

**St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley**  
*Extraordinary Times*  
*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*  
**Issue 65** **July 4th 2021**

**Conference confirms resolutions on marriage and relationships**

*Official statement from The Methodist Church*

Following prayerful consideration by the whole Church, the Methodist Conference has voted to confirm provisional resolutions on the principles or qualities of good relating, understanding of cohabitation and same sex marriages conducted on Methodist premises or by Methodist office-holders.

A report on marriage and relationships, '*God in Love Unites Us*', was received by the Conference in 2019 and the local District Synods were asked to consider the provisional resolutions and report back to this year's Conference which is being held this week in Birmingham. The Conference received a report on the results of the local conferring which showed that 29 out of the 30 Synods confirmed support for the provisional resolutions.

The Revd Sonia Hicks, President of the Conference, prayed ahead of the main debate on Wednesday morning in Birmingham, asking that the Conference's "words may be imbibed with your grace, with tenderness from on high."

A range of views were expressed on the resolutions, in particular on cohabitation and same sex marriages. The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, spoke to the Conference acknowledging the "depth of feeling, pain and anxiety that there is" with a commitment to work across the Connexion with District Chairs to heal divisions.

Speakers called for unity going ahead irrespective of the decision. Other speakers spoke of the acceptance of diversity that younger Church members have for each other with younger speakers relating their own lived experience as Christians from the LGBTQI+ community. Another representative asked that the Church does not ostracise those who oppose the introduction of same-sex marriages in the Church, saying the great majority of these people are trying to be faithful to Scripture as they see it.

The Methodist Church included other denominations and Methodist Churches across the world in the process of listening and consultation, with written submissions from ecumenical partners to the '*God In Love Unites Us*' report and workshops with global Methodist partners.

Following the vote on the provisional resolutions the Revd Sonia Hicks said: "The debate today and our wider conversation has been conducted with grace and mutual respect. As we move forward together after this historic day for our Church, we must remember to continue to hold each other in prayer, and to support each other respecting our differences."

## **A pastoral letter from the President and Vice-President following the Conference vote on Marriage and Relationships**

We wished to take this opportunity to write to you after the Conference voted on the resolutions contained in the marriage and relationships report.

We very much appreciate that these decisions will stir up many different emotions for our siblings across the Connexion. There will be some who will be deeply hurt and others who will rejoice by what has been decided.

Our Presidential theme this year is *God's Table: An Invitation for All*, and God's invitation is for every single one of us. The Methodist Church has held tension for many years and as a Church and a family, we must do all we can to live with contradictory convictions.

This work was first reflected on back in 1992 and we have been on this journey together since that point. During the past years we have continued to listen to and to pray for each other and remaining true to what God is saying to us. We must remember in all this, to continue to hold each other in prayer, and to support each other as we find a way forward, respecting our differences.

It is perhaps helpful to remember that there are other issues, some of them discussed at the Conference, on which we hold differing and sometimes strong opinions. We live with them and we do not allow them to impair our communion with each other. We respect each other's consciences, we exercise judgment in when to speak and when to be silent, and we hold one another in prayer. We do all this not for our own sake but for the sake of Christ and the sake of the world which urgently needs to know the power of Christ's reconciling love.

Our prayer for you, beloved siblings, is that in joy or sorrow, in pain or excitement, we might continue to live within that reconciling love.

*The Revd Sonia Hicks*  
*President of the Conference*

*Mrs Barbara Easton*  
*Vice-President of the Conference*

### **What's On**

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>** **10:30am** back in church for worship and Holy Communion with Rev Ralph Ward. This service will be live-streamed on Facebook

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>** **10:30am** in church and on-line with Mr Eddie Newton  
**3:30pm** in church for all-age worship with Rev Ralph Ward

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>** **10:30am** in church and on-line with Mrs Helen Greaves

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>** **10:30am** in church and on-line with Rev Melvyn Cooke

**Find all online services** on [St Paul's Facebook page](#) and [website home page](#)

### **For Kids and young people**

**Fridays 6-7pm** Kids and Young People *Friday Funday*

**Fridays 7pm** Young Peoples' Singing Group

## **In your prayers**

**Our friend** Pam Vanstone has let us know that she is awaiting surgery for kidney cancer. Please hold Pam in your love and your prayers at this anxious time.

**Pray for** the new President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Sonia Hicks and Vice-President, Barbara Easton as they begin their year of office.

**Pray for** Rev Ralph as he returns to circuit duties after his 3-month sabbatical leave. Pray that he brings new strength and vision to St Paul's and Trinity churches in his remaining few weeks with us before he and Adele move to Cornwall.

**Continue in prayer for** all affected by the present rise in Covid cases due to the Delta variant, for those who are ill and for all medical and care workers.

**Continue to pray for** Lyn and Richard and for all others you know who need prayers at this time.

**Send** your prayer requests to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

*Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list*

## **Have you visited Friday Funday?**

Our children and young people get together from 6-7pm on Fridays for half an hour of Bible teaching and related activities followed by half an hour of play and socialising. They could do with a few more helpers, so do drop in any Friday evening, see what's going on and consider whether you might offer your help.

## **A happy announcement**

The wedding of our Circuit Superintendent, Rev Melvyn Cooke, to Hazel Poole will take place on Monday 5th July at 12.30pm at Reigate Methodist Church. Under Covid restrictions attendance is by invitation only. Please pray for Melvyn and Hazel on their special day and in their new life together.



## **Welcome back and farewell to Ralph!**

This Sunday sees Ralph's final morning worship and Holy Communion at St Paul's, but he will be with us for all-age worship at 3:30pm next Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July.

Don't forget that Ralph will be having an 'open' afternoon/evening on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July at Trinity Church, East Grinstead when we are all warmly invited to drop in any time between 5 - 9pm to say farewell to Ralph and Adele as they move to their next appointment in Cornwall.

Many thanks are due to Ralph for his ministry to us over the last 3 years, especially during the difficult and testing time that the Covid pandemic has put us through. Ralph's online worship on Sundays, his Wednesday bible studies, the occasional songs and, when it became allowed, his Tuesday afternoon messages from inside St Paul's kept us all connected positively and cheerfully.

Thank you Ralph, and may God's blessing go with you and Adele to Cornwall.

## Methodist President and Vice-President's tree of hope

At the end of a challenging year, which has prevented them from meeting Methodist people in person, the outgoing President and Vice-President of the Methodist Church have commissioned a tree of hope at The Queen's Foundation in Edgbaston.

Unfortunately, due to the current coronavirus travel restrictions in central Birmingham, the President the Revd Richard Teal and Vice President Mrs Carolyn Lawrence could not be present when the tree was planted. Instead, a plaque, bearing this message:

*'The best of all is God is with us' (attributed to John Wesley).  
Planted in hope on 26 June 2021"*

was handed over to the Prof. Clive Marsh PFHEA, Principal of The Queen's Foundation, at the Methodist Conference venue at a small celebration on Saturday 26th June at the front entrance of the National Conference Centre.

The outgoing President of the Methodist Church, the Revd Richard Teal said, 'In a challenging year for everyone may this tree be a sign of hope, new life and resurrection. May it also be a sign to those people at The Queen's Foundation of how ministry can flourish when well rooted and be a symbol of the fruitfulness of God's kingdom.'



## Contacts

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**St Paul's website** [www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk)

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