



# SWANBANK

## September Newsletter 2024 Special Bumper Edition

### Message from our Ministers...

Hello!

As we enter into September once again, it always feels a bit like a fresh start as the Methodist Church follows the academic year. So, I guess I could say Happy New Year!

You may or may not be surprised to hear that I really didn't like school, though it did get slightly more bearable the older I got! I had good friends but as a younger child I was quite timid and found teachers very intimidating and frightening. The fact that my dad was a head teacher had nothing to do with that!

All that said, the one thing I did like about September was getting a schoolbag, new pencil case and all the bits and pieces to put in it. I'd also make sure my new school exercise books were neatly written in, for the first few pages anyway. I am also probably giving my age away by admitting to be of the generation where we took our exercise books home and had to cover them in old wallpaper to make them more durable! Do any of you remember doing that?

Even today September always feels like a new challenge and a chance to start as I mean to go on.

So, what of this year? From 8<sup>th</sup> September for the following few Sunday mornings, we will be thinking about what it means to be a 'Church at the Margins', that is ensuring our mission and ministry looks to working with those who others might see as being on the sidelines, often overlooked and even disregarded.

For us at SwanBank, 'Church at the Margins' definitely means having a closer look at our work with the homeless community, which will probably come as no surprise to those of you who are familiar with the church here. However, I think it's important for us all to be aware that we are seeing a significant increase in requests for help in this area. We are currently spending quite some time most days talking to and trying to help those who are homeless including offering showers, clothing, a hot drink and biscuit, a Pot Noodle and also signposting to organisations and agencies offering more



specialist help.

There are a few ways that you can join in this exploration and outreach:

**Prayer** - please join with us as we seek to prayerfully discern what God is asking of us as a church and what 'Church at the Margins' means for us.

**Time** – we are looking for some regular helpers to make and serve hot drinks and Pot Noodles as well as chat to some of our homeless visitors. Maybe you can give a morning or afternoon during the week as part of our new 'Hospitality and Hope team'. Or perhaps you can take towels home on a Sunday to wash and bring back the next week.

**Provisions** – we often run low on Pot Noodles and biscuits. Perhaps you can buy some for our store cupboard (if so, please can you avoid the spicy ones as they are an acquired taste and please can the biscuits be individually wrapped chocolate biscuits).

Maybe you have some other ideas about how you can help? If you are feeling stirred as you read this, please do have a chat with me, Ruth or Liz - we'd love to hear from you.

As we seek to share the love of Jesus with our community, we remember that it is not just about words, but actions too. May we be Christ-like in all we say and do.

God Bless you, *Kathryn*



## A Pilgrimage in the Derbyshire Dales – (an Epic Tale!)

It was whilst reading the Swanbank April Newsletter earlier this year that I thought about the possibility of following up on one particular article that was advertising a new pilgrimage



walking route, no not that one in northern Spain, but one in the Derbyshire Dales, the Peak Wesley Way (PWW) which officially opened in May 2024.



On the pilgrimage, it was our pleasure to meet a lady called Sheila Travis, who lives in Baslow near Cliff College. She had the idea a few years ago to

make better use of several small Methodist chapels located in the Derbyshire Dales. Because they were not being used for regular worship, Sheila had the wonderful vision of turning these chapels into overnight accommodation for walkers/pilgrims. Can you imagine the initial response from some church members at such a suggestion? However, after much discussion, planning and meetings and a lot of effort from Sheila, five chapels located between Matlock and Edale were eventually adapted to receive up to

six pilgrims at any one time. And so it was that in August, five Pilgrims from Swanbank embarked on this 'epic' 45 -mile adventure over six days. I must add at this point that all credit and appreciation has



to go to our very own Nigel Johnson for agreeing to organise this adventure and I'm pleased to say that everything went well as a result of his meticulous planning, even down to knowing where all the local watering holes were and where and when to catch buses, should things not be going very well.



One of the key elements for anyone agreeing to take part in such an adventure is to set aside enough time to do some practice walks beforehand with a relatively heavy rucksack to prepare your body for the stress and strain that you are about to put it

under. Well, things don't always go to plan, and it would be fair to say that apart from Nigel, the others didn't really do the training that they should have done, a lesson learned for next time.

Come the morning for our departure, for some reason, I felt a little anxious, I'm not sure why as I've been on multi-day walking adventures in the past, but I soon managed to shake off my butterflies once we got going. Our starting point was just outside Matlock, in a small village called Bonsall. The first 25 minutes were straight uphill, which soon got our hearts racing and blood pumping.

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..... So, when we finally reached the top of this first of many climbs and looked back down into the valley below, we commented that we should have done more training!

However, for those of you that have taken part in something like this, you'll know that after the first day and the initial shock to the system, you do tend to get into the groove particularly with carrying the weight on your back, which in our case, was about 10-12kg (22-25lbs).



After each day's walk along the PWW, following our maps and the numerous directional signs that Sheila had

located on posts and stiles along the route, and after obligatory cafe



stops, we would arrive at our destination and it was clear to see where money had been spent upgrading the chapels; new showers, new kitchenettes, new camp beds which we grew to love (**NOT!**), new pillows, new blankets, fresh fruit and biscuits, milk, tea and coffee.



It would be true to say that we were more than pleased with the standard of accommodation, plus we would also have a warm welcome from a member of the local chapel to make sure that we had arrived safely and were settling in.

In the true spirit of pilgrimage, most mornings and evenings we had a short time of reflection and prayer led by Cameron Sheeran just to focus our minds on the important things in life, such as family, friends, the world we live in and God.



It is also a tradition for this long-standing group of friends, which includes Milton Willis, to

invite him to lead us on what we call a late evening's

'fireside chat'. And so, it was whilst we were relaxing in

the chapel at Baslow on the Saturday evening, after we had returned from our meal

at the local pub, that Milton took the opportunity to take us on another

kind of journey with one of his famous chats. Unfortunately, I can't quite remember now

what his topic was, not sure why, but it's certainly not because I'd nodded off.... 🤔

Perhaps you could ask him what we talked about next time you see him at church.



cont....

..... One of the highlights of the trip was arriving on day four, at the town of Hathersage on what was the hottest day of the week. Fortuitously, I'd booked places for us to get into the local outdoor swimming pool, so once we'd dropped off our kit at the chapel and got out our towels, sun lotion and trunks, we quickly made our way to the pool for a well-earned dip. It was certainly just what we needed after a long hot day, even though Milton complained that the water was too cold.



As the days progressed, the pilgrims were all feeling the strain on our shoulders and backs, contending with 25 or more degrees of heat, and climbs like the 1,000ft one up on to Curbar Edge. But in true pilgrimage style we were all determined to soldier on and not let our heads go down. However, it was when we reached the penultimate village of Castleton on the fifth day that the decision was made by some (not all), to catch the bus to Edale the following morning and not have to climb 1,132ft from Castleton up to Mam Tor and then tackle a steep descent of 965ft back down to the village of Edale. Some were struggling more than others - but it wouldn't be fair to mention any names. To be clear though, four out of the five decided to catch the bus, which left just one remaining Pilgrim to complete the final day's walk.

I've not yet introduced you to the fifth pilgrim in our group, Andy Godfrey.



So, who was it that slogged it out to the end? No, it wasn't Andy, therefore congratulations must go to.....Cameron! The rest of us were very proud of the effort you put in on the final push, particularly as you got up at early on the last morning, leaving the chapel at 6.45am, alone, without map, compass or raincoat, travelling a route you'd not previously walked. Imagine then our surprise and relief when we got off the bus at Edale to see a red-faced Cameron slumped on a bench on platform one at Edale railway station, waiting for the 10:52am train to Stockport. The look on Nigel's face showed total shock



and amazement that Cameron had actually made it there and in time for the train! I however never doubted him knowing how good his navigational skills are and fully confident that he'd successfully arrive at the station on time!!

*(Editor's note – I'm not fully convinced of the accuracy of this last statement).*

Cont.....



... All in all, a good time was had by all, and we would definitely recommend the Peak Wesley Way Pilgrimage to others.

A time for getting to know one another better, a time for reflection, a time to enjoy the beautiful Derbyshire countryside, a time for pilgrims to grow in faith and so on.

What's next, well interestingly, Milton has already sent out information to the gang suggesting we consider going on another walk/pilgrimage.

He's put forward the idea of us flying to Kathmandu then trekking on to Everest basecamp. I'm not sure how much research he's carried out on this, but apparently it's 200 miles long. We'll get back to you on this Milton!!!



Keith Stubbs

<https://peakwesleyway.com>

### September 24 - Circuit Preaching Plan

Venue	Time	1 <sup>st</sup> Sept.	8 <sup>th</sup> Sept. CITY CELEBRATION	15 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept. HARVEST (H)	29 <sup>th</sup> Sept.
Swan Bank	9.00 am 10.30 am 6.15 pm	Worthington Jeffries 🕒 Jeffries	Stephens Stephens (Baptism) City Celebration	A Johnson (&KS) 🕒 A Johnson Sunday Night Young Adults 🕒	Jeffries (H) Jeffries (H) A Johnson	Cooper Atwood Atwood
Potter's Church	9.30 am 11.15 am	Price Price	Price Price	Law Law	Hancock Hancock	J Johnson -----
Oasis Church	10.45 am 6.00 pm	Wyatt 🕒	Tindale	Boateng	TBC	Community Sunday
Wesley Hall	10.45 am	Tattersall	Boateng	Own Arrangement	Cooper	Tattersall
The Gateway	10.45 am	Zinyemba	Tattersall (Anniversary)	Batho	Own Arrangement	Boateng
Mt Pleasant Packmoor	10.45 am 11.00 am	Mason Tindale	Wilshaw J. Johnson	Tindale Own Arrangement	Brooks Tindale (H)	Harrison (H) Dutton
Village Church	11.00 am	A Johnson	Jeffries (H) 🕒	Jeffries	Andrews	Brooks
Whitehill	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Brooks Cooper	Cooper White 🕒	Cooper Q & A TBC	Tretheway Cooper 🕒	Nixon Cooper

### Multi-faith Gathering

Following the recent unrest in some UK cities, Kathryn was invited to speak at a gathering of faith leaders where the focus was on our need for peace and unity. Over 50 faith leaders plus City Councillors and MPs met as a sign of our commitment to stand against racism and violence.





What's on at Church

The Alpha Course – from 11<sup>th</sup> September

Harvest Sunday – 22<sup>nd</sup> September

# The Alpha Course

Alpha

Why not come and join a series of weekly conversations, exploring the basics of the Christian faith? You're invited no matter where you find yourself on your faith journey as everyone is welcome. Starting Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> September at 7pm in the Coffee Lounge at SwanBank. For more information contact **Liz Thompson** either by email at [liz@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:liz@swanbank.org.uk) or telephone the office on 01782 575129.

**HARVEST SUNDAY**

IN AID OF

Stoke-on-Trent **foodbank** & **SWANBANK**   
**DROP IN MINISTRY**

**SUNDAY 22 SEPT 2024**

Opportunity to donate during all 3 services  
9am; 10.30am; 6.15pm

NON-SPICY POT NOODLES

TINNED AND PACKAGED LONG LIFE GOODS

Individually wrapped biscuits

## Stoke-on-Trent UNITED CELEBRATION

Sunday 8 September - 6.15pm

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 2AA



Join with Christians from across North Staffordshire for an evening of worship, prayer and fellowship



**Hosts**  
Rev Kathryn Stephens (Swan Bank)  
Lloyd Cooke (Saltbox)

**Worship**  
James Adams

**Guest Speaker**  
Simon Edwards  
(Founder of Walk Ministries)

For more information contact  
[email@saltbox.org.uk](mailto:email@saltbox.org.uk)



## POPPY WORKSHOP



The next workshop for our poppy display is on **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September, between 1-4pm**. If possible, can you bring along your own,

- scissors
- small paint brush
- glue gun (if you have one)
- any red or black fabric you may have.

See [Georgie Boden](#) or [Jane Sheeran](#) for more information.

## Answers to Hidden Books of the Bible Quiz!

Here are the answers to last month's Bible quiz.

*"I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. Merely by a fluke it kept people looking so hard for the facts and for the others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially as the names of the books were not capitalised but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few minutes for you. Yes, there will be some really difficult ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them. There will be great rejoicing or loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so that she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now for there really are sixteen books of the Bible hidden in this paragraph."*

**Well done if you found them all!**

## An Ecumenical Pilgrimage

Over the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August, an ecumenical pilgrimage visited a number of Methodist Heritage sites in NW Staffordshire and SE Cheshire. On Friday, the pilgrims walked from Hanley to Mow Cop. On Saturday, the walk went from Mow Cop to Cloud Methodist Chapel (the oldest former Primitive Methodist Chapel still hosting regular worship). The Sunday route began at Mow Cop and ended at the Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

The pilgrimage was a celebration of the huge impact made by Methodism over almost 300 years, since John Wesley began to preach to the masses in the open air following his conversion in May 1738. The reach of Methodist societies from the inner city to the deepest countryside was well illustrated by visits to huge chapel buildings in Stoke-on-Trent and small chapels in the Staffordshire Moorlands and SE Cheshire. A total of thirteen people participated in the pilgrimage. The Right Revd Matthew Parker (Bishop of Stafford) and the Venerable Megan Smith (Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent) were among those representing the Anglican Diocese of Lichfield. Revd Helen Kirk (Chair of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District) and Revd Rachel Parkinson (Chair of the



Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District) were joined by Methodist Superintendents, Presbyters and Officers. Bishop Tim Menezes, newly appointed Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop for Staffordshire and the Black Country, joined the pilgrim party in Biddulph Moor on Saturday lunchtime.

The pilgrimage walks, which covered 32 miles over three days, encompassed the former Wesleyan, New Connexion and Primitive branches of Methodism, including now closed chapel buildings and very-much still-functioning congregations. Prayer was also offered at churches belonging to other branches of the Christian church enroute. As the pilgrims thanked God for past blessings, the prayer rose from our hearts, 'Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?' (Psalm 85:6).



What's on further afield

**MID-WEEK SERVICES at Whitehill Methodist Community Church**

Every Wednesday commencing at 10.15 am

**SEPTEMBER**

- 4<sup>th</sup> TBA
- 11<sup>th</sup> Doreen Leese
- 18<sup>th</sup> TBA
- 25<sup>th</sup> Rev. Ruth Jeffries

**OCTOBER**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev. Peter Hancock
- 9<sup>th</sup> Alison Price
- 16<sup>th</sup> Rev. Arthur Wakelin
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Ann Worthington
- 30<sup>th</sup> TBA

**NOVEMBER**

- 6<sup>th</sup> David Bowers
- 13<sup>th</sup> Keith Stubbs
- 20<sup>th</sup> Chris Mason
- 27<sup>th</sup> Rev. Kathryn Stephens

Address - Whitehill Road, Kidsgrove, ST7 4DS

Regular Activities at Swan Bank

Sunday

Sunday Night Young Adults – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm

Monday

- Prayer Time – Meeting Room 1, 9:00-9:30am
- Bible Study – Meeting Room 1, 10:00-11:30am
- Dementia Activity Group – Coffee Lounge, 1:00-3:00pm
- Gospel Choir – Fellowship Room, 7:30-9:00pm  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month*

Tuesday

- Little Treasures (0-4 years old)– Lower Hall, 9:30-11:00am *(term time only)*
- Chatty Café – Coffee Lounge, 10:00am-12noon
- Tuesday Club – Coffee Lounge, 1:30-3:30pm

Wednesday

- Knit & Natter – Meeting Room 1, 10:00am-12noon
- Foodbank – Coffee Lounge, 2:00-4:00pm  
*(To receive a food parcel an E-voucher will be required beforehand from a referral agency)*

Thursday

- Younger Youth (School years 3-6) – Upper Hall, 5:45-7:15pm *(term time only)*
- Youth Club (11-16 years old) – Upper Hall, 7:30-9:00pm *(term time only)*

Saturday

- Messy Church (Primary school aged children) – Lower Hall, 10:00am-12noon *(first Saturday of each month)* Breakfast included and only £1 per child!
- Women's Walking Group – Rendezvous usually at Swan Bank before going to the start of the walk *(3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month)*. See **Liz Thompson** for details.

**Contact the office on 01782 575129 for further details of all our regular activities**

**CAFE CHURCH**

MOW COP METHODIST CHURCH

Every 1st Sunday each month @ 3pm

Supported by Presence Worship

Children's activities available

FOLLOW CHURCH FACEBOOK FOR MORE UPDATES





## What Matters?

Recently the Newsletter advertised 'The Vicar of Dibley', presented at the Mitchell Memorial Theatre by the Mow Cop Players. When it first appeared on our screens 30 years ago, women clergy were a rarity. The most impactful moment of the first episode was when Dawn French, whom the Parish Council assumed was the cleaner, took off her coat, exposing her clerical collar. Disbelief! Confusion! It had not occurred to them that the new vicar might be a woman. At that time women priests were a novelty, barely tolerated in some quarters. Basically, female ordination spread from foreign and non-conformist churches to the mainstream Church of England. It was the thin edge of the wedge. A similar process took place in medicine. The first women doctors to practice here had qualified in France and Switzerland. Now virtually all the vocation-based professions would collapse if women were sent home. The speed of this evolution is breath-taking.

There was considerable opposition, centred on St Paul's admonition, 'Let not your women speak in churches'. In this he reflected the values of his time and indeed of many succeeding generations. The Early Church had to disentangle itself from some Hebrew traditions sanctified by time. Eating was an obvious cause of dispute. At Joppa, St Peter had a vision in which he was offered many types of food. He told the divine messenger that he refused to eat 'unclean' meats. The reply was, 'Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean.' St Paul followed the same line and told his charges not to wrangle about the relative acceptability of various foods.

One thousand years earlier Moses had issued complex instructions about everything and anything. He had no choice. He was a secular ruler as well as a religious leader. But his practical decisions taken in response to

immediate problems acquired divine sanction enshrined for thousands of years. To drive Christ's basic message home, this mass of now irrelevant regulations had to go. Jesus reduced his instructions to two. 'Love the Lord thy God and love thy neighbour as thyself.' He specifically renounced worldly power. 'Who made me a judge over you?' was his reply to a man seeking his support in an inheritance dispute. Right through the four Gospels run denunciations of greed, oppression of the poor, hypocrisy and self-importance. But they are general complaints, not reactions to specific incidents. They are as applicable today as they were 2,000 years ago.

What next? How will Christianity adapt now? Churches on the Moon? Why not? Some of us remember the first breakthrough to the Moon landing in 1969. The astronauts read from the book of Genesis. There are infinite variations of practice here on earth. In some West Indies services, the collection plate is passed round three times. In some American Bible Colleges beer is totally forbidden. In South Korea services are held on Wednesdays as well as Sundays. Further afield in time and space, in primitive Sweden the people being converted had never seen wine and assumed it was literally lamb's blood. On some Pacific islands it would have been useless to tell the inhabitants that Jesus was the shepherd of their flock. They had never seen a sheep. So, the word employed was 'pigs'. Indeed, Christianity has a gift for such adjustments and grafts. Consider how it absorbed the Roman mid-winter festival.

'The Vicar of Dibley' is a comedy, but it has been a vehicle for basic truths. Ours is an inclusive missionary and we should not let ourselves be distracted by minor dissensions from bringing it to a world which never needed it more.

**Margaret Brown**



## SWAN BANK NOTICEBOARD

We still need your **CLEAN** plastic milk cartons and pop bottles for our poppy display. They can be left at church or the grocery store.

Messy Church restarts on the 7<sup>th</sup> September after the summer break. This month's theme is David and Goliath!

We're always looking to restock our supplies of Pot Noodles and wrapped chocolate biscuits. Donations can be dropped off at the church office anytime.

The Circuit invites you to the Accreditation Service for Local Preacher Mr Chris Mason.  
When: 3pm, 8th September 2024  
Where: The Gateway Methodist Church, Goldenhill.  
Guest preacher: Rev Simon Sutcliffe.  
Followed by refreshments.

Chester & Stoke-on-Trent District  
**The Methodist Church**  
District Resource and Compliance Manager

An exciting opportunity to offer strategic leadership to the District and dynamic management to existing District staff and key volunteers. You will have wide experience of managing change, working collaboratively and offering expertise in a number of key areas.

Terms: 30 hours per week; £40,000  
Home-based but will require travel around the District.

For more information, or an application pack, please email the District Administrator on [chester.stoke@btconnect.com](mailto:chester.stoke@btconnect.com)

Applications by 12 noon 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
Interviews to be held 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
Role to begin 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024

**Cheshire South Methodist Circuit** requires a  
**Centre Development Manager,**  
**Nantwich Methodist Church**

20 hours/week, £13.85 per hour (= £14,404 p.a.)  
Length of contract - 3 years

The Cheshire South Methodist Circuit is seeking a Centre Development Manager for Nantwich Methodist Church both Hospital Street & Broad Lane sites to work with the Church trustees to co-ordinate and develop activities for the church and community.

For more information, or an informal chat about the post, please contact:

**David Maidment**


(maidmentrail@aol.com, 01270 627170)

Swan Bank Church, Swan Square, Burslem, ST6 2AA

Office hours:- 10am - 4pm, Tuesday - Thursday

 01782 575129

 [admin@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:admin@swanbank.org.uk)

 [www.swanbank.org.uk](http://www.swanbank.org.uk)

Sunday 10:30am Service, live stream links:

 [www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams](http://www.youtube.com/@SwanBank/streams)

 [www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en\\_GB](http://www.facebook.com/swanbank/?locale=en_GB)

### Future Articles

If anyone has any stories or articles to be considered for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Shirley Brooks or Nigel Johnson directly or email :-

[officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk](mailto:officeassistance@swanbank.org.uk)