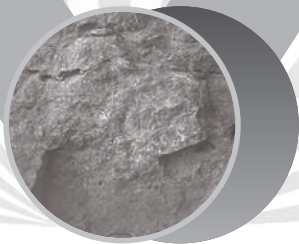


Triangle



LOVE THAT
EMPTIED
THE TOMB



The quarterly magazine of the
Methodist Churches of
Springdale and Wombourne

Spring 2017

A future for Sylvia

David Hotchkiss, editor



Hello and welcome. The Mothering Sunday service at Wombourne was a bright, sunny affair, all the ladies being given a posy of flowers to take home. How blessed most of us are. Not so Sylvia, whose plight reported in a recent bulletin from Friends of Kenya's Children, a charity supported by our church, brought us to tears. Sylvia was just ten and was pictured with all she had in the world – the clothes she stood up in, a small cooking pot, a rush mat to sleep on. Worse still, she was in effect alone, and had been since, at the age of six, she fled across the Sudanese border into Kenya to escape the war. Her parents had been killed.

The charity had been able to fund places for 14 such children at the school in Eldoret. Sylvia had been number 15, and wept for days when she was left behind. It would cost £1,000 to board Sylvia at the school for a year, and the aid worker who found her asked for help.

An appeal was launched at Wombourne and members were moved to contribute, despite the fact that some were already committed to regular donations to FKC. When we celebrated my wife Pauline's 70th birthday with a day-long "open house", she asked for donations rather than gifts. The result was equally amazing. Thanks to the appeal and the birthday gifts we were able to send FKC's organiser in Derby more than £1,500. With this and the aid worker's own appeal there is now sufficient to fund Sylvia for four years' schooling. We ask for God's blessing on Sylvia and all those supported by FKC, whose motto is "Out of poverty through education".



Pam Smith, Val Philpott, Janet Fenney, Doreen Pike and Gill Worrall prepared spring flowers to be given out at Wombourne on Mothering Sunday.

The deadline for the next edition of Triangle is

June 4th

Articles can be given to me or your stewards, sent by post to David Hotchkiss, or emailed to [triangle\[at\]springdalechurch.org.uk](mailto:triangle@springdalechurch.org.uk)

Witnesses from the Resurrection

The Reverend Christopher Collins



Every year, as we approach Easter, I remember and contemplate the words of James Allison: “We are all witnesses from the resurrection.” This year, as that sentence rolled around my mind, a second phrase has joined it: “Our only tasks are to worship God and proclaim the Gospel” – a phrase taken from a speech made by our Secretary of the Conference, the Rev’d Canon Gareth Powell. Both phrases are both emphatically simple yet so enigmatically complicated. It is worth us asking what they mean to our local Methodist churches as we approach this Easter and seek to be the Church of Christ.

We could simply say that the most important things for us to do are to gather for worship on a Sunday and to evangelise, as evangelism is often said to be the main thing. However, I think if we do that, we void the phrases of their true impact. So what might they mean for us?

Firstly, let us consider what it means to “worship God”. It’s true that we often use the word “worship” as shorthand for what happens in our Sunday gatherings. But in this sense, “worship” is just shorthand, because “worship” has a much broader aspect. Someone once said that worship is “our response to God”. God always takes the initiative and therefore, all we can do in worship is to respond. God took the initiative in the resurrection and our worship is a response to it.

We must heed the warnings of the prophets though and not segregate our lives into worship and non-worship, where we see what we do with our lives outside the walls of the church is irrelevant: “No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.” (Isaiah 58 v6 NLT)

When our worship starts to look like that, then we inevitably “proclaim the gospel”. It is not so much that we evangelise in the traditional sense, but that we allow people to realise that the Gospel of God’s Kingdom is life transformative. Theologian John Hull wrote that for many the usual Christian discourse has become unintelligible and irrelevant but the response to the church is quite different when they realise it’s the church that is demanding justice against injustice, when life is sought amongst the death of injustice.

Therefore, what is often considered secondary – social justice – becomes ingrained in the only thing – the proclamation of the whole Gospel. And, as Hull went on to say, “the church is much more than a movement for social justice, but it is at least that”.

So when our worship is whole-gospel for the whole-life we proclaim the Gospel of life over death. And when we have experienced that, and tell our story, we become witnesses from the resurrection and the glorious gospel of God’s triumphant and indefatigable love that emptied the tomb on that first Easter Day.

Rev’d Chris

Springdale vestry news

Samantha Cartwright, senior steward



Life Has a Divine Purpose

If I were to choose a single word to encapsulate this moment, it would be “transition”. As I write this, the sun is peering through the clouds and promising spring; a welcome gesture given the relentlessly gloomy weather in recent weeks. I have become like an animal in hibernation and Lent has forced me to awake from my slumber. It has offered me a chance to contemplate and sacrifice: among other things, I have given up refined sugar which, if you know me, is a trial!

Springdale is certainly undergoing transition as we look ahead to celebrating the ministry of Rev’d Chris and then to accommodating our prospective minister from the United Church of Zambia, Rev’d Teddy Siwila, and his family later this year. Online video calls have been made across to Zambia, jokes exchanged about Wolverhampton Wanderers and, to ensure the bolstering of stereotypes, the British weather has been discussed.

Hope

There is a sense of excitement and anticipation and with that also a degree of anxiety: how can we best prepare to receive them? How can we support Chris as he considers his new role?

Furthermore, the stewards’ team will soon be changing. I would like to express thanks and gratitude to James Peterson who is coming to the end of his stewarding term. His input has been superb and his humour and insight will be particularly missed at our stewards’ meetings. James’ departure leaves room for one more at the stewarding table, to be welcomed in May after our church meeting. It will soon be time for me to pass on the senior steward baton (hurrah, I survived!) into the very capable hands of David Crook. We are blessed and grateful that he has accepted this role.

With all these transitions taking place it is all too easy to put emphasis on the apprehension of the future and neglect the gift of the present. Therefore, at times like these, it is comforting to refer to scripture to be reminded to put our faith in God and continue our Christian journey, because life has a divine purpose. Hence I leave you with Jeremiah 29: 11-14:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity.”

Simple recipe for a fairer world

David and Pauline Hotchkiss at the Fairtrade Shop



“It’s a bit manic today,” Brenda told us. It was a Wednesday and a big order had arrived, all of it demanding labelling, displaying, storing. Phil, her other half, emerged briefly on to the brightly-lit shop floor. “Keeping you busy, then?”

“Oh yes . . .” he said, before returning to his chores in the back room at Wolverhampton’s Fairtrade Shop. It reopened in its smart setting, on the School Street side of Darlington Street Methodist Church, only last year. A devastating fire had led to a move into temporary premises. Now the enthusiastic team of volunteers have it up and running again.

Brenda had lured us in with a 10 per cent discount voucher and the promise of freshly-made coffee. She has a combative relationship with the sophisticated espresso machine, but seemed to be mastering it, having provided us with a delicious latte and a creamy decaf. You can buy snacks to go with your drink and take a table seat with a close-up view of the goods on sale.

The principle of Fairtrade shops is quite simple. They sell only goods that have been ethically traded, so that growers, manufacturers etc are guaranteed a fair price. The Wolverhampton branch is enthusiastically supported by the city council and many influential individuals. The late Lord Bilston was particularly keen on the organisation and his portrait hangs in the shop in tribute to his support.



Volunteer Lesley Cook pictured with some of the stock not long after the store reopened.

There’s a wide range of food items, from biscuits to jelly beans; chocolate to fine teas and coffees. Pauline sought out the gluten-free range and also chose some hand-

painted eggs for Easter presents, an eye-catching laundry basket and lots more. Non-food products include fashion accessories and jewellery, ornaments, children’s toys and novelties, kitchen things and candles, and an array of greetings cards. The shelves are packed with ideas for gifts of all kinds and many prices seem surprisingly low, especially for hand-made items.

With its easy access, welcoming atmosphere and friendly staff (the Shuttleworths not being alone, of course), we’re sure to make a return visit to the shop in the near future. We advise you to do the same!

Wombourne vestry news

Charles Clowes, senior steward



The last few months have been a mixture of sadness and celebration, as we saw the passing of four of our long-standing members, namely John Fellows, Peter Moyle, Cynthia Hatton and “Mo” Boswell. We mourn their passing and celebrate their lives, knowing that they have fallen into the arms of a loving God. We share the grief and emptiness of their family and friends.

At both services on the January 9th, the day of the Covenant Service, we sang the hymn “Have you heard God’s voice”, StF 662, with the chorus:

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in one who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

It reminds us that though we share the sadness at this time we must continue to care for each other and trust in a loving God for our future.

Despite all this our Christmas activities continued with a brilliant “Scratch Nativity” led by Rev’d Chris and a very moving “Prayer Nativity” on a Sunday afternoon organised by Sandra Clowes with prayer stations reflecting different aspects of the Christmas story. We also held our annual carol service and toy service, with the gifts going to the Little Brothers’ Good Shepherd Ministry and the collections from the carol and Christmas Day services going to W’iAM. The Christmas eve midnight communion was slightly different this year in that it was timed to coincide with midnight in Bethlehem.

We have also held a service for Church Action on Poverty followed by a bring-and-share lunch and have hosted the Women’s World Day of Prayer service. At Easter we share a “Passover” meal on Maundy Thursday evening, then on Easter Sunday 8am communion followed by breakfast, after which will be the family service at 10.30am.

We shared a Skype conversation with our new minister, Rev’d Teddy Siwila and his wife. He seems to be a very jolly yet down-to-earth person. He has 18 years’ experience of ministry. He will be coming from Zambia with his wife and family in August to take on our churches in September as Rev’d Chris moves to Darlington Street. I only hope he and his family will be able to cope with our English winters.

As I come to the end of my time as Steward, I would like to thank all those who have supported me especially, Diana and Pat, all the Worship assistants and Doreen on the organ. I pray that the love of God and his peace that passes all understanding will continue to abide in this place.

Blessings, Charles

Springdale pastoral news

Jane Rawlings, pastoral secretary

As the spring bulbs start to show, a glow of hope for the future always starts up in me and I begin to look forward to lighter evenings and higher temperatures. The days seem to pass so quickly now that it is important to take time to look around us and take in the beauty of God's creation, which I think at this time of the year is at its most beautiful.

In September we announced the safe arrival of Connie Ash, second daughter for Claire and Robert and little sister for Piper. Piper is already taking on her big sister role with great importance, introducing Connie to her new family at Springdale with much excitement.

We had a difficult month in November, with the loss of three of our members: Fred Thompson, Margaret Haddock and Emma Jones. In the many years they were part of our Springdale family they brought joy, peace and laughter, and passed on their guidance and experience to our younger members (and some of our not-so-young). They are all greatly missed but we can take comfort that they have all made their final journey and are now with their Lord, living in peace and harmony.



Some of our church family have found the last few months difficult, with many experiencing health concerns, hospital test and visits. These are always trying times for everyone concerned and we continue to pray for everyone. We may not always be aware who needs our prayers or how to help but we can be confident in the knowledge that our Lord always knows what is needed and will be there beside us, offering support, comfort and strength as we go through difficult times.

We pray especially for Audrey Grainger, who is finding daily life a struggle and is currently in hospital, hoping to be back home soon with people to care for her. May she accept the care with the grace with which it is offered and may she continue to get stronger in the weeks and months ahead.

Congratulations to anyone who has celebrated a birthday or anniversary recently or has one coming up in the near future. I won't name names, as I am sure to miss someone!

As we start on our journey through Lent we go with the knowledge that Christ is risen on Easter Day. We also go with the excitement and anticipation of receiving seven new members into the Springdale family – what a special occasion for everyone. You will need to read my next message to hear how this uplifting service went.

God Bless, Jane

A unique brand of leadership

David Hotchkiss at the funeral of the Rev'd Tony Kinch

Half-a-lifetime ago I stood among fellow members of Stratton Street Methodist Church in Park Village, Wolverhampton, as a tall and assured man introduced himself, in what became his trademark stentorian tones, as our new minister. The Rev'd Tony Kinch outlined his intentions, for us and for his own career, adding that he didn't do pastoral visiting. Such was the authority in his voice that no-one questioned this and, however good at visiting he might or might not have been, he simply didn't do it, but soon showed that he had tremendous skills in so many of the other areas in which ministers can shine.



The Rev'd Tony Kinch

A few weeks ago, Darlington Street Methodist Church (a cavernous natural habitat he could address without a microphone) was packed for his funeral after a long battle with cancer. We had last seen him a few weeks before on Christmas Day at Stratton Street, not taking the service itself, but leading the singing with his mighty voice. Now it was the turn of others to give thanks for his life, as speaker after speaker recalled his unique brand of leadership. The Mayor was there; the MP; the former colleagues. They all wanted to recognise Tony's contribution to the life of Methodism and the city.

Former President of Conference the Rev'd Inderjit Bhogal said of him that "every sermon was dramatic; every song was operatic; everything he said, a statement". He would scythe through the red tape of stuffy meetings with a shout of "Standing Order 247 (or whatever) Mr Chairman, move on". Having heard it invoked by Tony a few times, Inderjit plucked up the courage to ask him what the standing order was. "I've no idea," he said, "but neither does anyone else."

His widow Tina bravely spoke as well, recalling fond memories of their early married life and Tony's positive attitude. He was, she mused, the Marmite of Methodism. You either loved him or . . . not. But his role in the life of the city of Wolverhampton, the effect on its people, not only Methodists, and the unflagging support he gave to many organisations and institutions in the name of Jesus were without doubt unrivalled and entirely admirable.

Singing lustily from the pulpit, he always ended on a high note, and his funeral was certainly one of those.

*In his book of **Easter Thoughts**, Eddie Askew pictures Jesus not as the pristine, clean figure of stained glass, but a man soiled by life outside; a man with dirt under his fingernails:*

"Jesus was part of the real world, and he calls us to be the same. Involved. . . I believe Jesus would rather see the honourable stains of service, my clothes dirtied in an honest attempt to get involved."