



THE GREEN SOCK

NEWS FROM THE SHROPSHIRE AND MARCHES METHODIST CIRCUIT

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Superintendent's Sabbatical Produces Photographic Meditation on Psalm 23

Two months back from Sabbatical, Circuit Superintendent Revd. Richard Hall took a moment from his full schedule to share reflections on how his time away was spent. Feeling that his previous *time out* was not as productive as it might have been, he had determined that this time would be more creative. "I knew I wanted to do something around photography but at the beginning I wasn't entirely sure what end product I should be aiming for. My first thought was around two things, light and time which are both central to photography and central theologically as well, so I thought maybe I'd bring those two together somehow," he told the *Green Sock*. It was through meeting Methodist minister Philip Richter last year and reading his book *Spirituality in Photography* that Revd. Hall, a keen and practised photographer, mulled over the idea of borrowing from this theme. "I was thinking about doing something around a presentation of the Methodist church in pictures and after I thought about it for a bit that felt like a longer term project than just three months so I had spent a couple of weeks with my camera just exploring, taking photographs and basically enjoying myself, without having a clearer idea of what the final project would be," he said. The booklet, *Psalm 23 A Meditation in Photographs** resulted.



A steadfast advocate of film, Revd. Hall immersed himself in the "whole business of patience, of waiting and to some extent as well, the unexpected and the imperfections." While digital photography enables you to immediately view your image, the results are always predictable. "I can use my digital SLR and know that it will produce a pixel perfect image whereas with an old film camera there are always margins, all sorts of things that can go awry that means you never quite know what you're going to get back until it actually arrives on your doormat. That is an interesting area of exploration in an age when we expect everything to come immediately. I've got an old Polaroid camera that I picked up at a church sale and you know it is described as an instant film camera but you know that it takes the picture fifteen minutes to be properly developed, 1970's instant means at least a quarter of an hour wait."



It was while he was reviewing photographs, particularly one taken of (Local Preacher) Wes Morris at a Lambing Service in April, that The Lord's My Shepherd popped into his head. "I thought it would be interesting to do a little presentation of Psalm 23 but not using words, just doing it in pictures." Prompted by that image, he spent six weeks shooting; out most days with a particular phrase of Psalm 23 as impetus. "I was spending at least part of most days looking at the world with a little bit of scripture buzzing around and looking for images that might speak to that. And some days the images appeared and sometimes they didn't and sometimes it wasn't until I reviewed the images later that the theme immersed." Revd. Hall recounted.



Working through the Psalm, with images rather than words he found different ways to explore the meaning of the scriptures. "What we normally do is we read a passage of the Bible and *work out* what that word means. I'm a preacher so clearly I don't think there's anything wrong with that but then you read the way Jesus appeared to have preached which was to stand up and for the most part, just tell folk a story and say "He who has got ears to hear let them hear", which I take to mean "well make of that what you will", so an image, like a story can carry all sorts of different meanings that can change over time and will speak to different people in different ways so I'm hoping that the pictures give people a different way into the scriptures and enable the scripture to speak in different ways."

*COPIES OF THE BOOKLET AND POSTCARDS OF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE CIRCUIT OFFICE—DONATIONS TO THE DISTRICT'S CHARITABLE WORK IN RWANDA

TENBURY CORNERSTONE—Out of the Ashes

Exciting things are happening! Many of you will know that in the summer our friends at Tenbury Methodist Church decided, after many years of devoted service, to cease worshipping as a congregation. However, the idea was born that rather than just sell the building, we could begin a brand new work, and so, at any moment now, a new notice board will be going up saying TENBURY CORNERSTONE. So what's going to be happening? Already there are lots of things going on. Working with Revds. Sian Harris and Mark Inglis from St Mary's Parish Church in Tenbury we are welcoming mums and their babies into the church for 'Tea and Toast', and we have been holding 'Starting Rite' a preparation course for parents who are considering baptising



their children. After Christmas the Food Bank, run by Revd. Mark, will be moving in. People will now be able to enjoy a cup of tea and some friendship, when picking up much needed food. Worship continues too in the building. Revds. Jon Chesworth and Frances Biseker started a monthly 'Hymns and Cakes' which is very popular. The first gathering, in October, brought over eighteen people along. Psalm 23 formed the Biblical basis for worship, with the hymns *Great is Thy faithfulness, The King of love my Shepherd Is and What a Friend we have in Jesus*, that reflect God's constancy in His friendship with us. Jesus is our friend; loyal, trustworthy and good to be around in the good and not so good times. We began by remembering friends, some of whom we have become separated from, and others with whom we have had a lifelong connection. We explored the qualities we look for in a friend; loyalty, trust and the inexplicable understanding and connection that we can have with another. We will continue to meet monthly, welcoming all to this and many activities anticipated as Methodist and Anglican Ministers and friends come together to listen to what God wants to guide us towards.



The hall continues to be really popular, and we hope to paint and decorate the hall and refresh the kitchen. A small kitchen area in the church vestry would be great as well. Jon and Frances have been really moved by the enthusiasm and offers of help from those who use the hall. All of this has meant a huge clear out! But the team has had great fellowship together in shifting furniture and emptying cupboards.

On Christmas Eve morning we shall be having a drop-in to sing carols and eat mince pies. After Christmas we hope to start other forms of worship, and hopefully in the not too distant future, hold worship on some Sunday mornings. There is a real sense that God is opening a new door in Tenbury, and I invite you to join with us in praying about this journey we are on, and the destinations God will take us to.

We appreciate the work of Revd. Helen Roberts, Revd. James Eaton-Challinor and others who have ministered here before. We are grateful for the support of Leominster Methodist church, who have taken on Trusteeship, and wish to support Frances and Jon to build on the past to secure the future.

Revs. Frances Biseker and Jon Chesworth, Andrea Sheppick

Barbara Oakely talks *Listening* at Church Stretton MWIB

God's call to Samuel and Eli's instruction to him to reply: "Speak Lord your servant is listening", provided a fitting basis to Barbara Oakely's workshop on tools for listening which she delivered at Church Stretton Chapel. Drawing from her background spanning twenty years of establishing and conducting a range of listening courses, she outlined methods of listening to God, listening to others and listening to ourselves. Barbara emphasised the difficulty many of us face in truly listening to each other. Exploring *Listening to Others* she challenged participants with a role-playing exercise which readers may wish to try out: Working in pairs, one person takes on the role of Samuel, the other Eli. Each takes it in turn to describe the feelings Samuel and Eli might have experienced at the time (bearing in mind that this occurs at a time when God speaking directly to man was an extremely rare occurrence). Pointing out that posing the question "How did it feel?" can be a highly effective listening tool, the exercise revealed that for listeners "keeping quiet" or keeping mouths "zipped up" can prove easier said than done.



Talking when we should be listening often prevents those people who really need to offload from getting out what they wished to say and can undermine the good intentions of our listening, Barbara explained. "The idea behind the exercise is not interrupting. When somebody interrupts with a question it often puts you off what you were next going to say."

Listening can have one of three intentions: *Me-centred* listening seeks information, *we-centred* listening is what we do when having a regular conversation and *you-centred* listening focusses on the other person. The importance of listening to ourselves and being aware of the impact of the external on our internal responses, or rather the effect that others have on us is vital so that we can reorganise our feelings. An inability to do this impedes our ability to listen to others.



Barbara spoke on the importance of body language, the tell-tale signs that we are being listened to and the benefit of maintaining an awareness of our own body language as we listen. Most importantly she said, when we find ourselves in the listener seat, we must avoid telling our story or explaining how we dealt with a similar experience as no two people *feel* in the same way. A self-awareness of our own issues should prevent us stereotyping or burdening another person in their time of, for example, bereavement. She concluded that listening effectively to one another is a form of ministry which we can all do, if we try.