

THIS MONTH: JULY 2008

RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH



Dear Friends

Birthday celebrations

When I was making the draft of the circuit plan for the summer back in January I wondered about taking the Sunday of my birthday as holiday but I realised that what I really wanted to do was to have special services and a tea at church. I did not want the services to focus on me but on elements of the Christian faith that are particularly important to me. I feel that is what happened and I very much appreciated the prayerful support and encouragement that I received before, during and after the day. The tea was just what I wanted and I was glad that so many could come. Thank you to all who worked hard on that. I was completely overwhelmed with cards and good wishes and am very grateful to those who gave to me or to the church's fund for outreach. I am sorry that I have not been able to acknowledge all these personally and hope you will understand. Several people travelled quite a distance to join us on the day but I was delighted to welcome my friend Willy Niklaus from Switzerland. I had no idea that Willy was coming until he put his head around my lounge door – truly a surprise visit.

Sunday services

I started as a Methodist Local Preacher on Trial in July 1979 and took my first service at Millbrook on the evening of 22 July (*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* John 1:29). In those days the typical Free Church service consisted of five hymns, two readings, two prayers, the Lord's Prayer, collection, sermon and benediction. This was a pattern that Methodism had followed for a century or more. In the first few months of my circuit ministry, the Methodist Church authorised a new hymnbook, *Hymns and Psalms* (1983) to succeed the *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), but the basic pattern of the services remained the same. It is still possible to find churches that follow this pattern but we are trying to do something different and I want to take a few lines to explain.

To me the most important part of any Christian service is the reading of the Bible. From the beginning, Christians have believed that the Bible is uniquely God's Word and that God speaks through it. Since my student days in Leicester, under the influence of my minister there, I have been committed to a style of preaching called 'expository'. This means taking a passage of the Bible and asking, what does the Bible say? What does the Bible mean? What does the Bible mean to us today? The preacher then encourages the congregation to follow that process. Ideally, I would like to do that systematically (using consecutive Bible passages week by week), but I would need to be with the congregation most Sundays to be able to do that, so I simply try to meet that aim as best I can.

I am very grateful that I have an appreciation of music. I particularly enjoy classical music of the Romantic period (Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Chopin) as well as Beethoven and Bach which were the core works of my own piano exams. That said the “signs of my misspent youth” are my knowledge of chart hits of the 60s and 70s. It’s not a matter of saying that Beethoven was better than the Beatles or vice versa, I am blessed that I can enjoy both.

There is no doubt that the ‘pop revolution’ has touched just about every part of modern culture. I do not naively believe that all you need is a few guitars and the church will be seething with young people. What I do believe is that in Free Church worship today it is right neither to ignore the great upsurge of new songs, mainly written in the last 30 years, nor to abandon the richness of Christian heritage and experience that we have in our hymns. I concede that some of the tunes to the traditional hymns are pretty dire, but some of the tunes to popular modern worship songs are pretty dire too. What really matters to me are the words - that the words are biblical and that they enable us to praise God and express faith and Christian experience in a way that is meaningful.

On Sunday mornings my aim is to read the Bible and preach an expository sermon. To complement that I arrange an order of service that often includes a Psalm and a blend of traditional hymns and song-sets of the more contemporary worship songs. Our pattern of prayer, particularly the prayer request book, is important to me. It is never my aim that the service should run later than noon. On Sunday evenings my aim is to read the Bible and preach an expository sermon but in a more contemporary framework that does not normally include traditional hymns but more song-sets and gives an opportunity for more informal sharing of testimony and prayer requests. My own feeling is that as a church we are doing this quite well and I am grateful to all the visiting preachers who share these aims with me.

Membership service and church lunch: Sunday 6 July

In our membership preparation group we shared some thoughts about hymns and songs that were important to us. What inspired me was the variety of items that were shared, *In Christ alone, Make me a channel of your peace, Great is Thy faithfulness, Jesu, lover of my soul*. I am so pleased that we shall be welcoming new members on Sunday 6 July at 10.30 am. This service will be followed by a church lunch (roast dinner and pudding) at 12.45 pm (£3.50). This is an excellent opportunity to invite friends and family to join us but it is very important for catering purposes to book in advance. I hope to bring some guests myself including my friends Fran and Karol Nimick (who were my hosts in New Mexico), their daughter Aileen (pron. ‘Eileen’) and another girl, Jamie, Aileen’s friend. If you missed this series of membership groups and are interested in the next groups, which start in September, please let me know.

Latest medical news

I went for lithotripsy (‘stone zapping’) on 28 May but the kidney stone could not be found. Since then I have been waiting to be recalled to the hospital for an x-ray. My weekly reminders have so far been fruitless but happily I don’t seem to be suffering any

adverse affects. The brachial neuritis (a condition similar to sciatica but affecting the arms) continues to aggravate me but hopefully is improving slowly. Thank you for your kindness, understanding and prayers. I hope to catch up with all my regular home visits between now and the end of July, as I miss seeing members who are not able to come to church regularly. If you know of anyone who would like me to visit them at home or you would like me to visit you please leave a message in the office.

Office changes

For the last two years Joanne Dixon has been working in the office and, among other things, producing this monthly sheet. On 11 July Joanne is leaving us in the hope of taking up a full-time job. Joanne's friendly disposition has made her a popular member of our church community as she has dealt with enquiries in person and on the telephone. Joanne has become used to my pernickety attention to detail and I have been introduced to a world of film and TV celebrities that I did not know existed. It has been a happy working relationship and I know that everyone joins me in thanking Joanne for what she has done and wishing her well in the future. I am sure that Joanne will never look at an apostrophe in the same way again.

Yours sincerely

John Haley

Boys' Brigade

There will be a BBQ and presentation held on Monday 14 July for Andrew Sherrington who is leaving Boys' Brigade after many years service. Everyone is welcome to join us, especially past and present staff and boys.

July Diary

Tuesday 1:

10.00-12.30	Patchwork Group
7.45 pm	Ladies' Group: Brian Gerry

Wednesday 2:

10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
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Thursday 3:

2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship
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Saturday 5:

8.30 am	Monthly prayer meeting
9.15 am	Dartmoor walk
10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine and Lydia)
7.00-9.15 pm	Recharge

Sunday 6:

10.30 am	Revd John Haley: Communion (Reception of new members and dedication of pastoral visitors)
12.45 pm	Lunch
7.00 pm	Mrs Kate Konrad

Tuesday 8:	10.00-12.30 7.45 pm	Patchwork Group Ladies' Group AGM followed by buffet
Wednesday 9:	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 10:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship AGM
Friday 11:	7.00 pm	No MADD Café today
Saturday 12:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Women's Fellowship (Muriel)
Sunday 13:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Revd John Haley Mr Michael Raymont and Revd John Haley
Monday 14:	6.00 pm	Boys' Brigade BBQ
Tuesday 15:	2.15 pm	Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome)
Wednesday 16:	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 17:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship
Saturday 19:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Church funds (Avril)
Sunday 20:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Revd Dr Denis Applebee Revd John Haley: Communion
Tuesday 22:	10.00-12.30	Patchwork Group
Saturday 26:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Church Outreach (Pat)
Sunday 27:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Revd Jon Bush Miss Judith Walker

**Church office hours:
Tuesday-Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm**

Church telephones: 348178 (office only), 331186 (pre-school and hall)

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Minister: The Revd John M Haley: min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
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Information for August's *This Month* to the office by 22 July please.