BPW Methodist Circuit Newsletter

Issue 85

May 2023

Message from The Revd Loraine N Mellor, Superintendent Minister



Dear Friends and Colleagues, I am sure you have heard the saying "don't cast a clout 'til May is out!" I thought it meant that you don't change from winter to summer clothes till the end of May and I think that although it does mean that it's not referring to the month of May but to May blossom and only of course if you have clothes for the different seasons, and not many of us do these days.

This May (that's the month) brings us three bank holidays: the usual early May bank holiday on the first Monday of the month, then of course the coronation weekend, when we get an extra day and then the Spring bank holiday weekend, what we used to call in the North 'Whit weekend', which sometimes falls at Pentecost when we celebrate the birth of the church and the coming of the Spirit.

Many Methodists from across the country would travel on bank holiday Monday by coach to Cliff college for the festival celebration and come rain or shine we would renew friendships, share in fellowship, sing our hearts out in worship and hear the president preach. Sometimes we would be in t-shirts, but other times huddled under umbrellas as it used to be all outdoors. Even though we have moved now to the very big marquees thousands of Methodists still flock to Cliff for the festival which now runs from Friday night to Monday night. Some take caravans and tents, others stay in local hotels and cottages or on site at Cliff in the wonderfully appointed rooms. It's a real family weekend and as chair of trustees of the college I love it and have not missed a year for a very long time. I see family and friends there every year, meet new friends, we chat over mealtimes, enjoy and are challenged by the bible studies, hear some great preachers and have the experience of worshipping with more than a thousand others. The staff and student body work tirelessly throughout the weekend, clear tables, help with the creche and children's work, play in the five bands scattered around the site and support the festival in a myriad of ways and it is so good to see. It's on weekends like this and at 3-Generate that I know God has not done with the Methodist church just yet.

Even though there is no week in May when I will be in my own bed for more than four nights running due to work commitments and the Cliff festival, I would not swop it for the world. All that I do strengthens my faith and renews my commitment to God, his church, and the people within it. As I reflect on what this May has brought already and all that is to come I'm grateful to God for the space of the bank holidays, the time to refresh and be renewed amongst the work and the travelling, the May blossom, the waking up of spring as days lengthen, as bluebells whisper their scent into the wind, as the sea changes colour, as the soft breezes announce the coming of summer. I won't be casting a clout until May is out, but I will be rejoicing in all that it brings. I hope too that you have much to rejoice in during the month of May.

God bless

Loraine

Hello again!

John starts with a huge welcome back to Tracey after her recent illness, feeling sure you will all join him in prayers for Tracey's continuing good health. The Circuit just wasn't the same without you, Tracey!! (The April edition was available to download from our website, so we hope that message got through to you via your Church Senior Stewards).

This month we give a large part of the newsletter over to our Superintendent-in-waiting, the Revd Nichola Jones, who allows us to reproduce a report she wrote for her current Circuit in Nottinghamshire. This describes the trip she took with Tracey and a number of other people to Palestine recently. Conditions in Palestine and the West Bank are extraordinarily difficult as Nichola tells us (although we do detect a touch of black humour in Banksey'aptly named '*Walled Off Hotel'*) but with faith in God there can be change. And faith is the theme for the remaining items this month: the Revd Dr Susan Henry-Crowe explains '*Why the World needs faith'* and the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler finds a '*Room for Faith'* in the unlikeliest of places. The Revd Gwen Wills lightens the tone a little by describing an axe throwing Christmas gift from her daughter Revd Mo. Revd Gwen accepted that challenge and concludes by encouraging us all to grasp new opportunities when they come our way.

Take care and keep safe, John & Tracey <u>office@bpwcircuit.org.uk</u> <u>j.tilling@btopenworld.com</u> traceycollins360@icloud.com

Palestine March 2023

Dear Friends,

We have returned fired up at the awful things we have seen and heard but determined not to be depressed or too dispirited because of the amazing resilience and determination of the witnesses we have met. Their courage and ability to keep going despite no water, little food, no freedom to go anywhere even 6 miles away, the ever-present soldiers wielding their AK47s and

the sheer brutality of Occupation, with children arrested for throwing stones at the Wall, teargas canisters littering the streets, soft bullets which maim and hurt you.....all this and much more and we carry on life in the UK as if none of this is real or as if we can do nothing about it! So, we look to CHRIST who understands our sufferings cos He suffered and triumphed.

THANK YOU for praying for us and lighting a candle each night at 6pm when we were praying for you in Bethlehem and felt connected in the midst of the struggles and sorrows, we heard each day. We enjoyed Peter Primacy beside the Sea of Galilee where Jesus cooked breakfast for his disciples after his resurrection and told Peter (and us?) to 'feed my sheep.'

We loved the church in Magdala, Mary Magdalene's village who, with the other women, cared for Jesus and his disciples from their own resources. Yes...do read Luke 8: 2-3 again which reveals some of the many women who supported Jesus. This light-filled chapel celebrates them and women down the ages, often unknown and unsung.

SAILING ON THE SEA OF GALILEE is beautiful, looking at the hills as did Jesus. He is very close, and one feels he may walk across

The church of the annunciation in Nazareth glows with glorious stained glass and images of Mary and Jesus from hundreds of countries where Christ's face is the same as that country's people. Meeting Bedouin leaders the next day stirred us to think about water and the few resources available in the Jordan Valley, unless you belong to an Israeli village or settlement and get water piped in. The village of Fasayil established some hundreds of years ago has to break into the water pipe to the nearby new settlement under cover of dark to receive water to wash, cook, clean, give their animals.

the still waters and say, 'Come, follow me' and we would!

In Jericho we clambered up the Wadi Kelt and saw the monastery and the hills where the Good Samaritan was based and where the psalmist wrote 23 The lord is my

shepherd.....how very beautiful is this land.

The General Manager of Bethlehem Water and Sewage came to our hotel to explain he had at his disposal 65 litres per person in the area of the West Bank mainly Bethlehem which was his responsibility but that settlements (foreigners usually from American, UK, Australia, parts of Europe) had access to 450 cubic litres per day and had roses and swimming pools. It didn't seem quite fair! Our hotel had just received its last water for 14 days so had filled great tanks of water stored underground and on the roof. We didn't linger in the shower after that nor flush quite so often but what a way to live! When asked about water conservation or collecting rainwater in butts for recycling or to water crops or use in toilets, he told us that no one is allowed to collect the rainwater because 'Israel owns the rain' and he wasn't jokingit is illegal to collect rainwater.

SHEEP, sheep everywherethe L'Arche community selling crafts of Bethlehem sheep wool were amazing and joyous including the secretary who had left a good job in the bank to come and work amongst adults with learning needs and said her life had been transformed and she felt such love from them and wanted to give them love in return.







Love was seen in the Four Homes of Mercy when the new Director showed us round and we held hands with the residents, were kissed and hugged by them.

So to Mother Maria at the Russian Orthodox School for Girls in Bethany where the bags of goodies were amply displayed, and



Girls in Bethany where the bags of goodles were amply displayed, and she tried on the woolly mittens made by Keyworth ladies! She had begged us not to dash away but to 'Bring Time' and she chattered away telling us of the mafia leader who was trying to steal their land and of the girls she was trying to rescue whose fathers were selling them to their uncles as second wives when the kids were aged 10 or 11 and sometimes even younger. All a bit much to hear actually. Saving the little girls is solely dependent on this one remarkable and brave Russian nun who when asked what she did replied, 'I survive'.



Some pupils at The Orthodox school for Girls in Bethany

Al Rowwad in Aida refugee camp works with kids after school to teach dance, drama, creative expression of all kinds and to see



and neither wanted him, so he is kept in an orphanage and sent to school here. When they had to make a Mother's Day card he was crying and upset till the teacher found him and he asked her, 'please will you be my mother and let me give you this card.'

One of the group knitted hundreds of bags so each child gets one filled with gifts e.g., wet wipes, paper hankies, soft toy, notebook, crayons, comb and brush, sweets, and their little faces were astonished and amazed as they delved into each bag. A huge success!

beauty in every day so they are not tempted to take their own lives or resort to attacks on the ever-present soldiers. No wonder we wanted to go and kneel at the star in the church of the nativity which marks Jesus's birth and thank God for all children who are safe at night with loving parents and secure homes and pray for all children who are vulnerable and desperately unsafe.

Early to the school of joy carrying 9 suitcases crammed with the uniforms you gave! They went wild! We took teachers lovely warm scarves and pj's. Plus, cosmetic bags which they were thrilled with. The kids were high as kites and danced the traditional dabkha and sang happy Mother's Day to us including the little boy whose mum and dad had separated



EMPOWERING WOMEN was a subtext in our visits, so Surif Cooperative welcomed us with open arms as we bought their lovely embroidery as well as the lady whose husband has been in prison for many years. How much longer will he serve? 400 years......

We were delighted to meet The Revd Sally Azar whose ordination as the first Palestinian woman to serve a Palestinian church



soldiers, so he had to sneak in to find us 45 minutes later.

GLASS BLOWING AND CERAMIC PAINTING by skilled men and shopping therapy for us all before the WALLED OFF HOTEL AND BANKSY. Banksy is the joint partner with Wisam who had been with Banksy two days ago in London and was keen to introduce me to the celebrated film maker who did 'The Wanted 18' about the cows smuggled into Beit Sahour (the home of the night sky watchers meaning the shepherds) so they could buy their own milk rather than the overpriced Israeli milk, leading to an army of Israelis hunting down the cows and the people who hid them in the outhouses! Well worth watching if you get the chance.

Here is a splendid photo of left to right: our friend and guide Usama, Nichola, Amed Shlomo the film director who also produced marvellous

was celebrated last January which Nichola was invited to attend along with 120 Lutheran bishops processing through the streets to the tunes of the Scout Band. Sally, when asked how she was, replied 'Bearing up and trying to shrug off the hate emails I receive each day saying I should die and am born of the devil and a vile and wicked woman'. Goodness! What a cost it is for her to serve Christ and face that each day.

We struggled through the check point in Hebron on the Jews-only Road called Shehadeh Street (google to be shocked) then climbed a wall and scrambled through a rough garden with soldiers lurking and watching from the settlement which has blocked up Nisreen's front door and threatened to kill her and family. Her husband died recently from teargas inhalation. It wasn't made easy since our guide had been prevented from coming with us by the Israeli





EARLY RISERS PLEASE NOTE we were at the checkpoint in Bethlehem 4.35am watching about 8,000 men and some women dashing through. They are the lucky ones with an ID that allows them to work in Israel, running through the wretched combination of X-ray machines, long corridors with turnstiles, eye checks, fingerprints and passportsonly this isn't a border! This is inside the country...... We met Hannah who is 87 years old and doing duty as Machsom Watch: incredible Israeli Jewish women who watch what the Israeli Jewish soldiers do and how they behave at checkpoints, reminding them they are their grandmothers and encouraging them not to throw their weight around and make

posters based on the famous 'visit Palestine' from the 1930's, Jessie 'Banksy hates me' artist, Wisam Salsaa hotel owner and George.

But Banksy's museum at The Walled Off Hotel shows with great clarity, the scope and intensity of the Occupation which is so determined and ruthless you wonder how people will ever survive the teargas, bullets, house demolitions, no freedom of movement, no jobs and no prospects and you have to remind yourself this isn't a natural disaster but a manmade one. Surely peace with justice is possible...one day? If the international community and local Israelis put pressure on the government to make peace? Well maybe one day.....



threatening gestures with their big guns. A brave woman whose friends have dropped her since she started doing Machsom Watch

The HOLY SEPULCHRE isn't quite what Methodists are used to with marble, mosaics, incense, swinging silver lamps, candles, pomp and splendour with great processions, singing and chanting. Quite a shock to the system. But we managed to crouch down under the altar and touch the rock where the cross may have stood.....honestly.... there is a massive crack in this rock made by an earthquake so listen to the gospel accounts really carefully this Easter.

THE WAILING OR WESTERN WALL with many tourists from all round the world (many of whom don't appear to understand 'queuing'!) but the bottom 7 massive stones come from Jesus's day. We walked back up the Via Dolorosa where Jesus carried



his cross being shoved by all and sundry as we were, only he was being led out to be crucified by the Romans on trumped up charges. We wept in the Garden of Gethsemane and in the purple stillness of the church of all nations marking Christ's suffering and anguish as he prayed not to face the appalling events he feared were coming then we prayed over Jerusalem from the viewpoint on the mount of olives where Jesus wept over the city for 'they did not know what made for peace' and Jesus said how he longed to gather them to him like a mother hen gathers her chicks.

THE HOUSE SURROUNDED BY THE WALL ON THREE SIDES belongs to Jonny and Claire Anastas who seem to have aged overnight with the worry of soldiers playing with red laser beams over them and their house. How to have hope when no one helps, visits, supports or stands alongside? We were glad we went, returning to share

communion at the hotel and make commitments to learn more and love better and strive for justice with a new vigour!

Final thoughts:

MICKEY MOUSE AND RED NET SKIRTS for the teachers at Hope kindergarten who want to give a party to all those little lost kids and footballs galore for the big boys of strapping 15 years old needing to burn off energy and be kept safe from thoughts of revenge and retribution....any teachers in the UK will understand that added to hormones is a deep - seated anger against the Occupier much as French people felt in the last war against the occupation of their country.

CHILDREN TORTURED AND PUT IN PRISONthere were no words to say after the presentation by the DCI (Defence for Children International) who work with children in prison as young as 12, though 10 year olds have been arrested and

detained...yes we know it's contrary to the 4th Geneva Convention so if you care about human rights and children being kept safe and laws applying to all signatories on the Convention of Human Rights for children please read up on DCI. Once you know we cannot pretend we don't! DEEPLY UPSETTING.

DAOUD AND THE TENT OF NATIONS: marvellous to be out in the fresh air again and after a picnic on the bus, we drove in slow increments through the Qalandia checkpoint, caught a glimpse of Banksy's balloon girl and were so thankful to sit listening to Daoud whose family has been given the Methodist Peace Award. His land is surrounded by massive settlements who have very violent settlers intent on harming him and his family on land owned by them since before the Ottomans. Google 'Tent of Nations' and be amazed at their determination. 'We refuse to be enemies' is a hard thing to say and even harder to live by but they do! Maybe they will be granted the right to live there after 36 long years battling through the courts and with all the paper documents to prove their ownership from hundreds of years ago. It comes up in May....please pray.

WI'AM CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTRE lives up to its name of gentle means of pursuing peace non violently and the traditional way of Sulha, resolving disputes by talking things over. If only that could be the way forward for the whole nation and for international affairs and wars, rebellion, cruelty and occupation. If only......



The Walled Off Hotel

We return to do as Palestinians have asked 'Come and see. Go and tell'. We walked with Jesus, met the people who love him



today and those working for justice and peace non-violently and we have been changed by it all. We feel that 'eternity is closer than we think' as Mother Maria reminded us and we are all called to be 'Change Makers' for the good, for freedom, beauty, hope; for joy and a future.

Martin Luther King said, 'In our generation we shall have to repent not only for the wicked deeds of bad people but for the appalling silence of the good.'

Please help us to share what we have seen and heard as our eyes have been opened to deep injustices that need to be healed so both Jew and Muslim, Christian and Samaritan, so Palestinian and Israeli can live in peace under the justice that is of God. In the meantime, we weep with those who weep.

Revd Nichola Jones

Why the world needs faith



Once again we turn to Connexion magazine for words of wisdom as many of our chapels continue to explore mission, their faith and their relevance to this modern world. We live in times of inequality and unrest (nowhere more so than in Palestine as we have just seen), but the Revd Dr Susan Henry-Crowe says faith based on United Methodist Social Principles will bring well-being and social justice. The Revd Dr Susan Henry-Crowe was the General Secretary of the United Methodist Church until December 2022. She writes:

The mission of the Church in the 21st century is to align its *raison d'etre* (reason for being) with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It constantly needs to refine its mission for the present age, make relevant its message to people today, encourage and form clergy and laity, and uphold the commitments and values of Methodism.

I used to be the General Secretary of the United Methodist Church in the US and my guiding inspiration comes from the United Methodist Social Principles, which you can find on our website <u>www.umc.org</u>. They are a prayerful effort to speak to the human issues of the contemporary world from a biblical foundation. With resolutions, statements and guidance from our General Conference they are a source of inspiration and hope for thousands of Methodist people around the globe. Today, we must continue to know, understand, preach and teach the values expressed in the Bible and live them out in the world.

In the United Methodist Church, the Social Principles provide this inspiration. We are called to renew our faith and to bear witness to it from the pulpit and in Sunday school. But we are also called to witness to our faith outside the Church: in coffee shops, at conference tables, and on the international stage. The world needs to live and be guided by our Social Principles. Through faith-filled witness our Methodist communities can contribute to a better world.

An active calling Methodists are not called to be passive. It is our calling to proactively address civil society around current issues from a perspective of a living faith. We are called to have a heart for seeking justice and pursuing peace. Our witness is expressed in the halls of national and local governments. We can play our part in influencing legislation, government action and local policies that hinder or advance human well-being. We can do this by understanding and addressing poverty, healthcare, climate justice and peace-building.

Tens of thousands of Methodists across the globe speak out and engage with issues that have resulted in harm from corruption, war, greed, sexism, racism, tribalism and our colonial past. Methodists around the globe are giving witness to the gospel mandates for justice and peace. There are Methodists in Kenya, South Africa and many other countries on the continent of Africa working towards this goal, as well as in Asia, North America, Great Britain and even on the tiniest islands in the South Pacific. They are all engaging day by day in the pursuit of justice and peace.

Our heritage As Methodists we are motivated by our foundations in Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Our Conference gatherings are times of pain when debating divisive issues, as well as of profound joy, especially over unified agreement. We are inspired by the gift of gathering, the procession of people from around the world claiming the causes of Jesus Christ, the commitments to diversity and inclusion, and standing together for a more just, whole and redeemed creation. We are animated by so much: from the holy Scripture that binds us and reason that centres us, to the traditions that inspire us, the prayers that hold us, the principles that guide us and the mission around which we journey. Our Methodist heritage is a gift that we must never take for granted.

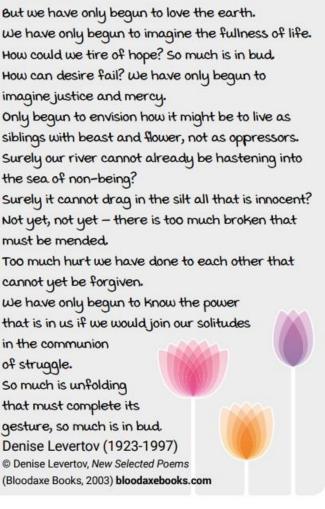
Courageous witness A public faith witness is now more important than ever. Globally, the public square is divided and recalcitrant. Nationalism and white supremacy are dangerously on the rise. War and conflict rage. The effects of colonialism continue to influence social, political and economic structures. Brave people who live with mental illness and debilitating conditions are being neglected. There is heartbreaking violence fuelled by homophobia. Children and families are still living in poverty. Greed, selfishness and inequity abound in political and economic systems. The struggle for democracy and election reform is challenged. So what are we to do? As people of faith we are called to be at the centre of these struggles.

Advocating for climate justice, eliminating poverty and addressing violence is holy work. There are people who stand up for their Methodist values across the UK and around the world: in Kinshasa in the Congo, in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, in Seoul in South Korea, as well as in countless towns and villages in many countries. Churches and individuals must lobby MPs and push national and local governments to take action against rising military budgets, irresponsible policing and gun violence, harassment at our borders and inaccessible healthcare.

We cannot lose heart because love and compassion abound. Even amid mean, ugly, selfish and greedy behaviour, we also witness examples of the most caring, brave, tenacious, steadfast and faith-filled actions imaginable. People offer tireless care and expressions of compassion to people who are vulnerable and living on the margins. Those on the margins of our societies extend themselves in generous and hospitable ways. So, when it comes to peace and justice there is much to do... And our hearts are full of hope.

Taking the Methodist legacy forward For more than 250 years, the people called Methodists have generously given of their time, talents, gifts and service. And we are continuing to advance this legacy for a brighter future. We carry the commitments to justice and peace as well as the legacy of our forebears as a new season begins. This is expressed beautifully in Denise Levertov's poem 'Beginners':

Beginners



Room for Faith



And in a bland airport prayer room the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler finds a universal truth: whatever our beliefs, we all need a space for faith, to pray and to contemplate eternity.

Airports are not usually scenic places and sightseeing is not usually an option during the long hours of waiting that air travel inevitably involves. However, one evening last year I found myself in a departure lounge for longer than expected and happened to notice that I was opposite the airport prayer room. It was not a particularly pleasing room aesthetically: the furnishings were plain and, being a multifaith space, the accoutrements of any one religion were not on display (but available for those who needed them).

Even though I was the only person in the room (and I did not notice anyone else going in or coming out), it struck me that there was something about the space that was for everyone. In the midst of hectic activity or frustrating inactivity, of business or leisure, of venturing forth or returning home, here was a unique space. Regardless of creed, it seemed to proclaim, having a place in which to pray, to reflect, to be silent or to be conscious of eternity is both ordinary and vital. For everyone who says 'I believe...' whatever their next words are, there is a 'room for faith'.

Faith in all our lives It seems to me that over the last generation we have seen a subtle but important shift in British society. The Prime Minister 25 years ago was famously told by his chief adviser "We don't do God." But that has changed. At a Whitehall reception in January, for example, I met the Prime Minister's Deputy Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion, one of a number of government ministers who now speak regularly to church leaders about the issues that concern us.

Ironically, as the proportion of the country who identify as Christian falls below 50 per cent, as a nation we seem to have realised that faith is not simply a private matter, as was commonly assumed in the late 20th century. Still less is it an eccentricity, as it can sometimes be regarded. Rather, faith is an ordinary and vital part of life. We might craft it differently: the discipline of time set aside each day, the religious symbol carried in the pocket, or set on the desk, the small rituals before eating or studying or playing a game, but in the building of our life we will find that we have constructed that 'room for faith'.

I did not stay long in the airport prayer room. I didn't need to do so. It was enough that it was there, enough to be reminded of the dimension of life that begins 'I believe...', enough to remember that every action, including those much less daunting or exciting than getting on a plane, is lived in the context of that 'I believe'.

Where will the axe fall?

When deciding on an appropriate Christmas gift for her arthritic parents, both in their seventies, my daughter decided that the perfect present for us was a forty-five-minute session of axe-throwing at Adrenalin Quarry, Menheniot. I must confess that the prospect of this filled me with some apprehension – would I be able to even lift an axe let alone throw one? And if I did manage to chuck it somewhere – where would it land? I was never any use at any sport that required throwing things in any specified direction.

But the auspicious day dawned, and Mo even texted us to remind us that today was the day! It had genuinely slipped our minds – after all it was April by now and Christmas seemed a long time ago. So we dropped everything, jumped in the car and made our way to Menheniot. We registered in, and the first thing we were asked was if we were there for zip-wiring over the dis-used

quarry – yes honestly! I think Andy might have been up for it if he hadn't seen the colour drain from my face. However, we assured the nice lady at reception that we were there for axe-throwing and we were duly directed to where we had to be, and were joined by other disparate groups of people, mostly holiday makers on their Easter break looking for something to do in the rain.

Well, to cut a long story short [*excusing the pun which Gwen, uncharacteristically, apparently hadn't noticed – Ed*], both Andy and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I needn't have



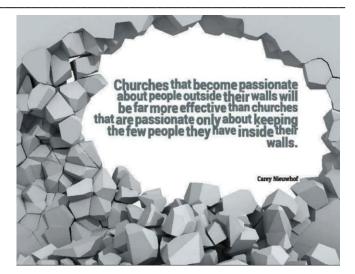
worried about lifting the axe – they were quite small. I had imagined great big axes woodcutters use for chopping down trees! We were given some tips about how to hold the axe and how to take aim.

And get this – I actually managed to get the axe to stick in the target - once! Afterwards instead of aching all over as I had feared, I felt totally invigorated! I would recommend it to anyone – but maybe check with your health care professional first! So it just goes to show that it really is a good idea to grasp new opportunities when they come our way, even though we might think they are things we could never do. It might not be axe-throwing but it might be accepting the challenge of Local Preaching, or offering to be a Church Steward, or initiating a new church project, or maybe taking the time to visit someone and having a chat.

Blessings, Rev Gwen

Faith

Faith is needed every day,-Faith to work and faith to pray; Faith to learn and faith to teach, Faith to practice, faith to preach; Faith to love and faith to charm, Faith to guicken, faith to calm; Faith to bless and faith to chide, Faith to follow, faith to guide; Faith to prove and faith to know, Faith to stay and faith to go; Faith to urge and faith to keep, Faith to waken, faith to sleep; Faith to do and faith to dare, Faith to bear and faith to share; Faith to bind and faith to break, Faith to give and faith to take; Faith to stand and faith to yield, Faith to heal, faith to be healed, Faith to pardon, faith to seek, Faith to listen, faith to speak; Faith to wait and faith to try, Faith to live and faith to die.



Links

Cost of Living:

<u>Cornwall Council cost of living page</u>

Mental Health:

- call the Samaritans on 116 123;
- mind.org.uk/coronavirus;
- <u>mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus.</u>
- Singing the Faith Plus website link:

www.methodist.org.uk/

Tubestation:

www.tubestation.org

Kate Louise Wheeler