off. Then Emily Louise Cook on April 28th followed by Layla Beck Mulamo on June 16th and last but not least Piper Rae Ash on August 18th. Congratulations to all the children and their families and friends. They were joyous occasions for all concerned, including the congregations at Springdale. May they be safe in the knowledge that God is with them every step of their journey as they grow.

In May, Lizzie and Julian announced the safe arrival of baby John, brother for Jack and second grandchild for Judith and

David Pilsbury. What a joy, even with the sleepless nights that will follow. Also in May, Wendy and Richard Gould became grandparents for the first time.

Sadly, in March we heard about the death of Margaret Ganley, a close friend and regular member of the congregation at Springdale. She was a member of the ladies' fellowship and is missed by all her friends.

In March we welcomed four people back into membership at Springdale – Sue and David Crook, Jenny Bailey and Dorothy Forster. We are pleased to have you as part of our family and pray that as we all continue on our individual paths our love for God will grow deeper as we journey on together.

On the June 7th Sarah (Partridge) and John got married. The sun shone and a great day was had by all. The Partridge family have had a busy year, and life has changed for everyone. May you all feel the closeness and love of God as you journey forward into the future on your different paths.

With all these joyous occasions going on it is important to realise that not all of our family at Springdale are finding it easy. There are several people who cannot make it to church due to health problems. We send our love and best wishes to anyone unable to be with us at present and hope their health improves soon and pray that God will be with them as they get through this difficult time. We especially think of Alison Mellor and Gwyneth Wade, who are in hospital.

I think that is nearly everything from me – only congratulations to everyone who has celebrated a special birthday or anniversary recently. Special congratulations go to Dorothy and Graham Clulow who celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on September 14th. Where have all the years gone!?

As we journey on through these uncertain times, may we keep God close by to offer us comfort and love.

Penn Christmas tree festival

The Four Churches in Penn are again holding a Christmas Tree Festival at Springdale Methodist Church on December 13th, 14th and 15th. This is to raise money for:

n Alz Café, which provides social support for people with dementia and for their carers, and

n The Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd Ministry, providing food, clothing and other support to the homeless and needy in and around Wolverhampton, from the premises of Darlington Street Methodist Church.

We aim to have 50 natural trees, five feet high, brightly illuminated and decorated. These will be sponsored and decorated by local businesses, community groups and individuals. There will be a variety of entertainment for adults, activities for children and seasonal music during the day, with refreshments and FairTrade goods on sale.

Would you, your church group or business like to sponsor a tree? Speak to Helen Cook for a sponsorship form.

Pennies well spent

Brenda Shuttleworth

It's long overdue – a disabled accessible toilet at Wombourne Methodist Church

We finally got the bit between our teeth after Wombourne Music Makers raised £450 and a concert by Jean Martyn raised a further £505. Grants amounting to £1,500 from Staffordshire Local Community Fund and the Wombourne Community Fund have also been pledged. We must record our thanks to Doreen and John Pike for getting us started on the project.

Including the much-needed repairs to the flat roof over the creche, the total project will cost £7,259, so we have some way to go. We have made applications to grant-making trusts and to the Methodist District but need to roll up our sleeves to raise the shortfall.

We have asked for donations or pledges from all church members and we are contributing our small change with “a penny a flush”. After Christmas we are holding an evening of entertainment with a hot supper and other ideas are beginning to emerge.

Please do support us in our effort to make our building more accessible for everyone.

‘The British are to blame . . .’

John Howard on three months as a West Bank observer

I was in the main bus station in Tel Aviv, waiting for a “settler bus.” To get back to Yanoun, the village in the West Bank that was my home for three months early in 2013, I needed to catch one of the buses that went to the Israeli settlement of Ariel, not very far from Yanoun. An Israeli woman came up to me and said: “You’re British.” I couldn’t deny it, though I had a strong feeling I knew what was coming! “Do you know your history?” This was said loudly so that everyone in the queue could hear! “Yes,” I said, though I had the feeling my particular view of history might not entirely agree with hers. “You were the people who put us back into prison camps after we had left the concentration camps of Germany.” I had to agree with that though I thought there were other aspects of the history of 1947 she didn’t seem to be taking into account. It was, to say the least, an embarrassing and troubling encounter. I was glad when the bus arrived, and I was careful who I sat next to.

The following day I was at the Palestinian village of Awarta. I was there with another member of the team to gather

information for an incident report on a tragic event in which a young Palestinian man had been very badly injured by some unexploded Israeli ordinance. There was a lot of anger, as the villagers were convinced it had been left on purpose, in a place where it would be found. In the middle of the conversation a Palestinian man turned to me and said: “Of course it’s all your fault.” As you would expect I was a little startled. “It was the British who caused all this – the Balfour Declaration.” (In 1917 the British Prime Minister promised the then Zionists an Israeli state). He obviously felt he might have been too aggressive, as he followed up with: “But you are very welcome here!” It became a joke with my team that whatever happened, it was the British to blame.

At the beginning of February I had joined 29 others from 13 different countries who were to act as human rights observers in seven locations across the West Bank, (from north to south) Jayyus, Tulkarm, Yanoun, East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron and Yatta (in the South Hebron Hills). This is the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). It was created as a response to an appeal from Palestinian Christian Leaders in 2002, for the World Council of Churches to send observers into Palestine to see what was happening and help churches across the world to have a fuller understanding of the crippling effect of the occupation. Since then, more than 1,000 volunteers from more than 20 countries have taken on the role of “Ecumenical Accompaniers” in the West Bank for a period of three months. I was sent as part of a team of five

(from Norway, Ecuador, Switzerland, Sweden and myself from Britain) to the tiny village of Yanoun, about ten kilometers south of Nablus.

In 2002, after weeks of violent attacks by Israeli settlers from the Itamar settlement, the village had been abandoned as too dangerous for Palestinians to live in. After a short time, some of the villagers agreed to return if there were Israeli peace activists present. When this constant presence became impossible for them, an international presence by EAPPI took on the task and has been sustained. There have been hundreds of settler incursions into the village, in most of them the settlers have been armed, often with M16 machine guns. The well has been poisoned and dirty nappies dropped in it. Settlers and Israeli army personnel have called throughout the day and night, but the village life has gradually returned. There is a small school in the village, a community centre and about 80 residents. Every morning and evening, the team walk through the valley, wearing our EAPPI vests to be visible to Palestinians, to settlers and to the army. It is what is referred to as "Protective Presence." When Yanoun is calm we leave just one or two team members in the village and visit other villages where trouble has taken place. Evenings are taken up with writing reports upon any incidents and upon our activity. The reports from all seven placements are sent to the Jerusalem EAPPI office, collated and sent off to governments, the United Nations, the Red Cross and other NGOs. The feedback from the British Consul General and from other government officials from across the

world indicates that EAPPI is very highly regarded and has been wholly affirmed in its work.

It was an experience I will never forget. Some weeks, day after day, we were subject to tear gas, witnessing serious injuries to Palestinians from armed settlers and the Israeli Army, in a number of locations. Frequently we were called to ambulances to photograph casualties. We have visited many individuals injured as a result of the violence of the army or settlers. We have monitored demolitions of homes and other structures and walked with children to school where the actions of the army have left them frightened to go. We have spoken to many young people detained by the army, who claim to have been mistreated while being transported. We have ourselves been attacked by settlers and had to confront the army when it has sought to restrict where we could go to monitor settler activity. There have also been quiet days when nothing much happened. The closeness of the team working in these very troubled situations has given me the privilege of friendships from other internationals. I have been deeply shocked by what I have seen. The occupation is much more brutal and intimidating than I had ever imagined. It needs to end. I come home wanting to describe what I have seen so that we can play a part in changing the reality on the ground.

Safely gathered in

Jackie Neilson

I've been amazed at the wonderful selection of fruit and vegetables to buy in the shops.

Some have air miles, it's true, but local produce from our area and other counties has been excellent. There is nothing to compare with English strawberries and tomatoes in season. Remember when the first runner beans are picked (summer has arrived), and walking down the garden to check the peas are growing well. You just have to pop a pod and taste them, likewise those blackberries in the hedgerows when strolling along country byways at the end of summer.

Aren't we lucky with all this bounty to eat. Unlike a lot of people around the world we have the privilege of popping to the shops to replace anything, at any time. Even any indulgent treats we fancy. Most importantly we have fresh, clean water, always, at the turn of a tap. We are truly blessed in this country.

After the vagaries of last year's weather, rain-rain-rain, and this year's long, cold winter and late spring, we've had a lovely summer. I wonder if autumn will be as spectacular as last year's. Everywhere you looked the trees were dazzling colours – a photographer's paradise (and I've got the photos to prove it). Even with the price of commodities rising around the world and challenging harvests for our farmers (dealing

with drought and flood, affecting yields) we still have ample food for our needs. We are very fortunate. God is good, we count our blessing and in our prayer to him we give thanks “for our daily bread”.

Perhaps that pesky Jet Stream will align well to keep us and the farmers content in the future.

A presbyteral what...?

Christopher Collins

Some of you may have already noticed on my calling card that my title is a little unusual. I am a “Presbyteral Probationer” and I thought I would take a few moments to explore what that means. The “presbyteral” bit is important because the Methodist Church recognises two orders of ministry: Presbyteral and Diaconal. Presbyters and Deacons are all ordained ministers but the orders recognise distinct elements in what we offer God, the Church and the world. A presbyter is called into the ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral care.

On the other hand, a deacon is called and commissioned to lead God’s people in worship, to minister Christ’s love and compassion, to visit the sick and suffering, to seek out the lost and to encourage us to continually offer our lives to God. So I am seeking to live out my calling as someone who breaks

open the Word of God, celebrates the Sacraments and exercises pastoral care.

The “probationer” bit means I am still in training and this part of my training is in this circuit. All candidates seeking ordination must undertake a period of probation first, usually for two years. In practice you may notice very little difference between me and other presbyters but . . .

. . . even though I am allowed to use the title “Reverend” and wear a clerical collar, I am not yet ordained. This means that some things, like presiding at Holy Communion, I can only do with a special authorisation granted by the Methodist Conference.

. . . and because I am still in training I have to undertake further study which is supported by a weekly “study day” which is in addition to my day off. And, like any period of testing, there will be plenty of reports written about and interviews for me to participate in! Some of you may become involved in those processes.

So, in a nutshell, that is my role as a Presbyteral Probationer! When all is said and done I think it is important that at the circuit welcome service I made the same promise to you as my ordained colleagues did. I promised to “work with you and pray for you”. That is my duty, my privilege and my delight.

I never wanted to be sexy Thank you very much God

I never wanted to have a sense of humour

Then I discovered more than five senses

I never wanted to be vulnerable I discovered it was a
strength not a weakness

I never wanted to marry a rich woman I think she is rich
beyond compare

I never wanted to be beautiful It took me 40 years to know I
was a beautiful human person

I never wanted to be in a band I now have a great band of
friends

I never wanted to be imperfect I now know it is in synergy
with beautiful

I never wanted to be a great lover I found it as a life
mission

I never wanted to be disabled I learned that I have abilities
and disabilities

I never wanted an idol, mentor, guru, then I met someone
who said Follow me

And that was all I ever wanted...