

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

JUNE—AUGUST 2020



Revd. Sue's ministry

FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

I am 'getting on a bit' and feel that I have led a very blessed life so far. No wars, a good home and childhood and a happy (in the most part) adulthood. I've not really wanted for anything although there have been times when I thought otherwise. I've sympathised and empathised with people and situations over the years while having, I now realise, no real conception of what the reality of a difficult life is all about. Until, that is, Covid 19 arrived!

We have seen panic buying, empty supermarket shelves, food having to be thrown out because there was too much panic, beauty spots and the seaside being jam packed when everyone was told to stay at home, long queues at the shops etc. Thank you, God, for the British propensity to queue and for the glorious sunny days, and for the technology of Zoom, Jitsi and the like that means we can still be in each other's company. Everyone has been affected by the challenges and changes but the one thing that has remained constant is God's presence and surveys have showed that more people have been turning to prayer.

This edition of MEMO is with you a little later than usual and a few pages shorter but we could not let Sue's

final months go by without recognition of how much she has affected all of us, as you will see as you read on.

Some of our regular items are still included and it is good to read an article from one of our young readers. Of course there are no future events listed but we will all be able to meet again sometime and somewhere. In the meantime please keep sending your articles in, we always enjoy reading and sharing your thoughts, ideas and experiences.

God bless, take care and keep safe
Anne, Dave and Elaine

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

Please send all contributions
to the
Communications Team
C/O the Circuit office,
Nunthorpe Methodist Church,
Connaught Road, Nunthorpe,
Middlesbrough TS7 0BS

Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com
by **1st July 2020**

The Superintendent's Letter



Hello my dear friends,

I was sorting through my old LP's yesterday and came across The Sound of Music. Do you remember the ingenious way Maria and the Von Trapp family escape by using the song, So Long, Farewell?

Well, I've been trying to think of imaginative ways - *not to escape the Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit - because I could quite happily stay for the rest of my life*

- but to say a fitting goodbye - because this is the right time for me to retire and for you to begin another chapter in the life of this amazing Circuit. The song got me thinking about how different people say goodbye. Of course most of these famous quotes are the last words spoken before the person dies! I'm not planning on 'shuffling off' any further than Whitby!

In the Old Testament, Moses gave a long goodbye speech (Deut 33) asking that good would come to the people of Israel.

I pray that God's goodness will continue with you all.

As St. Paul finished his letter to his young friend and student, Timothy, (2 Timothy 4:7) he writes: ". . . the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

My whole ministry has been one of trying to tell others the good news of God's Love for them in Jesus - at times - I have failed miserably - but I want to urge you to go on sharing God's Love in every way possible.

As I thank God for all the opportunities given to me by the Methodist Church over more than 30 years, I recall the famous last words of John Wesley who spoke words of eternal hope. "Best of all, God is with me. Best of all, God is with me." As individuals, families, churches, as a nation and globally we are going through one of the most challenging experiences in peace time. Nothing seems the same - and yet - God's Love never changes - it remains constant - we can put our trust in him for whatever the future holds. As we step into what looks like an uncertain future with changes going on all around, remember, it is God who holds the future and it is God who raised Jesus Christ to life so that our future hope can be eternally in him.

I know I can entrust you, my Beloved friends, into the hands of your new Minister and Superintendent, because David will Love you and Care for you and Guide you as a shepherd, as it has been my privilege to try to do. God has new and exciting opportunities planned for us all.

Of course I couldn't end this letter without some of the last words of Our Lord Jesus; having finished his work of Salvation on the Cross, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."
What better way for me to retire from full time ministry, than for me to commit every person who I have ever had the joy of ministering to; every boy and girl, every teenager and every adult, whatever their age. Every happy couple, every child baptized, every tear wept and

dried, every joy shared, every soul committed to God. . . I commit them and you all, my friends, into the Loving, eternal hands of God.

There were lots of plans for us to say, So Long, Farewell, but most have been scuppered by the Covid-19 virus. However, in an attempt not to exclude anyone, on Sunday 19th July, I shall spend the day driving around the Circuit and try to see everyone; socially distanced, of course! (More about those plans/times later).

So, let me finish this letter trying to express my sincere thanks to all of you for being the best Circuit in Methodism, for allowing me to be me, and for the privilege of serving you in the Name of Christ.

Back to some words of Moses - My Blessing for you:

*"The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace." (Num6:23-26)*

With much love

Sue

A letter from the Circuit Stewards to our Superintendent Minister the Reverend Sue Greenwood

Dear Sue,

When I was asked to write a 'short' note for Memo, I didn't realise just how difficult it would be without waxing lyrical, which I know you definitely wouldn't want me to do; or to do it just as an impersonal note. So I have decided to do this as a heartfelt personal letter to you on behalf of the Circuit Stewards.

I think I can safely say on behalf of all the Circuit Stewards, both current and past, that working with you over the years has most certainly been our pleasure. Your love, guidance and support have made what can sometimes be a challenging job so much easier, so worthwhile and a privilege. You are not just our Superintendent Minister, you are our very dear friend and we will miss you; but we have been truly blessed to have had you in our Circuit.

As you now go into your well-earned retirement, we wish you God's blessing on all that you do. Enjoy the time you now have to spend with your lovely family and keep well.

With love from us all.

Pat Barrett on behalf of the Circuit Stewards

Coronavirus Update

We want to keep you as up to date as possible with what the Methodist church is saying about the current restrictions. As you are aware, the Government is slowly releasing the restrictions on places of Worship but at the moment, we are still not allowed to open our churches for Worship, but we do want to start making the necessary preparations. The Connexion have produced guidelines for Churches and the Local Church and Property Stewards in consultation with the Circuit Leadership Team, will be working together to try to implement these guidelines. Your patience is much appreciated.

Every Blessing
Rev Sue Greenwood

WHERE DO WE GET INSPIRATION FROM?

Some weeks ago a friend at church picked up issue 17 of the Connexion, opened it at page 12 and said “Do you recognise him?” ‘After turning the page this way and that, upside down, near and far I said “Oh yes, its thingy – you know, the Rev. Richard or Andrew, Chairman of our district. Of course it was the Rev. Richard Andrew – I had some time ago had a chat with him about being a Boro season ticket holder. Anyway I closed the magazine and got on with what I was doing. Some time later, at home, I returned to page 12 and read the article. Rev. Andrew spoke of the Romero Prayer which he had pinned to a door as a daily reminder of how we may enter into God’s mission and by implication what might get in its way. Wow, this sounded good, but my frustration grew when the prayer was not printed. I think it was the following Sunday when our Rev. Sue was leading worship and she used the prayer. Again wow – what a coincidence. I mention this because in November 2019 our Rev. Charity led worship where she gave us a little booklet – “A story to tell” – a 30 day journal in which we were invited to write down where we had seen God that day, using prompts e.g. Day 1 was “What I am thankful for today and Day 16 – Did I notice God in the noise or in the quiet today”. I was inspired and scribbled something each day for the 30 days. Looking back at some of the things I wrote down then (it’s now early March) I wonder at my mental stability, but I expect that’s just getting a bit older. But at the beginning of the booklet is this prayer:-



“Loving God, refresh, renew, and revive me today. I long to encounter you in my life and to be transformed again by the work of your Holy Spirit. I invite you into the centre of every activity and ask that you remove those things that keep me from encountering you afresh. Open my eyes and ears to notice you in all I do today. Capture my heart and deepen my longing for you. Help me to be patient yet persistent with this prayer”.

I now have this typed out and laminated, not pinned on a door as a daily reminder, but as a bookmark in my daily reading book “Fresh from the Word”.

Bill Reeve
Trinity Methodist Church

These are a few of the words that have been used to describe Rev.d Sue and her ministry from our Circuit





Reflections on Lock Down

I remember well my final services before our worship in churches was cancelled. I was with my own church family at Grove Hill in the morning and with my friends at Trinity in the evening. Little did any of us know that would be the last time we would be together in our churches for a long time. However Rev Sue did give some very good advice in those early days, that we as God's people are not limited to a building but instead we are working for him in the world. That has stayed with me, and one positive of Lockdown has been that challenge to be at work in the world which has always been our goal but is even more important today.

I still find it special to go to Grove Hill on Sunday mornings, to check the premises, cut the grass and then to stand quietly at the front of church and pray for all the people in our Church family who would usually be sitting there.

It has been good to keep in contact, in some cases via email, but mainly by phone calls, a pleasure that I have shared with so many of that family who have been really active in keeping in touch with each other.

Lockdown has been sad as we have not been able to be with our grandson or our sons, as much as usual. Thankfully one of our sons calls regularly with our shopping. We have also been able to go to Stokesley with 'meals on wheels' when our daughter in law, who is a Sister at the Friarage has been at work. So from that point we have been fortunate. Also our niece set up a family WhatsApp so we have been able to keep in touch and see each other.

I have felt inspired to start writing my 'Thought for the Week', which goes on the Circuit and our Church website. This is alongside sermons produced by Rev Christopher and Rev Sue and various other 'virtual' gatherings around the Circuit.

I have also enjoyed writing to the 'Gazette' over issues I feel strongly about and had the pleasure of seeing them in print. I have walked much more and further than usual, so feeling and hopefully being much fitter. I have also wanted to eat even more than I usually do!

We have, in common with other people, lost holidays we were looking forward to this year. We feel a little better now we can go out further, so we have been to some of our lovely villages and enjoyed walks. We ventured to Redcar and on one occasion it was so busy we didn't stay.

I have read more, and also watched far more television than I usually do!! I have gardened and done some painting (house not artistic) However I am still putting off the job of cleaning out my cupboards and sorting files!! I will get round to it.

For all the disadvantages of lock down there have been many positives, we have our home we have our health and we have each other. The price we pay is nothing compared to the suffering of so many people who have succumbed to this dreadful illness. Others are mourning the loss of loved ones.

We can only keep praying for the sick and for all who care for them. Praying too for the Scientists looking for vaccines, and even a cure. We must look back on Lockdown as a time in our lives, when good things have happened when in some cases, people have grown closer and become kinder and more thoughtful. Maybe one day it will be over!

Dave Elliott

ALL THIS AND FIREWORKS!



In the beginning there was an idea.

It was bold; it was ambitious; it was daring.

The idea was entrusted to two people, who came at it from different angles.

One was a Methodist Minister, near to retirement, but inspired by the Methodist Year of Story. The other had taught children in Sunday School all her life but felt dissatisfied at the piecemeal way children learned the stories of the Bible.

The idea was without form until the two people got together. Then amazing things happened! One voice said, 'I want to organise a special day event for the children.'

The other said, **'Let's do three days!'**

One said, 'I want all our children to be invited no matter what their age.'

The other said, **'Let's open it up to some children from other churches too'**

One said, 'I want us to tell the whole story of God's rescue from beginning to end starting and ending with the garden. And to show how even the Old Testament stories point to Jesus.'

The other said, **'Let's use different story tellers to make it more exciting'**

The first said, 'Let's have different *methods* of story-telling too- Godly Play, Drama, DVD'

Concepts flew around, sparks sparked and before the meeting ended it was impossible to tell whose thought was whose. They had merged into one and become a coherent plan.

'I want us to make a Tree of Hands picture'. **Great, but let's use fabric and make a banner!**

'I want us to do a follow-my-leader activity as a response to the Moses story.' **Lovely, but better still let's have a complete assault course set up in the main hall.**

'I want a special meal where everyone takes part and the children prepare the table and serve bread they have baked.' **Super, but let's paint and wash each other's feet first.**

I want to give them a special treat. **Let's have a sleepover!**

And on the third day I want to take them to the beach. **Let's have a campfire and cook fish.**

Let's have three camp fires. **Let's have fireworks!**

The idea grew bigger and Bigger and BIGGER.

There was no time for doubt, just trust and faith.

When one said, 'I'm not sure we've got enough people. The other said, **'It'll be fine.'**

When one said, 'What if it rains when we go to the beach. The other said, **'It's not going to rain.'**

When one said, 'I wish I had more time to do this.' The other said, **'Let me do it and you can direct me.'**

When one said, 'I've been awake all night. If I don't share my ideas soon, I think I'm going to burst'; the other said, **'That's funny, I've been awake all night as well.'**



Many, many people contributed to its success: whether they simply baked an apple crumble, set up Operation Galilee on the beach, booked a coach, led a drama workshop, cut out 40 cardboard hearts for yarn-winding, practised plate spinning, baked a coffee cake or delicious scones, ordered the shopping, ironed the pillow cases, assembled the Tree of Hands banner, held onto a cargo net so that children could climb it safely, researched regulations and wrote out risk assessments, dressed up as Moses, led a night walk, taught a new song, washed up, made hot chocolate with squirry cream and marshmallows, wrestled sleeping bags back into their holders or swept sequins up from the messy floor.

Each individual strove to do their very best. There was a nervous energy as story tellers sought a time of quiet reflection before their slot, and prayed for the right words in order to change hearts. The very food was transformed: the humble sausage and mash Last Supper became ennobled by the reverence with which the table was prepared and the meal served, accompanied by the bread the children had kneaded and shaped.

People were moved. People's eyes sparkled, teared up, smiled. There was a closeness and camaraderie between ages, between churches, between disparate types of people.

The oldest child wrote a tremendously moving account as a thank you. (see page 10) The youngest just clutched the pink pig mask he had made and chuckled. The Big Story surpassed everything we had imagined in every possible way. We had wanted to take part in the Methodist Year of Story by celebrating the biggest and best story of all. Mission accomplished!



We had wanted to demonstrate Scripture's overarching message about God's glorious plan to redeem his rebellious people, and show that all of the stories point to Jesus. Mission accomplished!

We had wanted it to be a transforming experience; to reassure our youngsters, who were feeling isolated and marginalised, that it was ok to be different. That when their teacher asked them who went to church and only their own hand went up.....that that was Ok. Abraham was different. Noah was different. Moses was different. The disciples were different. God likes different.

We did it, and we did it for free. 28 young people attended and were fed, taught and entertained and none of them paid a penny. There were no arguments, no fallings out, no mention of the 'b' word because nobody was bored and everyone joined in. They didn't all know each other when they arrived but by the middle of the first morning they were all chatting and getting on. In a week of heavy rain and forecasts of gale force winds we had fun and fires on the beach and a tremendous firework display to represent the resurrection.



When the three days were up, a lasting memorial display was assembled in the church as witness to the Big Story. At the follow-up service on the Sunday, nearly all the children returned to fill the choir stalls, proudly wearing their fish bead badges and their friendship bracelets, singing the hymns they had practised and showing all those who weren't there what they had missed. And when the oldest twelve children, standing in front of the collaborative picture of the Last Supper by the altar, took paper cones of communion

bread out to the congregation so reverently and with real understanding, my heart soared.

For me it was a humbling experience. Throughout the event, my heart kept welling up with love for everyone. Was it worth the months of preparation, the sleepless nights and the meetings, the anxious moments? Yes and then some! I have learned that when you are prompted by the Holy Spirit, there is no time for doubt, the momentum drives you along. If you provide something this special, the children will come and the helpers will come and lives will be changed forever.

Marilyn Wilkinson

Nunthorpe Methodist Church

Thank You

What is it like to be a child in 2020 when there are so many bad things happening in the world? If you belong to our church family where all the adults make every effort to care with a passion to look after the young children so they are happy, supported and learn to live a good Christian life you are lucky kids!

For months and months adult church members have been planning and working on THE BIG STORY! I think every waking moment and in their sleep too.

On Wednesday morning bright and early 28 excited children and almost as many adults equally excited began what was the start of a journey that will never end. A time in our lives we will never forget.

The food was yummy all of it. We even had a Jam Butty factory and ate our sandwiches on the steps by the altar in Church. We had crafts, activities, drama, music, different ways of telling The Stories, games, an obstacle course where even the youngest kids negotiated all the challenges and even climbed up the netting. Which wasn't easy. A scavenger hunt, Circus skills and a drama workshop were lots of fun.

On Thursday afternoon we painted and washed each other's feet We baked bread, made fruit punch, Split into two groups one did the flower arrangements for the tables and the second group prepared the tables. What team-work. When all was prepared we had a big fellowship meal just like the disciples and Jesus would have had.

Following that a 4 mile evening walk and a sleepover was enjoyed by adults and the older kids and we did go to sleep!

THE BIG STORY

Starting with Adam and Eve of course, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Kings Saul and David, Isaiah, The calling of the Disciples, The Prodigal Son and ending with on the third day a visit by coach to Marske beach where we built fires and cooked fish fingers, 90 of them, on three separate fires. Representing the fish the disciples ate with Jesus by the sea of Galilee. Fishfinger sandwiches in the open air tasted much better than grilled at home.

Only we had Smores as well, yummy marshmallows toasted by us and put in between two chocolate digestives.

The highlight of the whole 3 days was daylight fireworks by the sea representing our risen Lord. WOW, there's no other word to describe our holiday club.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of all the adults involved and lots of prayers and The Faith of Sue that even in the grip of the storms this past week everything would be ok that the Lord would make sure it was and he did.

On behalf of all us kids youngest to oldest we want to say a big, big thank you for our whole experience of THE BIG STORY.

Ryan (aged 14)

Nunthorpe Methodist Church





What does a community based charity do when people can't meet?

Well the first thing is, to keep people safe.

MAP responded immediately to social distancing guidelines, by suspending all group activities from Monday 16th March 2020. For that first week, we carried on doing face to face outreach, keeping our Middlesbrough base open every morning, and visiting more remote areas throughout the week. Lockdown changed the landscape radically, and at the time of writing, this seems to be a new reality which will be with us for some time.

In the first few weeks we moved the office back home, and spent time making telephone contact with service users and volunteers so as to establish lines of communication. In those first muddled weeks we were able to help resolve many urgent situations for our service users, ensuring access to money, and food.

As time has passed we have moved into developing how we work.

The first big change was establishing a Thrift Fund, whereby (with support from the Jill Franklin Trust) we are now able to ensure continued access to basic necessities (food and money) for any NASS supported asylum-seeker within our area whose access to Government support has been interrupted temporarily, usually due to delays in Home Office or other systems. We have a loan fund and besides working with the individual to resolve the issue, where necessary we can loan funds to the individual, to be repaid once Home Office support resumes.

We are trialling use of Zoom to allow service users to come for English and other classes. This has been working well with our Meditation Group, and is now developing across other groups too.

Virtual reality only comes with fairly high level technology, though, and we recognise that a good proportion of our service users have no chance of accessing this. This is a particularly acute gap when they are not only locked down...but possibly about to emerge to a new world where a crucial tool (the NHS contact tracing app) will be based on this technology. We are extremely grateful to Big Lottery, and our partners in Ariadne, for allowing us to use funds initially earmarked for other services to look for ways to remedy this. Exactly what we will do is still being developed and discussed, but the aim is to get into a position where we can help some of our more vulnerable service users become better linked, at a very crucial moment.

So, developments come day by day, but we are doing our best at MAP to continue to safeguard our exposed service users. We want to support them in staying safe...and hope that you are all staying safe, too.

Ailsa Adamson

Lead us not...

I had been teaching my three-year old daughter the Lord's Prayer. For several evenings at bedtime, she would repeat after me the lines from the prayer. Finally, she decided to go solo. I listened with pride as she carefully enunciated each word, right up to the end of the prayer: "Lead us not into temptation," she prayed, "but deliver us some e-mail. Amen"

Smart money

"Dad," said the son, "what is a financial genius?"

"A financial genius," said his harassed father, "is a man who can earn money faster than his family can spend it."

Quick

A young husband was in big trouble when he forgot his wedding anniversary. His wife told him, "Tomorrow there better be something in the driveway for me that goes from zero to 200 in two seconds flat". The next morning the wife found a small package in the driveway. She opened it and found brand-new bathroom scales.

Prayers

When my daughter was young, she was glad to say her prayers, but she always worried whether God would know which little girl she was. One night after the usual 'Amen', she dropped her head upon her pillow and closed her eyes. After a moment she said, "Lord! This prayer comes from 203 Seldon Ave. I'll get you the postcode tomorrow."

Ketchup

A woman was trying hard to get the ketchup to come out of the bottle. During her struggle the phone rang so she asked her four-year old daughter to answer it. "It's the minister, Mum," the child said to her mother. Then she told her caller: "Mummy can't come to the phone right now. She's hitting the bottle."

Environmentally friendly transport

While driving in the countryside, a family caught up to an old farmer and his horse-drawn cart. The farmer obviously had a sense of humour, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand printed sign: 'Ecologically efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust.'



"The organist isn't too sure about it, he says he can't play that fast."

Being Sue

The rocking chair is empty now. The church is silent. There are no children playing in Noah's garden. I feel quite sad as I set about writing this appreciation of our lovely Rev Sue Greenwood to mark her retirement. It is hard not to feel cheated out of the last precious few months of Sue's ministry. There was an unacceptable suddenness. We were not prepared for this. I feel the raw pain of the enforced separation and even find myself identifying with the lonely disciples after our Lord was taken from them.

But let's rewind about 12 years. Let's go back to a very different time. Back to the start of what is really a love story between Nunthorpe Methodist Church and this wonderful lady. Love at first sight actually because as soon as you meet Sue, you realise that she is larger than life, a real character, brimming over with joy and the fruits of the spirit. You notice her eyes, twinkling with mischief and her calming voice. My grandson has even suggested that there is a glow about her 'like when Dr Who regenerates'! By the end of the first conversation you feel that you have known her all your life. And it does not take long to discover that this is a person of substance. There is a solidity to attach yourself to. She is a steady rock for all to cling to in time of need.

She is not one for airs and graces. She is down to earth. She is not afraid of rolling up her sleeves and digging in the church garden to help remove the old oil storage tank or unblocking a jammed sink which refuses to drain. And she is always the same; in the pulpit, gentle, self-deprecating, inspiring, humble; in your home compassionate, caring, interested in what you have to say; in meetings thoughtful, diplomatic, humorous. She does not take life too seriously. She consoles, encourages, strengthens, cajoles, coaxes. Following her example makes us all raise our game. We value her approval and wouldn't want to disappoint her or sadden her. She bears all our troubles on her shoulders, but still remains cheerful.



Whenever she arrives at church, the whole building lights up. She greets everyone by name. She notices anyone who is new; she notices anyone who is missing. She cares but doesn't pressurise. You never feel guilty for missing a service or two. She actively leads her churches as much as she can and would likely do more if only she had mastered the skill of being in two places at once! It always feels a great blessing when she calls in on your Brownie meeting or the jumble sale or speaks to the assembled children before they go on to perform the Nativity. She is always encouraging and inspiring.

Queuing up at the door to leave after a service, there is no awkwardness. You don't have to say anything. It is reassuring to know that there will be a firm handshake, always a remark, sometimes a bear hug and often a kiss. Whatever you need on that particular day. Whatever you as an individual need. She knows which of her flock needs which treatment, who needs a more formal greeting and their own personal space and who would appreciate a cuddle. St Augustine wrote 'God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love.' I feel that that is what Sue does too. She makes each person whatever age, gender or personality feel truly special.

She is equally intuitive with non-church members like the fashionable crews who often come to support baptism families most of whom rarely enter a church or sing a hymn. Sue is welcoming and gentle and explains everything and takes the fear and awkwardness away so

that they can relax and experience God's love and grace.

Her diary bursts with appointments. She has to juggle many churches and has many congregations and communities to oversee. Yet, somehow she manages to fit everything in meetings, managing the circuit, pastoral visits, hospital visits, baptism preparations and wedding rehearsals. But the personal touch is always paramount to her. She has great intuition and seems to know instinctively when you are low. 'I saw you walking the other day,' she once told me. 'You looked so sad.' I hadn't told anybody but it was true, I was sad. She visited me. I felt better. Nothing had changed. My situation was the same, but Rev Sue was praying for me and that made all the difference. She is always welcoming if you call at the Manse, too. She will hustle you into her cosy back room and listen attentively as you pour your heart out. She has visited my home on so many occasions and for such diverse reasons; to share a much loved album of photographs with my mother-in-law trapped in a girlish past through dementia, to share ideas for the Big Story, (What a great privilege that was!) to discuss the order of service for my Father's funeral, to simply ask if I am well. Our sheepdog, Nell, always greets her with great affection like a member of the family, which of course she is, and after all it is a matter of common knowledge that dogs are such good judges of character.

Her leadership is never represented more vividly than on each Good Friday when she leads the Walk of Witness, accompanied by a raggle-taggle bunch of followers: striding out purposefully from one church to another, carrying a large wooden cross over her shoulder, waving to passing cars and shouting the message to all who will listen, 'God loves you THIS much.'

You may have noticed that I have written this in the present tense because it isn't over. She is still doing what she can. She is still Being Sue! So let's not dwell on the loss and the sadness. And as we move into the future, we will each have our own personal treasury of special moments to remember, to warm us and calm us and cheer us. These are just a few of mine.

Picture Sue:



Taking a baby, she has baptised earlier in the service, into the pulpit for the final hymn, jiggling and dancing him just because she wants to.

On the beach, rosy cheeked and wind swept, she is helping to build the fires, as exhilarated and as excited as the children. As she eats her fish finger sandwich and toasted marshmallow, she can hardly wait for the fireworks.

Throwing her head back and laughing loudly, as a child paints her foot with tickly torment.

On a bus heading for the beach, showing the strength of her faith and belief as she calmly pronounces those immortal words, 'It's not going to rain' and dares us to doubt it.

And finally picture Sue sitting at the front of the church in her rocking chair. She is surrounded by children seated on the carpet eating jam butties. She is reading them a story. This last is how she will be fixed in my memory, long after she has left the church and we have someone new to lead us. I can't resist a note of warning though. She is going to be such a tough act to follow!

Marilyn Wilkinson
Nunthorpe Methodist Church



Sue's Ministry at Marton

How on earth do you summarise the wonderful ministry of the Rev Sue Greenwood in our circuit and in Marton in particular? Well perhaps you go right back to the beginning, when her initial “conversation” (interview in anyone else’s language!) occurred in our church. After the refreshments I offered to show Sue around the building and I was chatting away as we left the church and walked through the vestibule into the main hall when I noticed I was talking to myself. Sue had stopped in the vestibule area to chat with a man and his children who were setting up for an event in the afternoon. From the very beginning Sue showed that she is, first and foremost, a “people person”. Other things, church buildings, meetings, finance etc., although important take second place.

Two other things are worth recalling from that first meeting. Sue has an incredible ability to remember people’s names, but this isn’t just a good memory, it’s a further sign that for Sue people are important. The second thing was how quickly the decision was made to invite her to come here, everybody immediately saw Sue for what she was and is, a wonderful minister. This is further shown by how keen her churches and the circuit were to extend her stay with us not once but twice! But all good things come to an end, so they say and even we couldn’t ask her to forget retirement.... although we did try!

There have been so many wonderful occasions at Marton in the ten plus years of her ministry but one that springs to mind is when we celebrated our 175th church anniversary and she cut the cake alongside our oldest and youngest church members at the time. Sue has a particular talent to engage with children and she was instrumental in welcoming a scout group who worshipped with us each month for several years. She also welcomed people who didn’t regularly attend church but who came to weddings and christenings and made them feel so comfortable, they often commented afterwards how lovely our minister was – they were right! Her care and support for those going through difficult times and losing loved one's has been much valued by church members and their friends and families over the years.

So many people will miss Sue for so many reasons. We will miss her preaching, her leadership (as our church minister and as our superintendent minister, a role that she was so reluctant to take on but one that she has done so well), her friendship and support but most of all we will miss her love for everyone which is the hallmark of her ministry. Sue recently said that of all of the roles of ministry (teacher, leader etc.) the one that is most important to her is Pastor. Well Sue, wonderful Pastor that you are, enjoy a great retirement. But we will be seeing you again soon, Church Anniversaries don’t lead themselves you know!

John Hinton

on behalf of Marton Methodist Church



FIRE WATCHING



The Siren wails our nerves are frail
But do we ever shiver?
Shells round the sky—we make no cry
We're tougher now than ever.
And now we fear, dread planes are near
the drone is growing louder.
Our spitfires rise to search the skies
no pilot could be prouder.
Snatching hats and coats and scarves
we scatter helter skelter,
Our evening run has now begun.
Guns pop then the bombs drop
we'll pray they hit the river.
Suddenly a crash aground
Oh! how the shelter shivers
and no one can tell us how
to stop our knees from knocking.
But we are bold as knights of old
although the noise is shocking.
When comes the signals raiders past
the sweet all clear is heard at last,
then home we haste once more to sleep
faithful guards their watch will keep
our gallant air raid warden.
And if we show a light at night
we humbly beg your pardon.
Well let it rain hail or sleet
we'll never suffer from cold feet
as thermos tea we sip then eat
the sandwiches are short of meat!
But childlike, for all our might
despair and doubt come creeping.
There's cold and damp and dark to fight
and winds of winter keeping

Gladys Thompson

Gladys wrote this moving poem in 1940, while Fire Watching over Middlesbrough . She also worked during the day at I.C.I on aviation fuel.

As we remembered the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) on Friday May 8th 2020, this poem highlights the hardships and suffering of World War II. It reminds us of a time, when we all came together to help one another.

STANTON'S REFLECTIONS OF SUE

We have been blessed by the ministries of many loved ministers at Stainton but cannot recall anyone who has combined so much devotion to every aspect of ministry and pastoral care as has Sue.

Sue is always sincere, warm, dependable, caring, conscientious, and enthusiastic with a commitment second to none. She has great communication skills and teaches love and Christianity in layman's terms making the Bible come to life and relevant to us in our daily lives.



Sue's pastoral skills have been outstanding. She's always been aware of the needs and personal problems of everyone. We give thanks for the support she has given anyone who has been at their lowest ebb, spending hours, often into the night reaching out and comforting them making them feel THE special one.

Sue has led us in worship with unflinching thoughtfulness at all seasons in a variety of ways both traditional and modern. Her friendly, personal approach has endeared her to many, Methodists or not. She has attracted numerous people to Harvest Festivals, Carol Services and Big Sings. She has promoted harmonious, ecumenical links with St. Peter and St. Paul's, the Anglican Church in the village and has become well known, respected, trusted and admired in the wider community.

Through Sue we have developed a close relationship with Montpellier

Manor, the residential and care home in the village.

Sue has been a true and faithful servant to all. There is no doubt that she will be sadly missed and leave a huge void in the village and many people's lives, as she retires to the coastal countryside and puts her feet up!! (knowing Sue that is NOT going to happen). This retirement, Sue truly deserves but she will remain in our memories and everlasting prayers as we thank God for the twelve years of her life she generously gave to her 'little flock at Stainton'.

God Bless you Sue.

StF 465 Guide me

Friends who have more musical talent and knowledge than I, tend to roll their eyes at the mention of this hymn and its usual tune *Cwm Rhondda*. Don't protest! I have seen you do it! It has a vigorous tune and is a "belter" with nothing subtle about the music. That's maybe why it was regularly sung lustily by Welsh rugby fans at Cardiff Arms Park and later adapted by rival football fans to chant as they point at the losing team's stands: "You're not singing! You're not singing! You're not singing anymore... anymore!" Its tune has a lot of cheeky repeats and that's in addition to the reprise of the last three lines beloved by Welsh and Methodist congregations ...and me.

Composed and played first from the time of the 1904 Great Welsh Revival, a time steeped in passionate hymn singing which was carried to the terraces, *Cwm Rhondda* enhanced the

already well loved words of the hymn written in Welsh 1762 by an early [Calvinistic] Methodist, William Williams, Pantycelyn, a name revered in the chapels of my childhood. However, the version we sing in English is a freely redacted version, where for example Williams' Welsh word for "manna" is helpfully translated "Bread of Heaven" to make it fully understandable to the English immigrants who, finding work there, thronged the industrial south Wales valleys of the early 20th century.

Anyone familiar with DreamWorks animated film *The Prince of Egypt*, or Charlton Heston's portrayal of Moses in *The Ten Commandments*, or more importantly Sunday Schooled with a bit of OT bible knowledge will recognise the hymn's context and references. That "barren land" that wilderness, is the one travelled through by the escaping Israelites where Moses, following God's cloud and pillar of fire, led them to the "promised land" of Canaan. On the 40 year journey they are sustained by manna and water from a rock struck by Moses' staff following instructions by God.

The hymn uses these Exodus memes ending at the River Jordan which the Israelites have to cross before they can enter Canaan. This iconic and colourful story of the Exodus may well not be a literal historical account, but for people of faith, both Jewish and Christian, it expresses truth about God's saving power. That journey through the wilderness has a profound theological centre for it illustrates a shared experience of liberation from that which holds us captive, as well as God's providential care.

These days as we are held captive by Lockdown, with Pandemic in the land and understandably "anxious fears" about ourselves or our loved ones dying alone, gasping for breath, this hymn means a lot and should be, as it has always been, a source of great comfort. The true "Wilderness" or "barren land" of the hymn and the story is, as it has always been, anywhere where we find ourselves up against it. The wilderness is where anyone is isolated, and feels alone, totally alone, really alone, with the ultimate issues of life, death and eternity. It can be in a crowded refugee camp, a high rise flat with no garden, a detached house with a drive, a tiny care-home room shielded from the outside world, or an ambulance, a hospital waiting room, an empty chair. The hymn asserts our need and dependence on the "powerful hand of God" who is our "strong Deliverer" our "strength and shield": an eloquent confession of faith.

But it is in the last verse where Jordan is encountered that the hymn is most evocative. Crossing the river is an ancient metaphor for dying. The Jordan often symbolises a place of transition from physical, earthly life to spiritual eternal life: heaven. William Williams' words are I think, quite transcendent. Physically, the idea, for a non-swimmer like me, the very idea of treading a flowing river is terrifying! As is dying, particularly of Covid 19. But the alliterative three hard "d"s in "death of death and hell's destruction" act as a steadying drum beat, followed by assurance in the emotive softer sounding "s" words that the previously terrified I ["me" in the hymn] will land "safe" on Canaan's side. And what is more, when a sizeable congregation is actually singing these stirring words to this rousing tune, and enjoying the *hwyl* [a Welsh word meaning a vibrant emotional feeling], it is proclaiming that "songs of praises" which this hymn is, will "ever" be sung eternally, in eternity. Don't roll your eyes: singing *Guide me* becomes for the believer, a foretaste of heaven.

Ruth Lewis

PRAYER DIARY

June 7th We pray for Rev Sue Greenwood as she begins her final quarter in our Circuit. We pray she may know how much she is loved and how she will be missed. Pray for Nunthorpe church

June 14th We pray for our preachers both lay and ordained in their ministry amongst us, in the many link ups for prayer and fellowship during these difficult times. We pray for the Preachers' meeting scheduled for this Thursday that it will be a time of reflection and mutual support. Pray for Rev Charity, for the University Chaplaincy and for Linthorpe Road,

June 21st We pray today for the ongoing battle against the Corona Virus, especially for those who are suffering and for all who have lost loved ones to this terrible disease. Pray for Rev Christopher and for Grove Hill.

June 28th We pray today for all who live on their own and those who are lonely, We think of those who are bereaved and who find it hard to cope. We pray for Rev Len Karn and for Normanby.

July 5th We pray today for those young people whose education and exams have been so severely disrupted by the Virus, be with those seeking University placements and all who feel a sense of insecurity at this time. Pray for Rev Lawrence Law and the Chinese Church.

July 12th We pray for all known to us and members of our church families who are unwell at this time, in body, mind or spirit. Be with those who care for them at home or in Hospital. Bless Rev Sarah Ramsden in her ministry at the Hospice.

July 19th We pray today for the World community as we have been so aware recently of our dependence on each

other. We pray for Sharon Sewell and her work in the community and all who help in this ministry. We pray for Trinity.

July 26th We pray today for all who are feeling left out and who may be ostracised by their communities. Pray for Alisa Adamson and all who work in MAP. Pray for Stainton

August 2nd We pray today for the communities served by our churches and for all the initiatives we employ to reach out to these communities. Pray for Live at Home Scheme and for Eston Grange
August 9th We pray today for those who make important decisions for the lives of our churches, especially for Church Council and Circuit meetings. Pray for the Circuit Leadership Team and for Marton

August 16th We pray today for those involved in work with children and young people in our churches and in our schools, colleges and University. Pray for Elaine in her work at the Circuit Office.

August 23rd We pray today for family life, for those families going through hard times, for those who are facing divorce and for those for whom family life is happy and secure. Pray for the work of Action for Children. Pray for the Avenue team.

August 30th As we come to the end of another Methodist year, we thank God for all the blessings we have received. We pray for all ministers starting in their new Circuits and we pray for Rev David Godfrey as he joins our Circuit.