

The **Methodist** Church in Scotland



In Touch

Issue 4 winter 2015

Edinburgh &
Forth

Strathclyde

Ayrshire &
Renfrewshire

Central

North of
Scotland

Angus Dundee
& Perthshire

Inverness

Dear Friends,

We are trying to get this edition out by the Synod at the end of November so I am writing this, my annual Christmas/ New Year Letter, in October. But I shouldn't have worried; the shops are already limbering up for the 'Festive Season'.

Traditionally, of course, Christmas tended to be rather under-stated in Scotland with the emphasis being on New Year, while in England it was the other way round. When I was child my father worked on New Year's Day and I remember a retired minister telling me that, when he was first in Aberdeen, the coal was delivered on Christmas Day. But now the whole of the UK seems to shut down for ten days at least – unless you are in the hospitality or retail industries or work in the Church!

The title of this year's Methodist Prayer Handbook is *Pilgrims on a Journey* which reminds us that sometimes travelling is just as important as arriving. And this may also be true of Christmas. Hopefully, you will get this newsletter just in time for Advent – traditionally a time when we look forward with hope and expectation to the birth of our Saviour. I read recently about a woman who didn't know she was pregnant until she found herself giving birth in a toilet cubicle. Apart from the trauma of the event she had been denied a time of hope, excitement, preparation and sometimes anxiety that usually precedes birth. When we put all our efforts into the 'birth event' of Christmas and don't take some time to ponder the wonder of what will happen during the 'pregnancy' of Advent then we miss out on so much.

However you will be spending Christmas and New Year I wish you every blessing and send special greetings to those Members of the Scottish Methodist family who are scattered across this special country in places where there are no Methodist churches. We remember you in our prayers.

A Prayer/Reflection for Advent:

Lord,

I feel pregnant with a child called 'Christmas'.

As the day draws nearer, the baby makes itself ever-more apparent;

kicking, as if to say 'Let me out!'

So much to do before Christmas is born in a tree-filled front room, or in a service in a midnight church or with the children tearing open their presents;

so much to do, preparing for the birth of the baby called Christmas.

Sometimes I feel the need to sit and think about the wonder of this pregnancy business we call Advent.

Lord, help me to find time for at least a few ante-natal classes and deep breaths of the Spirit.

David Easton



Book Reviews

Book Review

Apologies to Andrew. This review was intended for the September issue but due to an oversight it was omitted, although some of you will have received it electronically.

Book Review

'A Nearly Infallible History of Christianity'

Author: Nick Page. Publisher: Hodder and Stoughton. £16.99. 456 pages

If you have seen your children or grandchildren reading 'Horrible Histories', you might be familiar with the genre. This book is an adult version in a similar style, and its subject is Church History. The subtitle sheds light on the interesting title: 'Being a history of 2000 years of Saints, Sinners, Idiots and Divinely Inspired Troublemakers.' You will get the flavour of it even more when you read of John Wesley: 'I felt my heart strangely warmed. Or it could have been indigestion.'

This is a book which I wish had been written when I was a student at Richmond College in the mid- sixties. In spite of its light, not to say irreverent touch, it does get to the heart of things. Early Church notables, and heresies which I had long forgotten have been brought back to mind, and my Church History tutor, Norman Goldhawk, would have appreciated this book, though he put us onto 'A New Eusebius'.

The author, Nick Page, is quick to put in a disclaimer Of himself, he says that he is not now, nor has he ever been, a theologian. Nevertheless, he has written a book which reflects an in-depth study of church history, citing details of personalities who were news to this reviewer. It is not his first book of a religious topic, and his own convictions as a Christian shine through. He describes himself as 'a writer, speaker, unlicensed historian, applied ranter, and general information monger'. He will be well known to any who attend Spring Harvest, and is not to be confused with another Nick Page, a stand-

up comedian of a completely different hue, i.e. 'blue'.

The book has twelve main chapters, covering the history of the Christian church from the very earliest days through to the last chapter which is entitled 'Fundamentalism, Fascism and Females'. All the chapters follow that alliterative form, so the first one is entitled 'Resurrection, Rome and Revelation'. The Wesleys are in 'Revolution, Reason and Radicals'.

He is actually very kindly disposed towards the Wesleys and Methodism, in spite of his rather cynical reference to 'indigestion'. And he doesn't fall into the trap of the once popular idea that 'Methodism saved England from revolution'. However, Scotland's tangled history scarcely gets a mention. He was probably wise to sidestep it.

It is very much a warts and all history. One aspect he does home in on time after time is the pacifist stance of the church in its earliest days, and how that somehow got lost. That, together with the antics of some of the Popes, to say nothing of the Crusades, is probably what is behind an amusing depiction in the front of the volume. It is a picture of an icon of Jesus, holding a copy of this book in his hand, and saying "I'm not angry, just very disappointed'.

Sadly, as we all know, the history of Christianity is littered with failure to live up to the standards of the Kingdom. At times Nick Page seems to fall into despair over this. Yet even then, his sense of humour shines through, and on many a page, it brought a smile to this reviewer's face, and at times, a hearty chortle. The irreverence is refreshing, not to say, quite enlightening. In the many potted biographies of the saints and other

worthies, his final question is always 'Could you have a drink with him down the pub?' The answer on John Wesley's page is 'Yes. But he'd probably start preaching to the bar staff.'

He ends on an optimistic and confident note. 'I am certain', he says, 'that Christianity will continue to renew itself. As we saw at the beginning of this journey, it began in a graveyard outside Jerusalem. The movement began at the very point when everyone thought it dead and buried. And that's what Christianity always does: reinvent itself. Rise again.'

It's the resurrection, stupid.'

Well worth a read, and you can probably find it in your local library, if you still have one. Better still – buy it for your grandchildren!

Andrew MacKenzie, Dumfries



Some Book Notes

Not full-blown book reviews but some brief notes on a couple of recently-published books on Scotland:

Pilgrim Guide to Scotland by Donald Smith, St. Andrew's Press, 2015, £14.99

As it says in the blurb on the back cover, this book is 'a comprehensive introduction to Scotland's major pilgrim routes, past and present'. The book is presented in fourteen 'Routes' around the country, each one divided into easily manageable 'Stages'. The Routes range from the two-stage Northern Isles pilgrimage to the one from Inveraray to Tain which is in nine sections and it covers the whole country from the Mull of Galloway to Shetland. As well as giving brief directions for the walks, the book is full of information about the religious background to the places visited.

[Perhaps we could start a District Walking Group that might take in some of these routes – Contact David Easton]

Reformation, Dissent and Diversity: The Story of Scotland's Churches, 1560-1960 by Andrew T. N. Muirhead, Bloomsbury, 2015, £22.99

It would be difficult to suggest a better book to put into the hands of someone who wants to get a good overview of the Churches in Scotland from the Reformation until the twentieth century.

Obviously, quite a bit of the book is taken up with exploring the history of the various manifestations of Presbyterianism but the other Churches – including Methodism – get chapters devoted to them, as well as the non-Trinitarian Churches. The book includes a number of tables and figures which are very helpful – if you've ever wondered where and how odd-sounding groups like the Old Light Antiburghers and New Light Antiburghers and their Burgher counterparts fitted into the Presbyterian firmament, then this is the book for you.

Although not a professional church historian, Muirhead writes from a deep and sympathetic knowledge of his subject. For a book of this type he is also refreshingly knowledgeable about Methodism.

Occasionally he does have a somewhat odd grammatical style and the book would have benefitted from a more rigorous sub-editing, but these are minor quibbles about a book that is excellent in so many other ways.

David Easton



Stationing Update

This year is a quiet one for the stationing of ministers in Scotland.

Edinburgh and Forth is looking for a part-time Deacon to replace Sue Langdale who will be retiring next summer.

It has been agreed that the North of Scotland Mission Circuit can have a Probationer Presbyter

Both of these types of appointments are carried out in different ways from those for ordained Presbyters. Deacons are stationed by the Connexional Diaconal Stationing Committee and the outcome of that meeting should be known by the time you read this. Applications for Probationer appointments have to be approved by the Connexion and, if accepted, are all made at the Initial stationing Committee in January.



Updates on Synod and DPC

District Policy Committee

At our meeting the afternoon was spent in two groups having some wide-ranging discussion regarding our policies and priorities. The minutes of the meeting summarise the feedback from the groups as follows:

- Doing things on other days than Sunday
- Buildings are both a burden and an asset
- New kind of Methodism that's not just about recovering the old but looking to the new (but may take inspiration from the past, just not try to recreate it)
- Tension between supporting what we have already (and our faithful people), with wanting to do new things
- Need new resources to look at some of these challenges and opportunities – can't expect our current ministers and lay leaders to do it on top of what they're already doing
- Challenge of where to find funding for new work

When the District Executive met (via a telephone conference call) following the DPC we discussed how best the district could help follow-through the above points. A common theme/challenge emerged: the tension we often feel as churches and circuits between supporting the existing work and looking for where God is calling us to undertake the new. We recognised that it isn't a case of 'either/or' but of trying to do two things, while sometimes needing the wisdom to know what to stop doing and what it would not be realistic to try.

It was suggested that the best way the District could further this would be to work with the Circuits and DMLN Team to help Circuits and Churches wrestle with this tension of the old and the new. It was suggested that we might call this the 'Janus Project'. If you know your Roman mythology, you will remember that Janus was the god of beginnings and transitions and is usually shown as having two faces – looking to the

future and the past. The Executive very much hopes that the District will want to take up this suggestion of focussing on the challenges and opportunities presented by being torn, in the present, between the future and the past.

Synod

As you know, it was agreed to postpone Synod until the end of November so that, following meetings in the Circuits, we could have a discussion on Marriage and Relationships, as required by Conference so that we could let the Connexion know by mid-February whether or not we felt that Methodism should revisit its understanding of marriage in light of, among other things, recent legislation enacting same-sex marriage.

Belinda and Andrew Letby attended a training conference organised so that Districts and Circuits might better discuss all of this. It seems from their feedback that the Connexion is now asking for a somewhat different response than that which was originally suggested. Andrew and Belinda led the morning session of Synod which was devoted to this matter.

The afternoon was spent having some serious discussion about if and how we might explore the possibility of applying for a Connexional grant to appoint someone to work with Scotland's 10,000+ 'missing Methodists', as revealed by the 2011 Census, and 'Churchless Christians'.

As this *In Touch* is being printed before Synod, the outcome of these discussions will have to wait until the Spring edition.



A Special Welcome

Jill and I moved into the manse in Glasgow at the end of July, ready for me to take up the appointment as Superintendent Minister of the Strathclyde Circuit in September. I want to thank the circuit and the district for a special welcome.

The manse is ideal for us, and we have made it into a home. The circuit had certainly

“prepared a place for us”. Jill has enjoyed tackling the garden and filling it with plants. We have managed to explore some of the Glasgow story: with its fascinating history and vibrant present. I have been up a Munro and caught something of the wonder of the countryside so close to the city.

We have been made welcome in all the churches in the circuit; the church at Woodlands was full for the welcome service – and we were moved to have colleagues there from Dumfries (on a Sunday evening at the end of August). We have met some remarkable people, whose faith story has been marked by God’s grace, as we have had people from the four churches of which I have pastoral charge in our home.

The Glaswegians have offered their legendary welcome too – on trains, in the parks, museums and on the pavements – we are easily engaged in conversation. I have watched Glasgow Warriors at home – and talked with passionate fans on the terraces, and we have sat in the Kelvingrove Museum and listened to the RSNO with astonishing acoustics.

The Scotland District has offered a special welcome too. There is a good banter among the Superintendents, among my colleagues in the circuit, and it has been encouraging to meet the DMLN team in the district. David has been an excellent pastor to us in these early weeks.

So, we are thankful to God for a special welcome. I recognise that there are many challenges to be faced in the months which lie ahead and I know that I am being called to walk with the circuit in making decisions which may be painful. There are always opportunities with the challenges though, and I am anticipating a taste of the grace of God as we pray, learn, reach outwards together.

Peace be the journey.
Andrew Baker

District Chair’s Sabbatical

David Easton will be on Sabbatical from March 17th until June 22nd. During that time, for any important matters please contact the District Office or the Rev. Alan Anderson, Secretary of Synod. As David’s period away will coincide with Synod, he has asked the four longest-serving superintendents to chair the four sessions of the two Synods.

During his sabbatical he will be hoping to complete a short history of the Methodist New Connexion in Cornwall and to do some preliminary reading and research for a general history of the New Connexion which he hopes to write one day – perhaps when he retires!. The New Connexion was one of the smaller braches of nineteenth-century Methodism which only ever had one or two churches in Scotland. He is also planning to explore some of Scotland’s pilgrim routes (see book notes)

Vice-President’s Visit February 27th – 29th 2016

The Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, Dr. Jill Barber, will be visiting Scotland at the end of February, following a few days in the Shetland District. Jill is a professional Archivist and is the Director of the Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism near Crewe. As well as preaching on the Sunday and visiting some Circuits, Jill will be leading an afternoon conference at Arbroath Methodist Church on Heritage and Mission. (See details elsewhere in this edition).

Arbroath is one of only two octagonal Methodist Churches in the UK and was visited by John Wesley, so it seems a fitting place to hold the event.

We also hope that it will be an occasion when we can launch a Scottish Methodist History Group – both for those who want to make a link with the more formal Wesley Historical Society and those who are more generally interested in our past.

Heritage and Mission

A Talk and Discussion led by

Dr Jill Barber

Vice President of the Methodist Conference and Director
of the Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism, near Crewe

Saturday February 27th 2016

2.00 - 4.00 p.m

Jill, an Archivist by profession, will be exploring how the church
can use its historic places as centres for the Church's Mission

*St. John's Methodist Church
Ponderlaw St., Arbroath (DD11 1EU)
The famous octagonal Church opened by
John Wesley in 1772*

for further details:

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The logo is a horizontal oval with a red border and a green interior filled with small red dots. The text "Methodist Insurance" is on the top line and "Church Insurance Made Simple" is on the bottom line, both in black.

**Methodist Insurance
Church Insurance Made Simple**

Caring for a church is an honour, but it comes with a number of obligations and responsibilities. Methodist Insurance's 'Made Simple' guides are designed to help churches meet their legal liabilities and make sure everything is taken care of.

- Administration - what you need to know about maintaining your policy, what documentation you should have and how to pay premiums
- Events - an overview of what churches need to consider when they are planning events
- Community Outreach - a straightforward guide to insurance and risk management issues that can arise with outreach projects such as foodbanks
- People on church premises - a short review of the key issues that need to be addressed to keep people safe while on church premises
- Church property - advice on what churches can do to reduce the risk of loss or damage to churches and their contents

All five guides are available on the Methodist Insurance website:

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk/madesimple

Christians Against Poverty

Or, CAP as we are more commonly known! You may already know who we are as an organisation. Primarily, we are recognised as a National Debt Counselling Charity. We help people become free from unmanageable and negotiate with creditors on our clients' behalf, lifting the burden from them to allow them the opportunity to get their lives back together. We work only through the local Church, offering Prayer and practical assistance on all levels to our clients, showing them the Love of God on their journey. We exist to give the very best to those who have the very least! Our Ministry is based on Matthew 25 where Jesus instructs that if we feed those who are hungry, clothe those who are naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, we do it for Him.

As our title suggests, all who work for CAP are Christians. None of us experience the 'Monday morning dread' of returning to work after the weekend. Not at CAP! At 08.45 each Monday morning, all staff gather together for Worship and we call this joyous event 'Mega Monday'! A great way to start the week and get back to our desks feeling ready to go. We Pray together each morning, we have a Salvation Bell, which rings when a client comes to Faith. We celebrate together when clients become debt free, or get a job through one of our Job Clubs, or reach a goal through a CAP Release Group. Through all of our work, we see people in local communities become free from the trap of unmanageable debt, successfully get back into the work place after perhaps years of unemployment. We see people become free from addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling etc. through our Release Groups. CAP Money Management Courses have revolutionised the finances of tens of thousands around the U.K.

It's great to know, that this evening, approximately 7 families will eat dinner together, being able to afford the food in the fridge. Being able to pay their bills knowing that they are completely debt free and that they now have the opportunity for a new beginning. The work of CAP is successful only with the help of the local Church across the Nation. Working together, we can see lives transformed. Visit our website at www.capuk.org

CAP is in partnership with our Pollockshaws Church as it runs a Jobs Club.

Diary Dates - 2016

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|----------------|---------|--|
| January | 4 - 5 | Initial Stationing |
| | 11-13 | District Chairs & Connexional Leadership Forum/Stationing Group 3 (London) |
| | 19 | EMU Meeting (Glasgow) |
| | 20 | Ecumenical Forum (Stirling) |
| | 21 | District Probationers Committee (Dunblane) |
| | 24 | Week of Prayer for Christian Unity |
| | 27 - 28 | Methodist Council |

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| February | 3 – 5 | Regional Probationer Retreat | (Perth) |
| | 6 | Circuit Stewards Meeting | (Dunblane) |
| | 10 | Church & Society Forum | (Stirling) |
| | 10 | DAF Meeting | (Dunblane) |
| | 12 - 14 | District LP Conference (Please note this is a change to the original date on the 6/7 th Feb) | (Coatbridge) |
| | 22 | Taking Care Group | (Dunblane) |
| | 24 | District Executive Meeting | (Dunblane) |
| | 25 | Ecumenical Stakeholders Meeting | (London) |
| 27 – 1 | Vice-President of Conference Visit | | |

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| March | 1 | Regional Learning & Development Forum | (TBC) |
| | 2 | Superintendents' Meeting | |
| | 4 | World Day of Prayer - Theme: 'Receive children, receive me' | |
| | 10 | District Probationers Committee | (Dunblane) |
| | 12 | District Policy Committee | (Dunblane) |
| | 16 | Relief & Extension Trustees 2.15pm & General Committee Meeting 3.15pm | (Dunblane) |
| | 17 | Chair of District on Sabbatical until mid June | |

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| April | 2 - 4 | Methodist Council | |
| | 18 - 20 | District Chairs & Connexional Leader's Forum | (Northampton) |
| | 22 | Ministerial Synod | (ADP) |
| | 23 | Representative Synod | (ADP) |

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|-----|---------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| May | 3 | EMU Meeting 12.00pm | (CEMC, Edinburgh) |
| | 3 - 6 | Diaconal Convocation | |
| | 16 – 19 | District Chairs' Retreat | Cumbria) |

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| June | 8 | Regional Learning & Development Forum | |
| | 24 - 26 | Solas Festival | (Perth) |
| | 30 – 1 | Conference - Presbyteral Session | (Southport) |

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| July | 3 | Conference - Ordination Services | (London) |
| | 2 - 7 | Conference - Representative Session | (London) |

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of "In Touch"
 If you would like to submit an article to the Spring issue, please send to Fiona Inglis at
fiona@methodistchurch.plus.com by 7th March 2015
 Please continue to check our website for updates www.methodistchurchinScotland.net/