

THE

June – August 2025

# ELBOW

The Magazine of **Formby Methodist Church**

Hope  
for all

## ***From the Editor***

Nearly the longest day - where does the time go?! It certainly doesn't seem so long since we were enjoying our '150' events. As they were so successful, we decided to repeat three of them in 2025. One we've already enjoyed - the visit of the *'Love Train'* was a memorable one. There are two more evenings to come - the Sefton Ladies Choir will return on 11 July (see back cover) and on 4 December, in conjunction with the Civic Society, we will have an evening of carols - and much more! Watch this space!

I am delighted that we now have another Steward, David Blake (see p7), while Trish Slinger has been shadowing Liz prior to her taking over from her as Pastoral Secretary.

Our congratulations to our ex Superintendent Marie-Anne and our current Superintendent (albeit a little premature!) for their magnificent fund-raising efforts (see p21).

This year is the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. We have already commemorated VE Day (I still have some copies of the excellent Scrapbook produced by the Civic Society for those who are interested, see also p30) but we must also remember the often forgotten VJ Day which did not happen for another three months - and several Formby men were involved in the war against Japan (see p34).

My thanks to so many of you who have given me words of thanks and encouragement regarding the *'Elbow'* - they are all very much appreciated. A very big thank you to our Minister, Rev Sheila, for her continued help and support, indeed not just to me, but to everyone connected with Elbow Lane - her pastoral work is simply wonderful. And as always, special thanks to Graham Watts for another beautiful magazine cover and to Helen for her invaluable assistance in the production of the magazine.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of the *'Elbow'* - amazingly, it's the 33rd!! - and that you have a wonderful summer holiday season, whatever you do and wherever you go.

# SERVICES AT ELBOW LANE

1 June, 10.30	Christian Aid Service	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
8 June, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr Rodney Hoyle
15 June, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
15 June, 6.30	Evening Service	Rev Ernie Grimshaw
22 June, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Derek Bowker
<b>29 June, 11.00</b>	<b>Circuit Service</b>	<b>St Philip &amp; St Paul with Wesley, Southport</b>
6 July 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
13 July, 10.30	Church Anniversary, Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
<b>20 July, 10.45</b>	<b>United Service</b>	<b>Ainsdale Methodist Church</b>
20 July, 6.30	Evening Service	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
27 July, 10.30	Climate Sunday Service	Mrs Eirlys Jessop
3 Aug, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
10 Aug, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Debs Attwater
17 Aug, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Shirley Potts
<b>17 Aug, 6.30</b>	<b>Circuit Service (Bible Month)</b>	<b>Mr John Venables</b>
24 Aug, 10.30	Songs of Praise	See also p29
31 Aug, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Sally Binymin

**“Are you wrinkled with burdens? Come to our church for a facelift!”**

**“Don't put a question mark where God puts a full stop”**

# ***Minister's Letter***

Hi All

Do you find it easy to believe what someone tells you, even if what they tell you seems impossible?

Think of the story of Thomas. Of course, it's not just a story about Thomas. It's also a story about some frightened disciples. So scared, in fact, that, they hid behind locked doors. And who can blame them? They had just witnessed the one they confessed to be the Messiah betrayed by one of his own, tried and convicted by both religious and civil authorities, and then brutally executed. Little wonder they were afraid, assuming that the next step would be to round up Jesus' followers. But when Jesus comes on the scene, their fear falls away and is replaced by joy.

This, I think, is the way we assume faith should work. Yes, perhaps you've got doubts and questions and fears, but then God arrives and those all fall away, replaced by joy and wonder and, of course, unshakeable faith.

But that's not the way it works with Thomas. He doubts. He listens to the reports and wants to see for himself. And I would say, who can blame him? He was, after all, one of those who saw his Lord and friend mistreated, beaten, and then crucified and has probably spent the last few days pulling the broken pieces of his life back together and trying to figure out what to do next. In fact, he might have already started getting on with his life – why else, I wonder, is he out and about when the rest of the disciples are hiding behind locked doors.

So I'm wondering do we make room for the Thomases in our world? Because I suspect that their number is legion, even among those who worship with us on a Sunday and certainly among those with little or no familiarity with our congregation or faith.

Thomas does come to believe. He sees Jesus for himself. And after that experience he not only consents to the witness of his friends but makes the most profound confession of faith about Jesus contained in the New Testament, calling Jesus *"my Lord and my God."*

But all of that comes after he has a chance to voice his doubt. And sometimes faith is like that – it needs the freedom of questions and doubt to really spring forth and take hold. True, vigorous, vibrant faith comes, I think, from the freedom to question, wonder, and doubt.

Not for everyone, of course. For some, faith comes easily. Maybe many of the other disciples were like that. But for others it's harder.

To tell you the truth, I have no idea what the other disciples thought of Thomas' scepticism. Maybe they were shocked at his honesty. Or maybe they sympathised.

Further, I suspect that John's whole point in including this story in his Gospel is to affirm the faith of his community, a group of people who *"had not seen yet believed."*

The Creator of this vast cosmos not only knows we exist, but cares deeply and passionately about our ups and downs, our hopes and dreams, and all the rest.

For some faith is easy. For others, more difficult. For some, hearing the testimony of Scripture is enough. For others, they need something more personal and direct.

Questions and wonder and doubt and even scepticism are signs of interest and curiosity and these, quite often, are the soil in which vibrant faith is born.

Thomas comes to faith because he first has the chance to voice his doubt and questions and then he experiences Jesus for himself.

Come and join us on a Sunday at 10.30 am to find out more!

Love and peace

*Sheila*



# In Memory of Susan

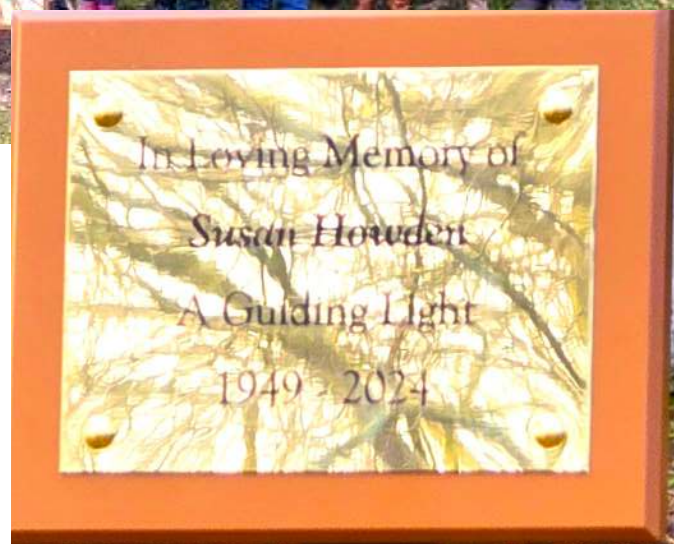
On Saturday 15 March family and friends gathered at Scarisbrick Campsite to dedicate the planting of a cherry tree to the memory of Susan Howden. Susan had been a Girlguiding Leader for almost 58 years (she had also been a Brownie and a Guide - adding another 11 years). Scarisbrick Campsite had been Susan's second home for pretty much all of that time giving of her time freely, with others, to keep the site in tip top condition for many to enjoy. Here are the address given by the local Guide Commissioner and, opposite, our own Minister's prayer.



Welcome to you all on this special occasion, to commemorate Susan Howden's life, but also her love of Scarisbrick.

Susan held many different roles through her guiding life – but I think those that involved being at Scarisbrick Campsite gave her the most joy and pleasure.

It is only fitting that we are here today to help her family and friends celebrate her life and love of the site by planting this cherry tree which will flourish and grow as a happy memory of a *“life well lived”*.



Living God  
we gather in your presence to worship you  
we celebrate the beauty and importance of the trees that you have made.  
We come together today as one family  
honouring the memory of our beloved SUSAN HOWDEN.

As we plant this cherry tree  
we implore your gracious blessing and guidance.  
May this tree remind us of the memories and the influence that SUE had  
on our lives.

SUE left this world a better place, she gave a life of service and  
commitment to others and demonstrated a life well lived.

Your memory SUE will live on as this tree blossoms and grows  
and we pray for its strength and resilience.  
Trees reflect the abundant blessings that God bestows upon creation

Today this is a special and beautiful tribute  
that will live on for generations to come.  
SUE you will be remembered always.

AMEN

## **Church Anniversary Lunch**

On Sunday 13 July, we will celebrate our Church Anniversary with a Communion service led by our Minister, Rev Sheila Prest. This will be followed by an Anniversary Buffet Lunch which, as last year, will be organised by Tim & Helen. No need to book - just turn up and enjoy! However, this will need some preparation the day before, so Tim & Helen would appreciate any assistance on Saturday 12 July, early evening, with laying tables, wrapping cutlery, getting crockery out etc (basically what we did last year). If you are able to help, just let Tim or Helen know.

# LADIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

## June

5<sup>th</sup> Rev Sally Binyman, Pioneer Minister – *‘Roma Community’*

12<sup>th</sup> Strawberry Cream Tea in aid of Liverpool MWiB Projects

19<sup>th</sup> Rev Ernie Grimshaw

26<sup>th</sup> Rev Derek Bowker

## July

3<sup>rd</sup> Maggie and Mandy Entertain

10<sup>th</sup> Chris and Trevor Hanson – *‘Japan and South Korea’*

17<sup>th</sup> ‘Community Farm’ Members and their Leader

24<sup>th</sup> Members’ Afternoon

31<sup>st</sup> Anne White – *‘And God Came Too’*

## August \_

7<sup>th</sup> Rev Sheila Prest – Annual General Meeting

Our meetings are held every Thursday in the Maple Leaf Room from 2.00 – 3.30pm. Our programme, as always, looks interesting and varied, and we thank Janet for her hard work in organising it, and Margaret who leads our afternoons with her warmth and humour. We are so grateful to all our Speakers, who educate, challenge, entertain and lift our spirits. After our appeal in the last *‘Elbow’*, we have the joy of ‘Ali’, who very kindly gives of her time to play for us so beautifully each week. We are so very grateful. Thank you Ali.

A number of our regular members are going through very anxious and difficult times at present. We miss them when they are unable to join us, and assure them that we hold them with love, in our thoughts and prayers.

*Irene Watts (876219)*





Ladies Fellowship were recently treated to a 'bee-autiful' afternoon when we were visited by 'the Bee Lady'. As well as a plethora of tasty items we learned a great deal about the fascinating & industrious life of bees. We have so much to thank these little creatures for, they are vital to our survival.

*Liz Morris*

## Spring

Snowdrops push soft white petals through the cold dark earth.

Purple and pink pansies gather together smiling, defying winter.

Roses remain resting awaiting the warmth of springtime.

Insects, antennae twitching, itching to investigate their world.

Narcissus and Daffodils lift bright yellow heads to challenge the sun.

Green hedgerows enhance this floral display, a playground for insects.

*Ivy Chapple*

# Eco News

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 11 of us visited the Veolia Discovery Centre, a recycling centre in Fazakerley. We shared cars giving us a chance to chat and to be more eco-friendly. Rachael, who works in the centre was our guide. She provided us with lots of information in an engaging and friendly way, happy to answer our many questions. It was fascinating to see how our recycling was sorted and sent off to be recycled. She told us that as cardboard is so valuable, we can now put empty pizza boxes in the recycling bin, as long as they are not too covered

in grease. It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. We will need to have another visit next year as the guidelines about what should be recycled nationally may change next April. Everyone said that they enjoyed the trip and learnt a lot. Colin McLennan commented on the massive investment involved in setting up and maintaining the centre and that he was surprised at the level of mechanisation.



We were pleased that a lot of the Spring bulbs reflowered on the area where the trees had been cut down. We plan to plant wild flowers there and put out a shallow dish of water for birds and other wildlife. Thanks go to Jenny Hunter, Jane Gillies, Irene Watts and Jenny Wallbanks for keeping that area and the tubs in front of the church watered and well cared for.

The organisers of the Artisan Market in March kindly gave us a table at their event, which we used to sell 'bric-a-brac'; this raised £98 for church funds. It was an interesting and lively event, with several people commenting on how welcoming we are

as a church. There will be another Artisan Market on 14<sup>th</sup> June (see back cover). We would welcome any new or nearly new contributions you may have and also plants (brought the day before if possible) for the church stall. Please let Jenny Wallbanks know if you can help with the stall (10.00 – 3.00).

Colin and I went to a meeting for 'Friends of Duke Street Park', coordinated and organised by Sefton Council. Katie Etheridge, the coordinator of the project, gave us all a lively and enthusiastic welcome. It aims to encourage members of the local community to take part in caring for the park. We went on a litter picking event. It was very well supported by adults and children of all ages and we gathered lots of litter. There will be a range of events to which all are welcome. We will keep you informed in the church notices and information is also available on Facebook. Involvement in this activity should help us in our work towards gaining our Silver Eco Award.

Thanks  
Ivy Chapel

### **FLOWER ROTA**

<b>1 June</b>	<b>Ann White</b>	<b>Trish</b>
<b>8 June</b>	<b>Brian Ashworth</b>	<b>Vicky</b>
<b>15 June</b>	<b>Trish and Ted Pentecost</b>	<b>Vicky</b>
<b>22 June</b>	<b>Chris and Trevor Hanson</b>	<b>Margaret</b>
<b>29 June</b>	<b>Jenny and Mike Hunter</b>	<b>Margaret</b>
<b>6 July</b>	<b>Doris and Colin Shewring</b>	<b>Trish</b>
<b>13 July</b>	<b>Lin and Graham Marks</b>	<b>Trish</b>
<b>20 July</b>	<b>Christa Dobson</b>	<b>Vicky</b>
<b>27 July</b>	<b>Marie Wright</b>	<b>Vicky</b>
<b>3 Aug</b>	<b>Barbara Giles</b>	<b>Margaret</b>
<b>10 Aug</b>	<b>Audrey Almond</b>	<b>Margaret</b>
<b>17 Aug</b>	<b>Mabel Walsh</b>	<b>Trish</b>
<b>24 Aug</b>	<b>Margaret Nicholas</b>	<b>Trish</b>
<b>31 Aug</b>	<b>Winnie and Mark Pickering</b>	<b>Vicky</b>

Please put your donation in the envelope provided, sign it and whether you can gift aid your donation, then give it to the flower arranger as listed above. Thank you.

*Vicky (873317)*

# The Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer

The Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer will be a piece of public art about Jesus and Christianity. It has been founded by Richard Gamble, former chaplain of Leicester City and author of 'Remember: Revealing the eternal power of answered prayer' (SPCK). Building will soon begin on the Wall in Coleshill near Birmingham and will soar over 50 metres into the air - over twice the size of the Angel of the North. It will be visible from up to six miles away, and will be seen from the M42 and M6.

It will be the biggest digital database of answered prayers in the world - a never-ending wall of a million bricks, each one digitally linked to a story revealing how Jesus has answered a specific prayer for an individual.



The Eternal Wall is designed in the shape of an infinity loop - a surface which has neither beginning nor end. Created by taking a ribbon, giving it a half-twist, and then re-joining the ends to form a loop, the shape is essentially a single surface running fluently in an ever-connecting line. As a result, a person can never be on the outside or the inside of it. The continuous nature of the band represents how God is always listening and always answering our prayers.

It is hoped that the Wall of Answered Prayer will open in Autumn 2027. For more information about it, and to share your own story of answered prayer, visit [eternalwall.org.uk](https://eternalwall.org.uk).

Alastair



Like me some of you will remember when Joy and Bill Murphy came to speak to us in church about seeing up 'Karibuni Children' and since then have perhaps continued to support the work of this Methodist based charity. We will celebrate their 30th anniversary with our after-church coffee donation later in the year. I will remind you nearer the time! *Anne White*

## Thirty Years of Karibuni Children

An Anniversary is a time for looking back and moving forward, so I look back to our beginnings, and Corinne Murphy's vision of starting a charity to enable some of the poorest children in Kenya to have hope where there was little. Children like those she had seen in Nairobi during our time when her Dad was the minister at Kariokor Methodist Church for 6 months.

The charity started small - £2.56 - was all that Corinne had when she visited the bank manager in Amersham, following her injury from a car accident. He, with more faith than her parents, opened an account for her.



Her next task was to get Karibuni registered with the Charity Commissioners in 1995 and then start raising money. A short time later she completed a bike ride from Edinburgh to London, culminating at the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs rally in Battersea Park and raising £13,500; Karibuni was financially launched!

At that time Rev Maureen Jones was a Mission Partner in Kenya and was based at St Peter's Church, Langata. Maureen asked if Karibuni could support a part-time untrained social worker/teacher to work with older street boys in the Langata market, close to her church. Joshua Katungu was employed, did a magnificent job and remains as Karibuni's Kenya Representative, with many qualifications to his name now. Maureen also introduced us to Kibra, a large slum area, where our largest project is based on the smallest plot of all.

Other projects followed, including Njoro (Wesley Empowerment Centre), Meru Children and Women Project, Tharaka Children and Women welfare project, Embakasi and Limuru. In each of these, children were admitted to the pre-school for 2 years, were supported through feeding (nobody can learn with a rumbling, empty stomach!), education fees (primary, secondary and tertiary) and provision of school uniforms - no small task with the ever-increasing fees! The children may be from any or no faith, but are all 'the poorest of the poor'.

I thank God for the past, for the many children who have received hope for the future, and continue to do so, thanks to our many individual donors, churches, schools and other groups who have supported Karibuni. As my many Kenyan friends say - God is good, all the time!

Joy Murphy



Karibuni Children



## Tea - “*the drink that cheers but not inebriates*”

There is a popular greeting card which says: ‘*All things are possible with a cup of tea*’. And for many of us, that is almost always true.

Tea comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, which is often blended with other plants for different flavours, such as Earl Grey or chai. Tea is the UK’s favourite hot beverage, which besides from cheering us up, has cancer-fighting properties and can improve our heart and gut health.

Tea is rich in polyphenols, which have antioxidant effects on the body, can reduce inflammation and may reduce the risk of cancer. It also contains flavanols, which help your blood to flow and lowers your blood pressure. And tea is prebiotic, which means it promotes healthier kinds of bacteria in your gut, helping with your digestion, respiratory system and immune system. It can even lower the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Tea can help with concentration. Coffee may speed you up, but it can also give you the jitters. Tea, however, contains around 40-50 mg of caffeine, which is only half the amount found in coffee. It also has *L-theanine*, an amino acid which helps to lower stress and improve mental focus. And it can also improve your sleep.

**BUT** ..... according to the ‘Fairtrade Foundation’, the wages and working conditions of the estate workers on tea plantations around the world are “*woefully inadequate*”. The Foundation’s new ‘*Brew It Fair*’ campaign is based on the findings of a report which sets out just how many workers on tea plantations live in “*chronic poverty*”.

Much of the world’s tea is auctioned, which means that a few very large buyers end up able to dictate the prices of how much they will pay for it. This has a brutal impact on the workers: a recent survey of 260 tea-growers and pickers in Kenya, for example, found that only one in five earn enough to feed and support their families and to send their children to school.

The report says: “*As tea drinkers, we are now used to paying very little for, and putting little value on, our cup of tea.*” But for the growers and pickers of tea, the “*high levels of unstable work, low incomes and wages, gender discrimination and unsafe working conditions*” continue.

Fairtrade calls on the UK Government to introduce a new law on human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD), “*centred on the needs of farmers and workers, with a focus on supporting living incomes and living wages...*” And UK tea-drinkers are urged to buy Fairtrade tea; the Co-op, M&S, Sainsburys and Waitrose are highlighted as key supporters. (from the Parish Pump)

**(But if like me you’re still not a tea drinker, see opposite! Ed)**

## SIX LITTLE STORIES WITH BIG MEANINGS

1 Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That is FAITH

2 When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is TRUST

3 Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but we still set alarms to wake up. That is HOPE

4 We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future. That is CONFIDENCE

5 We see the world suffering, but we still get married and have children. That is LOVE

6 On an old lady's blouse was written a sentence, "I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience." That is ATTITUDE

Live your life like these six stories, and remember, "good friends are difficult to find and impossible to replace!"

### **Why you should drink coffee!**

Recent studies have found that the billions of friendly microbes living in your gut are also given a cheering boost. And that means better overall health for you - and even a longer life.

It seems that coffee not only contains compounds that nourish our probiotic beneficial bacteria, but the caffeine even helps them to increase in number. Coffee also contains polyphenols, plant compounds which acts as anti-inflammatory antioxidants. Black coffee is the best for you, while coffee with cream and sugar is the worst.

# Pentecost – not a Ghost but a Gift

We used to call it Whitsun – ‘White Sunday’ – because long ago children marched to church in white on that day. There are no processions nowadays, and we’ve even changed its name. It’s now ‘Pentecost’, which is more accurate but needs explaining.

Pentecost marks a vital event in Christian history. It is celebrated 50 days after Easter. The year Jesus was crucified (which took place at the Passover), the remnant of His followers, just 120 of them, were together in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were afraid to show their faces in case the authorities arrested them. But on the day of Passover, they had an amazing collective experience.

They described it in terms of wind and fire, a great surge of spiritual energy and confidence. Afraid no longer, they burst out on to the streets where crowds were gathering for the festival. Led by Peter, they began to tell them about Jesus and His resurrection. As they did so, although many of the people in the crowd were foreigners who spoke other languages, everyone heard them in their own tongue. Peter told them that what they were seeing was the fulfilment of an old prophecy when God would pour out His Spirit on the human race, men and women, young and old.

As a result of His words and the extraordinary spectacle, 3,000 people believed and were baptised in the name of Jesus. They were the nucleus of what in 100 years would be a Church that would turn history upside down. For Christians Pentecost is in effect the birthday of the Church.

Many people find the whole idea of the Holy Spirit mysterious and elusive. It wasn’t helped by the earlier title ‘Holy Ghost’. The spirit is not spiritually a ‘ghost’ but a precious gift. (from the Parish Pump)

# 15 June - Trinity Sunday

## celebrating our God who is Three Persons

Trying to explain the doctrine of the Trinity has kept many a theologian busy down the centuries. One helpful picture is to imagine the sun shining in the sky. The sun itself – way out there in space, and unapproachable in its fiery majesty – is the Father. The light that flows from it, which gives us life and illuminates all our lives, is the Son. The heat that flows from it, and which gives us all the energy to move and grow, is the Holy Spirit. You cannot have the sun without its light and its heat. The light and the heat are from the sun, are of the sun, and yet are also distinct in themselves, with their own roles to play.

The Bible makes clear that God is One God, who is disclosed in three persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy Spirit. For example:

*‘Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’* (Deuteronomy 6:4)

*‘Turn to me and be saved... for I am God, and there is no other.’* (Isaiah 45:22)

*‘In the beginning God created.... and the Spirit of God was hovering...’* (Genesis 1:1-2)

*‘The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power...’* (Judges 14:6)

*‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.’* (John 1:1-3)

Luke 24:49 actually manages to squeeze the whole Trinity into one sentence. Jesus tells His disciples:

*‘I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power (the Holy Spirit) from on high.’*

In other words, the sun eternally gives off light and heat, and when we turn to its brilliant light, we find that the warmth and life are there also.

*(from the Parish Pump)*

*“If asked to define the Trinity, we can only say that it is not this or that”* (Augustine)

*“Tell me how it is that in this room there are three candles and but one light, and I will explain to you the mode of the divine existence “*  
(John Wesley)



In 1985 I sent to the '*Daily Telegraph*' for this tapestry called the '*Tree of Life*', designed by the Royal School of Needlework. I worked about half of it and then lost interest and it lay in a drawer for many years. However, a few months ago I thought that was rather a shame and approached the talented ladies in our Craft Group. It was taken in hand by Anne White and Jenny Hunter who completed it a few weeks ago - Trevor and I were invited to the unveiling! It has now been framed and we are delighted with the result. Our thanks to Anne and Jenny. We are planning to bring it round to the Craft Group for all to see.





## Well Done Marie-Anne!

On 1 June, we welcomed a very distinguished sportswoman to lead our Christian Aid service - Marie-Anne Kent, our former Superintendent Minister! We greeted her with the tune from *'Chariots of Fire'* - that wonderful film about another Christian runner, Eric Liddell.

As many of you will know, on 27 April, she ran - and finished - the London Marathon! And in so doing, she raised the magnificent sum of £8,500 for Christian Aid.

Marie-Anne said afterwards:

*"So pleased to have managed to get over the finish line. It was so hot and all a bit of a blur. Had brilliant support all the way round. Cheered on by complete strangers shouting my name and a great support crew in London. Not the time I wanted but didn't fall over."*



## So It's Your Turn Now Patrick!

Perhaps it's in the job description of a Superintendent Minister as it's now the turn of Marie-Anne's successor, Patrick Evans! As this issue of the *"Elbow"* goes to press, he will be in the Pyrenees, cycling the Camino Way from South West France, across the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela in North West Spain - that's 728 miles, 119 Parbold Hills and over 14 days in the saddle!

Patrick will be helping to raise funds for the SASWT (Southport and Area Schools Worker Trust) whose work, as he says, is particularly important given the tragic events in Southport last summer. For more details of Patrick's sponsored bike ride and a sponsorship form, and of the work of the SASWT, see the June issue of the *Southport Methodist Circuit News*.

# **The Story behind the Hymn**

## **‘Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You’**

From what various members have told me, this is a well-loved favourite hymn - and I will be very surprised if it is not one of your choices to be sung at our ‘Songs of Praise’ on 24 August (see p29). Yet I wonder how many people could name its writer - or indeed have even heard of Richard Gillard!

Although born in Malmesbury, Wiltshire, he has spent virtually all of his life in New Zealand, to where he emigrated with his family aged only three in 1956. He came from a Christian background, albeit a mixed one - his mother was an Anglican and his father Pentecostal.

Richard began writing songs - mainly folksongs - in his early 20’s. So the ‘*Servant Song*’, as it has come to be popularly known, was something of a new departure for him, and it is by far his most famous composition.

The hymn is a beautiful expression of the Christian call to community and friendship, expressing a desire to serve others and to be a source of comfort and support. It highlights the importance of being there for others in times of need and sharing in their joys and sorrows. It is based on several biblical texts, but probably the main ones are John 13, where Jesus washes his disciples’ feet and Matthew 20:26-28, in which Jesus tells his disciples -

*“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your Servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

The first line emphasises the Christian call to service and humility - greatness lies in serving others. It was originally written as

*“Brother, let me be your servant”*

but was later amended to be gender-inclusive, so:

*“Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you:  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant, too.”*

Verse 2 speaks of pilgrims on a journey, but extends the idea of walking to a point of worship to an opportunity for friendship and companionship:

*“We are pilgrims on a journey,  
Fellow trav’lers on the road:  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.”*

Verse 3 emphasises the importance of reflecting Christ’s light in the darkness of life’s challenges. Surprisingly, this was the first verse to be written; jotted down on a scrap of paper and forgotten for a time, he later came across it and was inspired to write the other verses:

*“I will hold the Christ-light for you  
In the night-time of your fear:  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear.”*

Verse 4 is one of empathy, evoking tears but also happiness and jollity:

*“I will weep when you are weeping,  
When you laugh, I’ll laugh with you,  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we’ve seen this journey through.”*

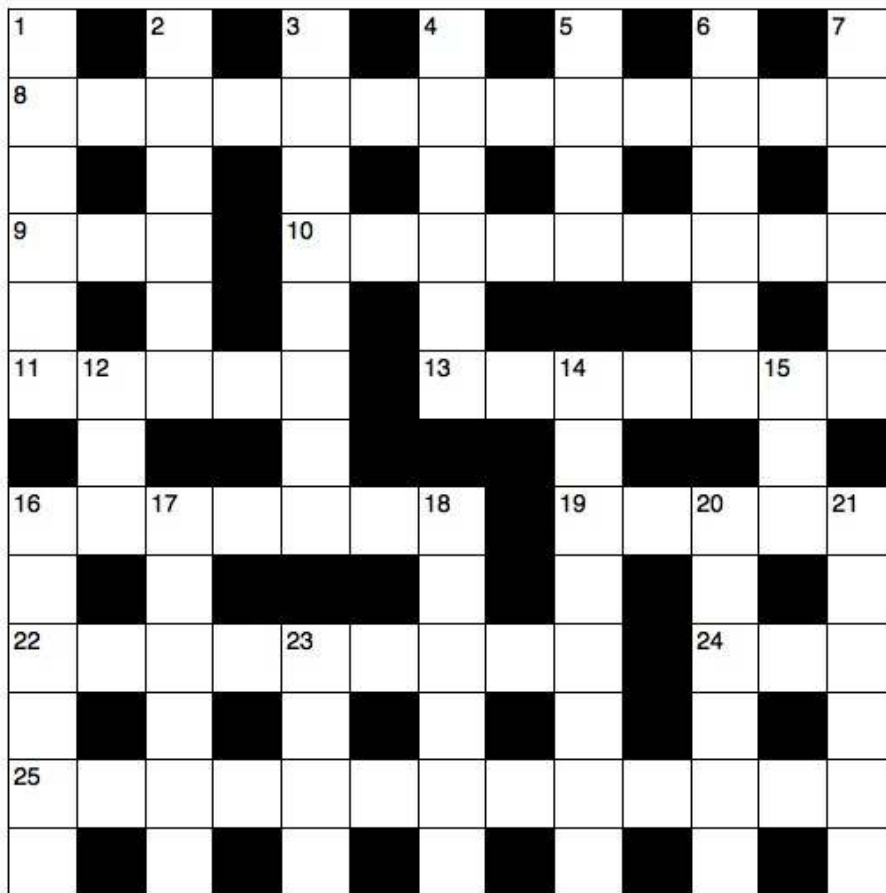
Verse 5 puts earth and heaven in perspective, as it compares the sufferings on earth with the joys of heaven, where people make a beautiful sound together, not by singing the same note but different ones:

*“When we sing to God in heaven,  
We shall find such harmony,  
Born of all we’ve known together  
Of Christ’s love and agony.”*

The final verse is a repeat of the first.

This beautiful hymn is particularly suitable for Maundy Thursday, but its references to serving, friendship and compassion make it appropriate for just about any occasion.

*Alastair*



## Across

- 8 Laban complained at not being allowed to kiss them when Jacob fled with his family (Genesis 31:28) (13)  
 9 In favour of (3)  
 10 *'The child's father and mother – at what was said about him'* (Luke 2:33) (9)  
 11 Swagger (Psalm 12:8) (5)  
 13 *'Terrors – him on every side and dog his every step'* (Job 18:11) (7)  
 16 Bay bits (anag.) (7)  
 19 Preach, address an audience, speak in public (5)  
 22 Holy Communion (9)  
 24 *'On their way to – out the land, Joshua instructed them, "Go and make a survey of the land"'* (Joshua 18:8) (3)

25 Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint these (Genesis 41:34) (13)

## Down

- 1 *'Assyria's pride will be brought down and – sceptre pass away'* (Zechariah 10:11) (6)  
 2 *'And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in – with God and men'* (Luke 2:52) (6)  
 3 The descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:9) (8)  
 4 The parts of the crown Jesus was made to wear before his crucifixion (John 19:2) (6)  
 5 Colour of cloth which was to cover holy objects in the tabernacle when moving camp (Numbers 4:6-12) (4)  
 6 One of the gold articles plundered from the Midianites offered to the Lord by the Israelite army *'to make atonement'* (Numbers 31:50) (6)  
 7 *'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set – – '* (Jeremiah 31:29) (2,4)  
 12 Ate (anag.) (3)  
 14 *'We ourselves groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our – as sons'* (Romans 8:23) (8)  
 15 Abram's nephew (Genesis 14:12) (3)  
 16 Rupture (Job 30:14) (6)  
 17 *'Yet to all who received him... he gave the right to – children of God'* (John 1:12) (6)  
 18 *'I... asked him the true meaning of all – . – he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things'* (Daniel 7:16) (4,2)  
 20 Military units (Exodus 14:20) (6)  
 21 *'Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to – her to public disgrace'* (Matthew 1:19) (6)  
 23 Diva (anag.) (4)

(answers on p39)

# The Summer Solstice

## 20 June – the longest day of the year

June is the month of the summer solstice, the month of the Sun. Sol + stice come from two Latin words meaning ‘sun’ and ‘to stand still’. As the days lengthen, the sun rises higher and higher until it seems to stand still in the sky. The Summer Solstice results in the longest day and the shortest night of the year. The Northern Hemisphere celebrates it in June, and the Southern Hemisphere in December.

While the Druids worship at Stonehenge and elsewhere, these are two Christian alternatives that honour the Creator rather than the created.

### A Canticle for Brother Sun

Praised be You, My Lord, in all Your creatures,  
Especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who makes the day and enlightens us through You.  
He is lovely and radiant and grand;  
And he heralds You, his Most High Lord.  
(St Francis of Assisi)

### God in All

He inspires all,  
He gives life to all,  
He dominates all,  
He supports all.  
He lights the light of the sun.  
He furnishes the light of the night.  
He has made springs in dry land.  
He is the God of heaven and earth,  
of sea and rivers,  
of sun, moon and stars,  
of the lofty mountain and the lowly valley,  
the God above heaven,  
and in heaven,  
and under heaven.

(A prayer of St Patrick)

(from the Parish Pump)



# The NICENE CREED

Those of us who were fortunate enough to attend the Circuit Service on 4 May were treated to a fascinating exposition by our Superintendent Minister on the Nicene Creed - not something with which we as Methodists are particularly familiar, although it is recited regularly in the Church of England and indeed many other Christian denominations.

But as Patrick explained, it is an ecumenical document which, although it was compiled in 325 AD - 1700 years ago! - has stood the test of time as a statement of Christian belief. It is a concise summary of orthodox Christian faith, particularly regarding the Trinity and the nature of Jesus Christ. As such, perhaps we should be more familiar with it and use it more often in our worship.

I was particularly interested to hear that the clergy responsible for compiling it were locked away for some three months and told not to come out until they had finalised it!

## *The* NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the  
Virgin Mary and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the  
living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is  
worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and  
apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.



# Kitchener and that Poster from World War I

Some 175 years ago, on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Herbert Kitchener, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Kitchener, was born. This Irish-born British Army officer and politician

became Secretary of War during World War I, when he appeared on an iconic poster asking people to join the army.

Kitchener already had a fearsome reputation, having been responsible for big colonial victories in Sudan and South Africa. He was very widely admired by the British people, though his cool personality and eagerness to push his men to the limit made him disliked by fellow officers. But he was also described as a godly man “*who did noble deeds and obtained noble results*”.



He had been on leave in England in June 1914 when he reluctantly

accepted an appointment to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for War and was promoted to Field Marshal. Most people expected a short war, but Kitchener did not; he went about enlisting a great number of volunteers – a campaign symbolised for most people by Alfred Leete’s poster using Kitchener’s own face with the slogan ‘*Your country needs you*’.

He organised British armies on a scale never seen before, but he was not to see victory. His life ended suddenly when he was drowned after the cruiser *HMS Hampshire*, taking him on a mission to Russia, was sunk off the coast of Orkney in 1916 by a German mine. His body was never recovered, and the wreck is now a war grave. His death has been likened to the deaths of President Kennedy and Princess Diana – everyone remembered where they were when they heard the news.

A memorial fund launched by the Lord Mayor of London raised £500,000 to help war casualties and continues today. A Kitchener memorial was built by the people of Orkney on the cliff edge at Marwick Head.

*(from the Parish Pump)*



Rev Michael Burgess continues his survey of various works of sacred art

*'He gave us eyes to see them'*

## **El Greco's *'The Tears of St Peter'***

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century John Bowes, the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Strathmore, built a museum in the French style, with landscaped gardens, at Barnard Castle in Teesdale. He bequeathed it 800 paintings, including a previously unknown Van Dyck.

But visitors to the Bowes Museum often make a beeline for its amazing 18<sup>th</sup> century silver swan automaton. As the music plays, there is the illusion of flowing water: the swan preens itself, bends down and catches a fish in the water. It is a thrill and a joy to watch. At the other extreme and striking a different mood and emotion is El Greco's painting of 1580: *'The Tears of St Peter.'* It was reluctantly purchased in 1869 for a price less than that paid for the monkey puzzle tree in the grounds outside.

The gospels tell us that St Peter wept bitterly when he heard the cock crow, as he had denied knowing Jesus three times. El Greco shows the saint, his eyes welling with those tears of betrayal, kneeling and turning to



heaven for forgiveness. The sky is overcast, reflecting the sad scene below, and we see ivy growing as a sign of the constancy so lacking in Peter's life.

At the Last Supper he had been the opposite: ready to follow, brave and generous with his words. But Peter leaves Jesus to drink the cup of sorrow alone in Gethsemane. In the courtyard of the high priest, warming himself by the fire, he utters that threefold denial. This was the lowest moment in

his life, when instead of being solid rock, he showed that he was merely shifting sand.

And then the wonder and glory of Easter. We glimpse it in the background of the painting with the angel and Mary Magdalene at the tomb. And we know that everything changes for Peter by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Like the silver swan in the Bowes Museum looking for fish, the disciples have returned to their old way of life.

But it is the risen Lord who directs them to a marvellous catch, and the charcoal fire of betrayal in the courtyard is now the charcoal fire of breakfast, a new day, and a new way of life for Peter. No denial now – he answers the three questions of our Lord positively and realises that he is loved by Jesus in his failure and weakness. It might have seemed the end for Peter in the courtyard, but the risen Lord comes to tell him ‘I make all things new’ and that includes you.

Peter is often known as the stumbling saint. Here, in El Greco’s painting, he has stumbled and fallen to his knees in prayer. We celebrate St Peter at the end of this month. As we look at him, we know ourselves to be as weak and fearful. But the Lord comes to us as He comes to Peter. He lifts us up and puts us back on our feet again. With Peter, we know Him as our crucified and risen Lord.

*(from the Parish Pump)*

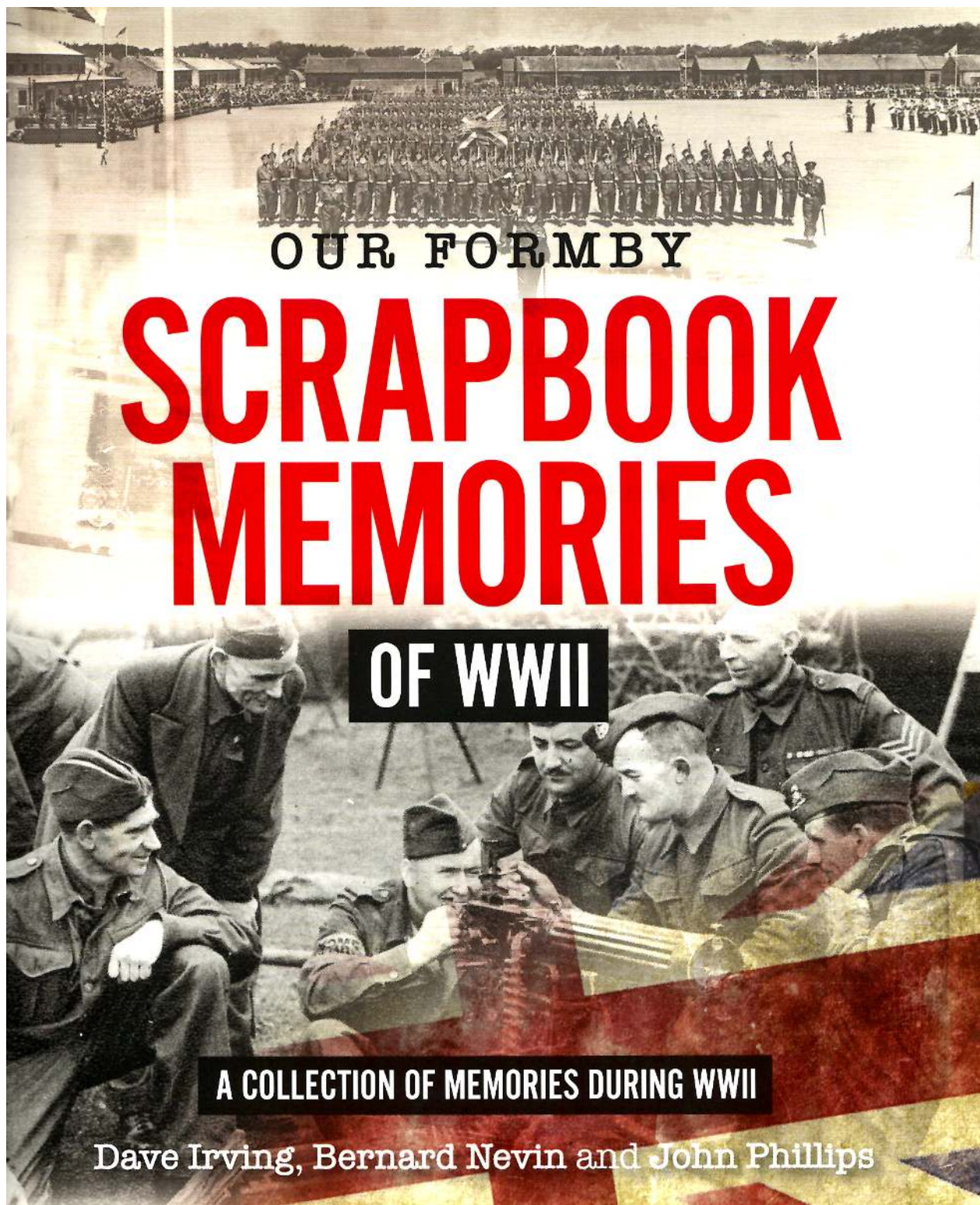
## **Songs of Praise**

Our morning service on Sunday 24 August will take the form of a ‘Songs of Praise’. The service will be led by the Stewards but will mainly comprise your choice of hymns (ideally from ‘Songs of Faith’ or the ‘Green Book’). So could you let me have your choice of hymn by the end of July, and let me know why you’ve chosen it. It would be really good if you could come to the front yourself, but if not, a Steward will read out your words.

Obviously I do not know in advance what the response will be, but if there are too many requests, I’m sure you’ll understand if yours is not included – though I will do my best to play some more of them before or after the Service.

Many thanks, Alastair





This publication has been supported by



To coincide with the 80th anniversary of VE Day, Formby Civic Society has produced this excellent Scrapbook. I still have some copies available if you are interested. We are recommending a minimum donation of £2.



## VJ Day - 15 August

We have only recently celebrated the 80th anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) Day, but for many these celebrations were tinged with sadness. What was often forgotten in all the merriment, and indeed continues to be forgotten today, is that Britain was still at war with Japan. A final cessation of hostilities would not come for another three months, with VJ (Victory in Japan) Day - and many lives would still be lost in these intervening months.

Japan had entered the War with their bombing of Pearl Harbour which, of course, brought about the American declaration of war. Their entry introduced a new dimension into the War. The Japanese culture was very different from the German, with their Kamikaze pilots, general refusal to surrender and consequent lack of respect for those of their opponents who did - not to mention their often unspeakable cruelty.

And so it was that, despite the German surrender, the war in the Pacific knew no abatement or relaxation, with thousands of Allied deaths, casualties and imprisonment - nearly 140,000 Allied soldiers were POW's in Japanese camps. It was only



with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the devastating

results for the people of Japan that Japan finally capitulated. After a few false alarms, hostilities finally ended on 14 August. Prime Minister Attlee (how I wish it had been Churchill!) made the announcement to the nation around midnight and the British Government declared that the following day would be VJ Day.

A national day of thanksgiving and prayer for victory was scheduled for Sunday 19 August.

*Alastair*

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**METHODIST CHURCH, ELBOW  
LANE, FORMBY.**

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**SUNDAY NEXT, AUGUST 19th.**  
at 11 a.m.

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**SERVICE OF  
THANKSGIVING.**

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**Preachers:**  
11 a.m.:  
**REV. JOSEPH GRAINGER.**  
6.30 p.m.:  
**REV. LLEWELLYN ROBERTS.**  
**COME AND GIVE THANKS.**

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## VJ Day in Formby, 1945

VJ Day in Formby was a very special occasion. In May, Formby Council had taken the unusual but highly commendable decision to welcome VE Day with considerable restraint, having decided to wait until Japan was defeated, *"and then to do the job of celebrating properly"* - which is exactly what they did! The *'Formby Times'* reported that there were *"two days of dancing, fireworks, parties, bonfires - and queues!"*

Yes, there were queues - *"bigger-than-ever queues coincided with smaller than usual supplies of fish. Bread queues were just as long."* And worst of all, there was a beer shortage! In anticipation of the big day, a number of hotels and public houses had actually run dry on the eve of VJ Day! So on the day itself, they had to open late and close early!! Otherwise, there would be a unanimous verdict that the Council *"did a good job this time!"*

Despite Prime Minister Attlee's dramatic midnight announcement, bonfires were immediately lit. Many people, however, did not hear the announcement, and *"railway staff at Formby and Freshfield stations broke the news to a lot of people on Wednesday morning, making sure that 'regulars' were up-to-date on the news before 'allowing' them on the train!"* There were parties throughout the day and night.

As VJ Day progressed, Duke Street park became the centre of attraction. *"For the children there was a Punch and Judy show, pony rides - ponies kindly lent by Mr James Kelly of Liverpool Road - and races. There was dancing for those older."* At night, the King's speech was relayed over loudspeakers to a large crowd in the park. Then the main bonfire was lit by Council Chairman Cllr Rimmer. Dancing went on until well into the night.

But Duke Street park was not the only focus of the celebrations. *"The folk and children of New Road had been working steadily for four days for their own VJ Day celebrations. They collected nearly £8 - and £8 can make quite a 'spread'. In addition to that shopkeepers had given cakes and other foodstuffs free. They had so much food they invited children from Southport Road and Paradise Lane too. The New Road tea party*



*New Road's V.J.-Day tea party. Children had been collecting and preparing for this for days. Rainy morning brightened up into brilliant sunshine at noon, and chairs and tables sprang up in the middle of the street. Shopkeepers gave some of the food. Councillor J. R. Rimmer, Chairman of the Council, is at the far end of the table.*

was quite a banquet!" Mrs Boyer, of 45 New Road, plump, smiling Commander-in-Chief, told a reporter: "The children have done most of it themselves. I don't think my front door has been closed once in the last four days.

But the 'old' were not forgotten - "a present of 5s. to celebrate victory was made to every Formby man and woman over 70. Councillor J R Rimmer, Chairman of the Council, has invited them to meet him between 3 and 6pm on Wednesday at the Council Offices. They should take their old age pensions books with them. Those who are unable to leave their homes are being asked to send in their names and addresses to Cllr, Rimmer so that he may visit them personally."

After the celebrations were over, Cllr Rimmer - he must have been an extremely busy man! - proudly remarked that people from Liverpool and other parts of Merseyside had congratulated him on Formby's VJ show. I think he was entitled to feel proud.

*Alastair*

## ***“Formby Men In The Hands Of The Japs” .....***

But for some, even VJ Day still brought little cause for celebration. As throughout the country, many families still awaited the fate of loved ones held captive in the Far East. As the *Formby Times* reported, *“final victory has a particular and personal significance for many Formby residents. These are the people who have relatives in Japanese P.O.W. camps, and who have waited hopefully for news of them since they were captured in the early days of war in the Far East. Some have had no news since those days, others have had to rest content with pitifully brief official postcards received at very rare intervals.”*

One happy Formby lady on VJ Day was Mrs K Govier of ‘Elmcroft’, Gregsons Avenue, whose husband, Capt William P Govier and son, Cpl Douglas John Govier, were both in Japanese hands. But *“Mrs Govier has hardly recovered from the excitement of a week ago of receiving her first postcard from her husband for two years.”* Capt Govier told her he was trying to locate their son who had been captured at Singapore and whose last postcard arrived last Christmas.

Also optimistic was Mrs Mabel Aindow of 34 Rosemary Lane, whose son, Cpl Gilbert Henry Aindow of the RAF, had been captured in Java in 1941. He was a member of the Formby band and apprenticed to Woodward’s of Altcar Lane.

Mr Arthur & Mrs Martha Tucker of ‘Ryde Villa’, Funchal Avenue *“took the news of VJ Day very quietly. Their son, Pte Alfred Tucker, had been a prisoner for so long now and correspondence they had received has been so very scanty, that they are afraid to hope for too much. Pte Tucker, who was captured in 1941 at Hong Kong, is in the Anagasaki sub-camp at Osaka.”* He had already been in camps at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Neither had Laura Mossop, of ‘Roma’, Freshfield Road nor Mrs Stead, of ‘Rievaulx’, Wicks Lane, heard any word of their husband or son respectively.

However, the faith of Mrs Mawdesley, *“has been well justified. When she was told that her son, Cpl J Mawdesley, was missing, she refused to believe that he had been killed. Later she learnt that he had been captured by the Japanese.”*

Ronald, son of Mrs Heywood of Piercefield Road, had been imprisoned in a civilian internment camp in Singapore since 1941, since when his mother has heard from him only occasionally. *“Then just before Easter she received word from the Colonial Office and from two strangers in the Midlands that they had picked up a radio message from his friend, Dick Sydney, also of Formby, which said that they were both well and cheerful and that she was not to worry. It will not be long before he is safe home again. Like everyone else in Formby, she is hoping that soon all the boys will be home again, and that the village will look more like it did before the War.”*



## ..... and what was their Fate?

Unfortunately, there are no further mentions in the 'Formby Times' of the brave soldiers mentioned opposite. However, I have managed to find references to three of them in the Forces War Records.

整理 10647 大 阪 広 島 6445 西 3732 4118 41-5

收容所 Camp	香港	番 號 No.	香 2644.
姓 名 Name	TUCKER, ALFRED NORMAN. タッカー, アルフレッド・ノルマン	生 年 月 日 Date of Birth	1915-10-31.
國 籍 Nationality	英	所 屬 部 隊 Unit	No. S/134380. 12, COY, R.A.S.C.
階 級 身 分 Rank	PRIVATE. 兵.	捕 獲 年 月 日 Date of Capture	昭和 16 年 12 月 25 日
捕 獲 場 所 Place of Capture	香港島防禦陣地	母 ノ 名 Mother's Name	TUCKER, MARTHA MATILDA.
父 ノ 名 Father's Name	TUCKER ALFRED VICTOR.	職 業 Occupation	
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND.	通 報 先 Destination of Report	MR. TUCKER, A.V. FUNCHAL AVENUE, FORMBY LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND.
特 記 事 項 Remarks			

It would seem that Cpl D J Govier and Pte Alfred Tucker, both of whom had been captured on Christmas Day 1941, were both liberated on 2 September 1945. Their POW index cards are fascinating with their surprising amount of

detail and curious mixture of English and Japanese. So far, however, I have been unable to find out what happened to them after their liberation.

馬來 本 433

收容所 Camp	馬來	番 號 No.	馬來
姓 名 Name	GOVIER, William P. ゴヴィア, ウィリアム・ピーター	生 年 月 日 Date of Birth	14.4.90
國 籍 Nationality	英	所 屬 部 隊 Unit	No. Not known. 46 Ord (M) W/S Coy I A O C. (11 Division)
階 級 身 分 Rank	Captain. 陸軍大尉	捕 獲 年 月 日 Date of Capture	昭和 15 年 2 月 15 日
捕 獲 場 所 Place of Capture	SINGAPORE 昭南	母 ノ 名 Mother's Name	Mercy.
父 ノ 名 Father's Name	William.	職 業 Occupation	REGULAR ARMY.
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	Woolavington Nr. Bridgewater, Somerset, England.	通 報 先 Destination of Report	Mrs. K. Govier, Gregson's Avenue, Freshfield, Nr. Liverpool England.
特 記 事 項 Remarks			

東京 96

收容所 Camp	爪哇	番 號 No.	爪本 9960
姓 名 Name	AINDOW, GILBERT HENRY エインドウ, ギルバート・ヘンリ	生 年 月 日 Date of Birth	1920.8.4.
國 籍 Nationality	英	所 屬 部 隊 Unit	631215. ROYAL AIR FORCE
階 級 身 分 Rank	CORPORAL. 空軍伍長.	捕 獲 年 月 日 Date of Capture	昭和 17 年 3 月 8 日
捕 獲 場 所 Place of Capture	爪哇	母 ノ 名 Mother's Name	AINDOW, MABEL.
父 ノ 名 Father's Name	AINDOW, GILBERT HENRY.	職 業 Occupation	APPRENTICE FITTER. 機械修理見習工
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND.	特 記 事 項 Remark	
通 報 先 Destination of Report	Mrs. M. AINDOW, 34, ROSEMARIE LANE, FORNBY, LANCS. ENGLAND.		

12分所 死亡

Sadly, however, Mrs Aindow's hopes on VJ Day were in vain - unbeknown to her, her son Gilbert had died from enteritis two years earlier, in a POW camp in Sumatra; he was just 22. His death is denoted by the red line through his card.



## A New Take on Eurovision!

Well, I never imagined that I would be including an article on the Eurovision Song Contest in the *'Elbow'*!! However, when Anne White handed me this Clergy Letter from the May edition of the *'Wenlock Herald'* which she had brought back from holiday, I changed my mind! I did consider removing the names of the countries and making it a competition, but thought that might be step too far. I for one would not have got any! But even if you share my views on the Contest - and of course Easter has passed - I think you'll still appreciate this very clever article. *Ed.*

The month of May is one of my favourite months, not only because of the generally improved weather, but also because it is the month of the Eurovision Song Contest. Of course, Eurovision continues to divide popular opinion. Some say it is too politicised, or too tacky, or simply just a waste of time and money. But when Liverpool hosted the contest on behalf of Ukraine in 2023, it got something of a renewed interest from the British audience.

May this year also sees the unfolding of the Easter season, as the 40 days between Easter and Ascension Day run their course, with Christians continuing to give thanks for the Resurrection of Jesus proclaiming *'Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!'*. We are also invited to ponder in these days of Easter what those first disciples of Jesus must have been thinking as the first Easter and the subsequent events unfolded. Surely a question that would have lingered in their minds in and amongst the confusion and chaos would have been *'What the Hell Just Happened?'* – words which also happen to be the title of the UK's Eurovision entry this year, performed by the girl group *'Remember Monday'*. In that spirit, I thought for the clergy letter this month, I would re-tell some of the events of the post-Easter story, inspired by some of the titles of other entries for this year's Eurovision Song Contest.

The disciples, alongside Mary, the *'Maman'* (France) of Jesus, had just seen their Lord die and their hopes felt buried with Him. It felt like saying *'Kiss Kiss Goodbye'* (Czechia) to all they had believed in. Now, they huddled behind locked doors, fearful of the authorities, keeping quiet and saying *'Shh'* (Cyprus), afraid of being found and uncertain of what might happen next.

But then came the news. The tomb was empty. They remembered the promise that a *'New Day Will Rise'* (Israel). The darkness was lifting, as the world became a *'Lighter'* (Norway) place once more. But was it all just a *'Hallucination'* (Denmark)? Whispers turned to wonder, and wonder to astonishment as Jesus Himself stood among the disciples, risen and alive. Their sorrow turned to joy as they realised the *'Freedom'* (Georgia) that Jesus had won for them. Still, a question lingered in their hearts: *'How Much Time Do We Have Left?'* (Slovenia). These precious days with the risen Christ felt too few, as they began to understand that soon he would ascend to his Father, leaving them with the promise of the Spirit and a mission to fulfil. They were being prepared for a *'Voyage'* (Switzerland), a journey to carry this life-changing news to every nation and people - which would include *'Tutta l'Italia'* (San Marino). Jesus called his followers to a life of *'Serving'* (Malta) others and drawing people closer to the *'Zjerm'* (Albania), the fire of God's love, proclaiming that all are *'Dobrodošli'* (Montenegro), all are welcome in God's family. It wouldn't be easy. At times they would feel *'Deslocado'* (Portugal), out of place in unfamiliar lands. They would know the pain of *'Wasted Love'* (Austria) when their message was rejected. Many would endure persecution, imprisonment and even death, but still, each of them endured, like a *'Survivor'* (Armenia), carried by the power of the resurrection. And so, the Church of Christ was born.

Just as Eurovision celebrates being *'United by Music'*, the song of Easter unites God's people *'with one mind and one voice'* (Romans 15:6) to give thanks for a hope that reaches beyond one moment in history. This was especially true this year as the Church in both the East and the West celebrated Easter on the same date. We no longer have to ask *'what the hell just happened?'* as we know that Jesus is alive and we are called to carry this Good News to the world around us today.

*(reproduced with kind permission of the Wenlock Team Ministry)*

# An English lesson with a difference!

We'll begin with box, and the plural is boxes;  
But the plural of ox should be oxen, not oxes.

Then one fowl is goose, but two are called geese,  
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,  
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

I speak of my foot and show you my feet,  
If I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?

If the singular is this and the plural is these,  
Why shouldn't the plural of kiss be named kese?

We speak of a brother, and also of brethren,  
But though we say mother, we never say methren.

The masculine pronouns are he, his and him,  
But imagine the feminine she, shis, and shim!

Beware of heard, a dreadful word,  
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.

And dead; it's said like bed, not bead;  
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!

Watch out for meat and great and threat;  
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.

And here is not a match for there,  
Or dear and fear for bear and pear.

And then there's dose and rose and lose,  
Just look them up, and goose and choose.

And cork and work and card and ward,  
And font and front and word and sword.



***‘Songs Old and New’***  
**Sefton Ladies Choir**

**Tuesday 1 July**  
**7.30**

**Formby Methodist Church**  
**Elbow Lane L37 7AF**

Refreshments will be served at the interval

Entry by Donation at the Door