

Issue 24

30th August 20

Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn,
Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Verses for the week

'See I have chosen Bezalel and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. (Exodus 31: 2-5)

Inspiration

I saw a photograph of it for the first time in a book called 'The Treasures of Britain' which we had at home when I was a boy. I kept the book when my father died as a treasure to treasure him by. He inspired me with a love of history and learning. The object is the so called 'Alfred jewel'. It was discovered in the 17th century in Somerset but dates to the 9th century, the time of Alfred the King of the west Saxons – known, if known at all, for burning cakes. The object is so named because on it is written an inscription, 'Alfred ordered me made'. Many years later when we moved to live near Oxford I saw the jewel for the first time in the Ashmolean Museum. I learned that it was probably the head of a pointer used to help with the reading of sacred manuscripts given by Alfred as part of his support of the church.



Image © Ashmolean
Museum,
University of Oxford

I like many suffered from the teaching of English history in my early years which moved from the end of Roman Britain to the Battle of Hastings, a period of some 600 years, with perhaps only a passing reference to Angles, Saxons and Vikings under the decidedly unhelpful description of the Dark Ages. How then could this object of such exquisite beauty, amazing craftsmanship and skill come from such an apparent cultural desert of barbarism and 'unenlightenment'? This inspired me to find out more aided by an excellent TV series by Michael Wood which I watched again during lockdown entitled 'King Alfred and the Anglo Saxons'. I have just finished reading Max Adams' acclaimed book 'Alfred's Britain' which brings light and life to this 'dark' period of our history.

What inspires you to new discovery I wonder? The very word tells me that inspiration is a work of God. Inspiration comes from the breathing in of the Spirit, the breath of God – the same Holy Spirit who inspired the creativity that resulted in beautiful objects being produced for the temple (see Exodus 31). If we are open to God's guidance through prayer and worship, if we breathe in God's life and power he will inspire us too to write, paint, make, design, learn, discover, give, care for, bless and so much more.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Encouragement from young Christians in lockdown

Here is a link to an excellent programme I heard last Sunday on Radio Wales which encourages me that the church is safe in the hands of Christian young people who are part of the church today. You will hear a short news bulletin at the start which you can omit unless you have always wondered how to pronounce Gwynedd and Pwllheli correctly! [Click Here](#)

Where is the Railway Gate?

From the newsletter two weeks ago: competition winner is Billy from Newbury. One of Karen's homemade cakes will be winging its way to Billy. Well done!

The gate is on the B4009 going from Hermitage to Hampstead Norreys – on the right hand side just after the M4 bridge.

New Methodist year

The Connexional year begins this week. Some churches use this as an opportunity to renew commitment to God. It is certainly a good time to pray for the Methodist Church in Great Britain and around the world, to pray for churches re-opening premises for worship, to pray for ministers and their families who have moved to take up new appointments and ministers beginning in ministry in these particularly difficult circumstances. Here is a prayer you may like to use.

Eternal God, for a slim slice of time, you have entrusted your work to our generation, work that Jesus began to do and continues through us. Equip us with all we need to discharge that trust with diligence and care. We pray for the Connexional Team as they serve the present age. Give them faith and strength as they lead, shape and guide the Methodist Church's commitment to evangelism. Give them wisdom and the gift of strategic thinking as they take decisions that will encourage church growth. Give them compassion and sound judgement as they seek to highlight and work with the church at the margins. Give them vision and imagination as they support pioneering ministry and church planting. May they see the fresh opportunities offered by the changes brought by Covid-19 especially to an online community. May our praying, serving and worshipping bring glory to your Name. Amen

A year of prayer

The Methodist Church has announced a year of online prayer focussing on our Church-wide commitments to evangelism, church growth, church at the margins, and pioneering and church planting. You can join in live every Tuesday at 12.45pm for 15 minutes starting this week; you can join in by watching the prayer meetings at a time that suits you and of course you can pray at home when the meetings are taking place if you prefer. For more details [Click Here](#)

Re-engineering the economy to deliver a just and sustainable future

As Churches, we long for the flourishing of people and the wellbeing of our planet. As we emerge from the coronavirus crisis, we find ourselves at a critical moment where we could re-shape the economy to enable the wellbeing of all people and the planet. For some thought-provoking and timely thoughts on this important topic why not take a look at this statement by the Joint Public Issue Team (JPIT) statement of which the Methodist Church is a part [Click Here](#)

And finally

Jokes about opticians just get cornea and cornea.