



Wellbeing Matters

Newsletter Issue 2

Message from: The Revd Dr Dan Haylett - Joint District Chair.



Dear friends, I'm writing this letter from The Ammerdown Centre, a retreat house which is near Radstock in Somerset. I'm one of those leading the time away for Ministers across our Districts who are in their first five years of ministry. It is a valuable time where people from very different contexts and backgrounds can pause after the busyness and celebrations of Christmas to share joys and sorrows with peers. It reconnects people who may have trained together and enables new relationships to be forged. Perhaps above all the retreat time offers time and space to be with God.

I wonder if retreat time is part of your experience of faith? Some people value led times of reflection, perhaps spending significant time in silence. Others find renewal comes from sharing as part of a group or going to a special place, perhaps on pilgrimage. Wherever or whatever the particular focus might be, time set apart for prayerful reflection to seek renewal and fresh perspective can be a great gift to us and can enhance our wellbeing, our serving, and our relationships with God and one another.

In our tradition of Methodism we are sometimes slow to accept the riches of those gifts. Particularly at this time of year in renewing our covenant with God, we can be focussed on the practical and active doing of faith, rather than prioritising the spiritual disciplines that will help us in our being and becoming. Historically there has been a (good) emphasis on social holiness and a keen awareness of our social responsibility to work for justice and for the good of our communities. We see today how our Methodist Churches continue to embody that important outworking of grace. But we have been less good at accepting our own need for renewal and refreshment and for retreat. In this year ahead, I wonder if you will accept the invitation or challenge (depending on your disposition!) to go on a retreat, or to intentionally find more time for silence or prayer, or cultivating a new spiritual discipline? It may be that you choose to go to a retreat centre, for there are a good number around. Or it may be that from your own home you will be intentional about seeking the sort of balance and rhythm that retreat time can offer to your ongoing serving. If you take up this challenge and invitation, may you find God's deep blessing in it.

The Ammerdown Centre describes itself like this:

A garden of joy and delight
A spring of living water
A tent of welcome
A door of acceptance
A shared table of bread and wine
A meal to satisfy our common needs
A precious jar of healing ointment
A listening ear
A holy space, open to all
An invitation to the dance
A word of hope, encouragement and good news
A memorial to the victims of war and violence

A remembrance of humble saving power,
A burning bush of unquenchable fire
A tangible sign of hidden salvation
A cross-roads and meeting point
A window, open towards heaven
A bridge of peace
A house of friendship
A Noah's Ark, a ship of fools
An encounter of personal faiths and shared traditions
A shelter from the storm
A blessing on life's journey

I wonder where it is that you are able to receive and unpack these gifts?

With every blessing,

Dan

The Methodist Covenant

At the start of the new year Methodists make a distinctive resolution. The covenant service, often celebrated on the first Sunday of the year but usually at some time during January, is at the heart of Methodists' devotion and discipleship. But have you ever considered the relationship between our wellbeing and The Methodist Covenant Service? I was intrigued to examine the connection between our own wellbeing and the Covenant Service, so I decided to take a closer look.

God promises to be our God
and we His people



Origins of the Covenant Service: The idea of Covenant was basic to John Wesley's understanding of Christian discipleship. He saw the relationship with God in Covenant as being like a marriage between human beings (both as a community and as individuals) on the one side and God in Christ on the other.

Over a number of years Wesley gradually saw the need for some regular ceremony which would enable people to open themselves to God more fully. He looked for some means of helping them to hear God's offer and challenge ever more deeply, and to allow God to prompt and enable them to respond. In 1755 Wesley created a form of service adapted from the works of Joseph and Richard Alleine. These works came from the Puritan tradition of pastoral and spiritual guidance. Wesley therefore insisted that the Covenant Service be located in a framework of pastoral care, preaching and guidance.

This framework dealt with the corporate needs of a particular society of Christian disciples, and within that with the needs of individuals within that group. It therefore linked personal devotion with corporate worship.

People were encouraged to continue to work out the implications for their lives of the fact that their relationship with God had been renewed in and through Christ. It was accepted that people might find this difficult to do without help, and might "backslide". There would therefore be further pastoral guidance offered to both groups and individuals in the weeks that followed the service.

Spiritual Nourishment: Attending the Covenant Service offers us a chance to strengthen our spiritual bonds and gain a deeper understanding of God. We might feel a sense of fulfilment, purpose, and serenity by reaffirming our commitment to upholding Christ's teachings and contemplating our relationship with God.

Emotional Reconciliation: The Covenant Service challenges us to reflect on our attitudes and beliefs. Emotional healing and a sense of relief from whatever burdens or responsibilities we may be carrying can result from the process of introspection and asking for forgiveness. It can offer a safe haven where we can recover and find healing by letting go of any hurtful feelings.

Support from the Community: The Covenant Service is held during church services. Our wellbeing can be enhanced by this sense of community and shared experience as it creates a sense of support, connection, and belonging. Being a part of a group of people who hold similar values and ideas can be both consoling and uplifting.

Reaffirmed Goals: The Covenant Service extends an invitation for us to realign our goals and to reaffirm our dedication to leading obedient Christian lives. By offering a feeling of direction, motivation, and fulfilment, this revitalised sense of purpose and meaning can improve our general wellbeing.

Relieving Stress: The Covenant Service offers us a moment to stop, think, and ask God for wisdom. By fostering a sense of calm, clarity, and confidence in God's plan, this set period of prayer and contemplation can help lower tension and anxiety.

There are many opportunities for us to contribute to our wellbeing during the Methodist Covenant Service. It relieves stress, nourishes the soul, encourages our emotional recovery, cultivates a sense of community, and revitalises meaning and purpose in our lives.

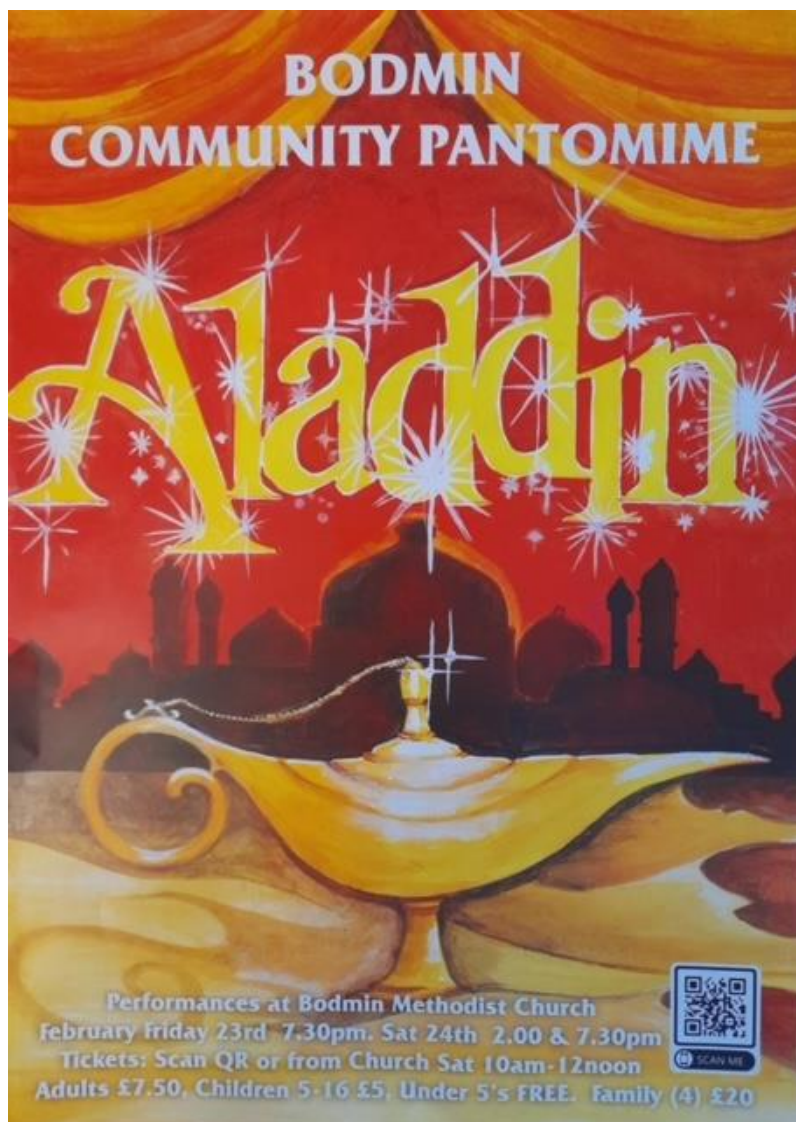
It has been really interesting to discover how the Covenant Service allows us to reconnect to the spiritual, emotional, and interpersonal facets of our existence and how it provides us with a comprehensive approach to our wellbeing. I hope you find these and other connections during your own Covenant Service journey this January 2024.

Tracey

The Magic of Pantomime!

This is pantomime season. Revd Mo Lawson-Wills, Minister at Bodmin Methodist Church in the Bodmin, Padstow & Wadebridge (BPW) Circuit tells us about the benefits she and her church members have gained from organising a production of Aladdin.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Famous last words! When one of the church stewards suggested we put on a pantomime I was all for it. *'How much work could it be'* I asked myself! So, I dived straight in with advertising for actors, hoping I'd get a few people from the local community showing a modicum of interest.



Had I known then what I know now, then maybe Aladdin would never have happened in the first place. But that would have been a great shame, despite all the blood, sweat and tears.

I was staggered at the response to my advert when the church was full of people all wanting to be involved. *'How many performances have you produced before?'* one young lad asked me? *'None'* I responded and his face turned ashen! Oh dear – had I bitten off more than I could chew? I have zero experience organising, producing, or directing a pantomime – roles which I now seem to have reluctantly fallen into. But I'm glad I didn't know then what I know now, as I would probably have pulled the plug on the whole thing – and that would have been to the huge detriment of all those involved, the church, and the wider community.

Aladdin has proven to be much more than just entertainment. Beyond the laughter and colourful costumes, the link between involvement in the panto and an improvement in people's wellbeing is a story worth telling.

Many experienced an immediate improvement in their wellbeing due to increased physical activity. Rehearsals involve movement, dance, and coordination, offering a fun way to stay active. Many of the cast also noticed an improvement in their mental wellbeing, even finding that the expressive nature of performing has provided a healthy outlet for emotional

expression. In the whirlwind of daily life, stress can take a toll on mental health, yet we found that fun and laughter is key element of rehearsals.

Panto rehearsals have become a meeting ground for individuals from hugely diverse backgrounds. Folk experience a sense of belonging and community. This newfound connection, especially among those who had never entered a church before, contributes to an enhanced social support system. New and unexpected friendships have been forged and people have been helped through difficult life events, all through the relationships formed via Panto.

This unexpected bridge between the church and the community has fostered a new level of understanding. It's broken-down barriers which separate us. This relationship building has provided community members with a new perspective on the church, emphasizing its role as a welcoming and inclusive space. The church, in turn, has witnessed the positive impact of community engagement, reinforcing its commitment to being a supportive force in the lives of local residents.

For many participants, the panto has become a platform for personal growth. The opportunity to perform on stage, even for those without prior acting experience, has increased their confidence and self-esteem, creating a sense of accomplishment. I'm in no doubt that this will in turn help empower them to tackle challenges beyond the stage.

Improvements in wellbeing is not limited just to the performers. Those that come to watch will be engaging with a community event which will provide a much-needed evening of laughter, entertainment, social interaction, and a sense of community togetherness. Our hope is that Aladdin will leave a lasting impact that resonates in the hearts and minds of all involved.

You can see Aladdin at Bodmin Methodist Church on Friday 23rd Feb at 7.30pm, Saturday 24th Feb at 2pm and 7.30pm. Tickets are available from Bodmin Methodist Church on Saturdays 10-12 and Tuesdays 1-3 or by emailing mowills83@aol.com. Tickets also available by scanning the QR code on Facebook.

Bathtime Blues?

Did you know taking a bath is good for wellbeing?

1. **Physical relaxation:** Bathing in warm water helps to relax the muscles and relieve tension in the body. It can help to reduce muscle soreness, ease joint pain, and promote better sleep. The warm water also increases blood circulation, which can have a positive impact on overall physical health.

2. **Mental relaxation:** Bathing provides a peaceful and quiet environment, allowing individuals to escape from the stresses of daily life. It can be a time for solitude and self-reflection, helping to reduce anxiety and promote mental clarity. The warm water and soothing environment can also trigger the release of endorphins, which are natural mood-boosting chemicals.

3. **Skin health:** Bathing can improve skin health by removing dirt, sweat, and dead skin cells. It can help to unclog pores, prevent acne breakouts, and promote a healthier complexion. Additionally, adding certain ingredients like Epsom salts or essential oils to the bathwater can provide additional benefits for the skin, such as hydration or soothing irritated skin.

4. **Improved respiratory health:** Taking a bath with steam or adding essential oils can help to open up the airways and alleviate respiratory congestion. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals with respiratory conditions like asthma or allergies.

5. **Self-care and pampering:** Taking the time to indulge in a bath can be a form of self-care and pampering. It allows individuals to prioritize their own wellbeing and dedicate time to relax and rejuvenate. This act of self-care can have a positive impact on mental and emotional wellbeing, promoting a sense of self-worth and happiness.

Overall, taking a bath can provide numerous physical and mental benefits, making it a valuable practice for overall wellbeing.



Chapel Blues?

Have you ever felt like this?

Mother: "Son it's time to get up and go to church"

Son: "I don't want to go to church"

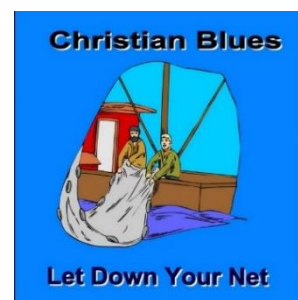
Mother: "Give me two good reasons why you don't want to go to church"

Son: "Firstly I don't like the people and secondly the people don't like me!"

Mother: "I don't care about that, it's time you went to church and you need to go now!"

Son: Give me two good reason why I should go!"

Mother: "Firstly you are 40 years old and secondly you are the MINISTER!!"



Contributed by the late Tony Magor of BPW Circuit

The Inclusive Language Guide

In a recent blog the Methodist Church says: 'We are proud of our [Inclusive Language Guide](#). This helps the Church hold conversations without making assumptions or inadvertently causing upset'.

The Assistant Secretary to the Methodist Conference, the Revd Michaela Youngson, explains why words are important and how the guide affirms traditional terms such as husband and wife while allowing people to express themselves using the language that is right for them.



Words in general are powerful and important and, of course, human language is changing all the time. The Methodist Church, as part of our calling to be an inclusive Church, is paying attention to the language that we use and is encouraging everyone to be careful in the words used when we are talking with and about people. We should never use offensive, racist, sexist or homophobic language but also part of loving our neighbour is to consider how they might want to be addressed or described.

Those in the life of the Church who help prepare people for special events such as baptisms, funerals and marriages will want to use language that is inclusive and reflects for those involved the language that they would choose to use for themselves. So, as well as traditional language such as 'husband and wife' it might be appropriate to use words such as 'partner' or 'spouse'. This is not a discarding of particular terms but an opening up of our language in a way that reflects the gracious and inclusive nature of God's love.

As the world's understanding of each person's identity changes, the Church is learning more about what it means to be created in God's image – our language about God is limited by our human understanding – as that understanding grows, so does our knowledge of the God who created us. In our guide to inclusive language we offer practical advice about how our language might be used in ways that do not exclude people, whatever their identity. We are called to love in the way that Christ loves, recognising, as St Paul's Letter to the Galatians, that in Christ Jesus we are all children of God in faith.

Here is a direct link to the guide: www.methodist.org.uk/media/31380/ilg-designed-update-december-2023.pdf.



New Years Resolutions!

To Make or Not To Make? That is the Question!



Ancient societies thousands of years ago invented the idea of New Year's resolutions. The ancient Babylonians, who celebrated the New Year about 4,000 years ago in mid-March during the vernal equinox, are credited with originating the custom of adopting resolutions or goals at the beginning of each new year.

In an effort to gain favour and guarantee a prosperous year ahead, the Babylonians made vows to their gods at the start of every year. Usually, they would swear to repay loans and give back objects that were borrowed. It was thought that if they honoured their commitments, the gods would provide them with luck all year long. If, on the other hand, they broke their pledge, the gods would punish them.

Up until 46 BC, when Julius Caesar established the Julian calendar, the Romans observed New Year's Day in March. This marked the start of the custom of making New Year's resolutions. Following the adoption of the Julian calendar, January 1st was designated as the official start of the New Year. The Romans named the month January after the two-faced god Janus, who stood for dawns and sunsets, transformations, and gates.

A mediaeval tradition called the "peacock vow" involved knights making a commitment to uphold honour and chivalry for the upcoming year. Over time, a more widespread practice of writing personalised vows or resolves emerged from this technique.

In more recent times, the popularity of New Year's resolutions increased over the 19th and 20th centuries. The method became to be associated with self-improvement and personal growth. People began making resolutions to start healthy routines, achieve personal goals, break bad habits, and embrace good ones.

In many cultures today, making resolutions for the coming year is a popular practice. The fundamental concept of resolutions is always the same: evaluate the previous year, make plans for the future, and work to better oneself in the upcoming year. Specific resolutions could differ.

For many individuals worldwide, making resolutions for the upcoming year is a long-standing custom. Some consider them as a waste of time and a surefire way to fail, while others see them as a great chance for personal development. The argument over whether New Year's resolutions are good or harmful is purely personal and mostly dependent on viewpoint and methodology.



Making resolutions for the New Year can be viewed as a good habit on the one hand. They can offer a chance for renewal, introspection, and goal-setting over the previous year. Creating goals for ourselves can provide us with a sense of direction and inspiration. Having objectives and working towards them may be empowering, whether they are related to health, relationships, career or personal development.

Crucially, New Year's resolutions can act as a trigger for transformation. They can motivate us to kick bad habits, take up healthier lifestyles, or discover new loves and interests. Making a

resolve allows us to solicit the help of our friends and family and foster a sense of accountability and dedication.

New Year's resolutions can also help with self-improvement and personal development. They promote introspection and self-reflection, which enables us to pinpoint the aspects of our life that require development. We may proactively transform into the best versions of ourselves and cultivate a sense of happiness and satisfaction by making resolutions.

However, New Year's resolutions can be detrimental or unproductive. We often have a tendency to make resolutions or goals that are too general or ambiguous, such as "be happier" or "lose weight." These resolutions are challenging to fulfil since they are vague and lack a concrete plan of action. It can be harmful

to our wellbeing to experience emotions of disappointment, regret and self-criticism when we are unable to fulfil resolutions.

Unnecessary stress and anxiety can be brought on by the pressure to make resolutions and the expectation of a quick change. The pressure from society to make significant changes around the New Year's Eve celebrations can be debilitating and unhelpful. It's critical that we approach resolutions with a realistic perspective and acknowledge that change requires patience and hard work!

Therefore, your perspective and method will determine whether or not New Year's resolutions are a positive thing. They could present a fruitful chance for goal-setting, personal development, and self-improvement. They can, however, also be detrimental or ineffectual if approached without clear objectives or with inflated expectations. In conclusion, it is important to approach New Year resolutions realistically and in a balanced manner, regardless of whether you believe they are a waste of time or a huge success.

Setting unrealistic or excessively ambitious goals might cause disappointment and frustration if they are not met. Always keep in mind how important it is to create attainable objectives, divide them into manageable chunks, and be willing to modify them as necessary. Remember to practice self-care and learn to be forgiving of yourself when obstacles arise.

Tracey

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