Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches

**Newsletter No 15 5 July 2020**

For all ministers in the Methodist Church, this past week will bring back memories of our ordinations that take place on Conference Sunday. My ordination was at the Southport Conference 28 June 2015 at Blackburn Cathedral. I was asked recently by a friend what were the 3 most significant days in my life? My ordination was one of them. Having spent a year of discernment and selection, waiting to be told I was not good enough, not holy enough, not educated enough, I somehow got through all the panels to be invited to train at Queens College Birmingham full-time for 2 years. Having taken both my girls to university, set them up in their halls and left them to make their own way in life, they were now unpacking my bags and setting my room up. Ruth’s parting advice to me was “to leave my door open so I spoke to others on my landing”. I never dreamt or planned that at my age I would be become a full time student, leaving a well paid, responsible job and nice home to spend 2 years in a tired and dated single study bedroom in the centre of Birmingham. It felt that everything I said, did, and wrote was being assessed and judged.

I trained alongside those training for presbyteral ministry in the Methodist and Anglican churches and international ministerial students . It was an amazing privilege to live in such a rich, vibrant, diverse community as part of my formation, but it was very demanding and challenging. Academic learning does not come easy to me. I can read a book and forget most of it as soon as I put it down. We had so many assignments to write, referring to at least a dozen books in each. At every stage students dropped out or were discontinued. To my utter amazement and by the grace of God, somehow I got through and then had to prepare to go into stationing.

As most of you know, my first appointment was Hull. I was given a blank canvas to work outside the church, to discover what God was doing and join in amongst the poor, the politicians and party-goers of the city! An awesome appointment that was exciting and terrifying at the same time.

I felt drawn to be amongst some of the most chaotic, messed up, rejected people in the city: the homeless, those battling addictions and prostitutes. We built a community together where we genuinely could, and did, say “all are welcome”. My “congregation” was made up of men and women straight out of prison, drug dealers and users, half-cut, smelly, foul-mouthed beautiful people, who were all made in the image of God but had been broken. All these people had a story to tell, if someone was willing to listen (and we were). They were someone’s child, partner, father or mother. And for some reason, they had been rejected, mainly because of relationship breakdowns. To numb the pain, the majority would turn to a substance of their choice - drink or drugs - just to get through the pain. And so would begin a downward spiral of hopelessness and addiction.

Our church offered food for anyone who needed it, I had a shower installed, we shared, grew and prepared food together. More importantly, we offered hope and love and helped many restore their relationship with God through Jesus which then resulted in them reconnecting with their families.

So after 2 years in Hull, miraculously, I completed and passed my probationer studies and was deemed worthy to be received into Full Connexion and ordained to the Ministry of Christ’s holy Church in the Order of Deacons.

I’m sure many of you have been to ordination services to support someone you know. Members of congregations will make the special trip to be part of such a momentous occasion. Well that’s what happened to me: many of the guys who I had worked with wanted to come. The circuit paid for a mini bus to bring some of my homeless, ex- prisoners, addicts and prostitutes who had become friends, to support me at my ordination. It still makes me smile today when I think of all the well dressed, elegant, holy people who had gathered for worship and in walks my crew! A 4ft and a bit 60-year-old prostitute with high heels and mini skirt strutting down the aisle clocks me and shouts out to announce their arrival. They were in a completely alien environment. I’m sure there would have been a few mutters from people around about their smell, language or attire, but they felt so honoured that they were about to be part of this story, and couldn’t stop talking about it back home on the streets and in the hostels.

As the ordinands were called forward by the President a guy ran down the aisle shouting out that he wanted to be ordained, causing quite a commotion (most people thought he must be one of mine, but wasn’t). It is a most profound moment that after 5 years of intense testing and training the congregation are asked by the President “Do you believe and trust that they are, by God’s Grace, worthy to be ordained?” to hear a resounding cry from 1000 people “They are worthy” followed by spontaneous applause. Still to this day I don’t feel worthy. I don’t feel clever enough or good enough, but I DO feel called by God, and it is only by his grace that I am worthy.

Some people put the ordained on a pedestal, they think we are holier, more worthy than others, but that is not true. God calls each of us, firstly to be in relationship with him, to worship him and serve him and share his love amongst those we meet. We are all equal in God’s sight, the specific task we are called to do is of the same value. There are so many people today with mental health issues, often with low self esteem and self worth. We need to build one another up, to nurture and encourage others, to recognise and celebrate their gifts and talents and tell them over and over again, “You are worthy”.

This time of isolation has been good for some people, they have not only had time to sort out their house and garden, but given head space to think of what really does matter, what are our priorities? It’s provided time to reflect and restore relationships with God and with others, putting us in a better place. But for many others it has been a time of isolation and doubt, losing confidence and motivation. We need to build one another up, pray for one another and be gracious to one another.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Amen **\***

With love and prayers, ***Deacon Jill.***

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Many of you ask when my “day off” is. I’m going to try my best to take Fridays. It’s my mum’s funeral Thursday 9th July so I will be off Thursday and Friday next week.

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*I am sure we are all immensely grateful that God called and equipped Jill to this work and saw fit to place her among us; and to Jill for the depth of faith she shares, and her care and compassion towards us all. (Pat)*

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REMEMBER …

**\* Broomhall and Sound**’s Zoom service as usual, at 10.30am on Sunday 5th. ‘Doors open’ at 10.15, and

there’s time for on-line fellowship at the close of worship. Easiest access is to click on:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81296781558?pwd=bFl1K1dkeEVZZXljS2RDRDBHUmpFQT09>

 In case it is needed, the Meeting ID is 812 9678 1558, and the Password 991013.

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**\*** The **Circuit Website** ([www.cheshiresouth.org.uk](http://www.cheshiresouth.org.uk)) has details of other opportunities to worship and guidance for accessing these. Also see the **Methodist Website** (Methodist Church of Great Britain) for a wealth of information.

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**\*** Jill mentioned last week that anyone wishing for the complete text of the **Open Letter to the British Methodist Church**  can ask for a copy.

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**\*** “**Counting Our Blessings**” in aid of MWiB has ended. Please send your donations direct as instructed last week, or let Jill or Pat know that they need collecting. Also, it is not too late to donate to **Methodist Homes** for the Aged, whose special Sunday should have taken place in June.

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