

THIS MONTH: SEPTEMBER 2007

RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH



Dear Friends

“At the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9)

Some years ago I met Herbert Silverwood, a famous Cliff College evangelist. He said that when he was a young man, all the Cliff College trekkers (as they were called back then) had to do was to put a notice outside a chapel or village hall saying “Cliff College trekkers here tonight” and the venue would be well-filled with expectant people, many of whom would already have some understanding of the Christian Gospel and when presented with a personal challenge would commit their lives to Christ. How things have changed.

Today, we live in a much different context. Although I believe good notice-boards and publicity are important, it is clear that people no longer just come to Christian meetings because something special is advertised. Neither do they come with a sense of expectation or even a basic understanding of the Christian Gospel. I believe that proclaiming the Christian message, through the traditional method of Biblical preaching remains the primary God-appointed way of bringing people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. If anyone should say (as they sometimes do), ‘if only we had better preachers’ all I could do is agree with them.

We must be careful not to misunderstand evangelism in simplistic terms of getting people into a building and then getting a preacher to hit them with the Christian message. This could well do more harm than good. Instead, we must realise that the whole journey to Christian conversion is a spiritual process.

Farmers and gardeners know only too well that there is a lot more to growing vegetables and other food than sowing seeds and picking the produce – there is groundbreaking, ploughing, fertilising, watering, feeding, weeding and nurturing to be done. Similarly, with the spiritual harvest, we need people to be engaged in the less exciting, less visible parts of the work before anyone can share in the reaping. We need people to pray for their family and friends. We need people to be faithful witnesses to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in both word and deed. We need people to share Christian faith with others in a relevant and coherent way. Giving someone a postcard from the church might be a good place to start. Maybe when we have won the respect and confidence of others, we will have the opportunity to invite them to an outreach event or church service (whether that is a special service or an ‘ordinary’ one). A lot of prayerful preparation will normally have taken place before a new person is ready to join us on a Sunday but I am confident that ‘at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up’.

Baptism, membership and Christian renewal

The Methodist Church has a list of registered members and our way of doing things makes formal membership important. Whether you are new to the life of the church or have been part of the

church community for a little while but would like to have an opportunity to express your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, to his church and to this local church, you can show this through baptism/Christian renewal and membership. There is a possibility that I would conduct a service of total immersion on the morning of 7 October. This would be followed by a service of reception into membership. If you would like to explore this possibility with me please speak to me, to one of the stewards or to the leader of your group as soon as possible. Enquirers will be given a copy of *Called by Name (Being a member in the Methodist Church)* and *A Catechism for the use of the people called Methodists* and these will form the basis of preparation for being received into membership. It is also possible just to come on the evening to the four preparation groups that I am holding on Monday evenings at 6.15 pm, starting on 3 September.

Summer Fire

I think most people will agree with me that, in terms of the weather, it has been an indifferent summer. We had some days away but, at the last minute I was invited to give the five Bible studies at *Summer Fire*, the annual celebration week of the Southport Methodist Holiness Convention, as the expected speaker withdrew at fairly short notice. As this was one of my scheduled holiday weeks, I was pleased to be able to go as I was a team member from 1991-2002 but stood down five years ago in order to give others the opportunity. This year we welcomed the President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, and Cliff College's Director of Evangelism, Revd Steve Wild, to our evening celebrations. Revd Ashley Cooper (District Evangelism Enabler from the Chester and Stoke on Trent District), Revd Piers Lane (Scripture Union), Revd Rob Cotton (Bible Society), Revd Phil Gough (Leyland) joined my friend Revd Mark Dunn-Wilson (Truro), who after becoming joint team leader with me in 1998 was also standing down. Interestingly enough, this year was the only year I recall going to Southport where it did not rain during my visit. Several other members have also been to Christian holiday weeks. It is good to have these special times with other Christians, often in larger numbers than the local church, but we must not allow them to make us discontented with or critical of our own fellowship. The Bible studies from *Summer Fire* are available on our website.

Church Review

Over the summer the church stewards have been engaged in a church review meeting with the leaders of all our church groups and activities. From what I have heard so far, this has been an encouraging and worthwhile process. Leaders of the groups have felt that the whole community of the church is taking an interest and supporting their part of our work. The church stewards have also been able to oversee what is happening in a way that is just not possible in administrative meetings.

Change of email addresses

From 1 September the main office address will be admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk and the minister's office address will be min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk The previous addresses become in active on 31 August, so if you have not changed your email address books please do so immediately.

Ridgeway Cell Network

About 45 people belonged to various cell groups in the past year. September is a good time to join a midweek group. These currently meet on Tuesday afternoon, or Wednesday, Thursday

and Friday evenings. We use *Scripture Union Lifebuilder Bible Study* books to prepare at home and then come ready to share with others around the Bible. We are starting a new book in the second week of September so now is the perfect time to let me, or one of the stewards, know that you would be interested in joining a group.

Minister's Bible study (Monday evenings 7.30-9.00 pm)

These start again on Monday 17 September when we are doing the book *Christian Doctrine 1* from the Moore College syllabus. No prior knowledge is expected or required. We sing, pray, read the Bible and then follow the study. All are welcome.

God bless

John Haley

September Diary

Saturday 1:

8.00 am	Cardiff Trip
8.30 am	Prayer Meeting
10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine Gregory)

Sunday 2:

10.30 am	Revd John Haley
7.00 pm	Mrs Danie Needs

Monday 3:

6.15 pm	Membership Preparation 1 (Believing and Belonging)
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Tuesday 4:

10.00-12.30	Patchwork Group
7.30 pm	Cross-talk: Revd John Haley at Stoke Methodist Church
7.45 pm	Ladies' Group

Wednesday 5:

10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
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Thursday 6:

2.45 pm	Womens' Fellowship: Revd John Haley (Communion)
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Saturday 8:

10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar Representative Synod
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Sunday 9:

10.30 am	Revd John Haley
7.00 pm	Revd John Haley with Revd Alen McCulloch

Monday 10:

6.15 pm	Membership Preparation 2 (Being a Christian, Pt 1)
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Tuesday 11:

10.00-12.30	Patchwork Group
7.30 pm	Men's Fellowship: Revd John Haley
7.45 pm	Ladies' Group

Wednesday 12:

10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
7.30 pm	Circuit Meeting (Pennycross)

Thursday 13:	2.45 pm	Womens' Fellowship
Saturday 15:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Church Funds (Avril Baker)
Sunday 16:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Revd Denis Applebee Revd John Haley
Monday 17:	6.15 pm 7.30 pm	Membership Preparation 3 (Being a Christian Pt 2) Minister's Bible study (Christian Doctrine 1)
Tuesday 18:	10.00-12.30 2.15 pm 7.45 pm	Patchwork Group Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome) Ladies' Group
Wednesday 19:	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 20:	2.45 pm 7.30 pm	Womens' Fellowship Finance and Property Committee
Saturday 22:	10.00-12.00 4.00 pm	Oasis Coffee Bar: Harvest (Carol Sharman) Harvest Festival at Dupath Farm (see separate sheet)
Sunday 23:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Revd John Haley Revd John Haley with Revd Andrew Earl
Monday 24:	6.15 pm 7.30 pm	Membership Preparation 4 (Testimony, witness and our calling) Minister's Bible Study (Christian Doctrine 2)
Tuesday 25:	10.00-12.30 7.45 pm	Patchwork Group Ladies' Group: Harvest with Revd Nathan Fisher
Wednesday 26:	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 27:	2.45 pm	Womens' Fellowship
Saturday 29:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Youth Outreach (Miriam, Steven & Kim)
Sunday 30:	10.30 am 7.00 pm	Mr Nigel Graham Revd John Haley

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

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

Church Office: admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
Minister: The Revd John M Haley: min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
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