



# THE GREEN SOCK

## NEWS FROM THE SHROPSHIRE AND MARCHES METHODIST CIRCUIT

December 2019

### Intergenerational Layworkers Take Up Posts

In November Craven Arms Methodist Church hosted a joint Commissioning Service for newly appointed Intergenerational Layworkers Kathryn Lewis and Helen Wright. Filling the posts has proved something of a journey and the service welcoming the women follows many months of thoughtful, patient prayer. Originally, a part-time Youth Worker was being sought to work among the Craven Arms, Bishop's Castle and Clun Methodist churches, however the advertisement yielded no suitable applicants so the job specification was widened. When simultaneously, a search by Hereford Diocese for a Pioneer Minister to work in Craven Arms proved equally fruitless, the way was paved for an ecumenical solution to the problem.

Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District's Ministry and Mission Coordinator Jo Yair explained that working closely with the Bishop and Archdeacon of Ludlow, The Rt Revd. Alistair Magowan, the District together with the Diocese created two part-time Intergenerational Layworker posts (effectively one shared full-time post). Hereford Diocese's Lizzie Hackney, partnering with Jo Yair, will head the management of the new employees as part of their respective teams. "The intention is for the Intergenerational Layworkers to journey alongside any existing mission within the churches and to pioneer new ways for new people to connect with Jesus within the local community and schools," Jo said adding that the Circuit is also being assisted by two retired clergy from the Craven Arms Anglican church who are offering to support pastorally.



Jo Yair introduces Kathryn Lewis to Bishop's Castle church members Heather Holt, Pat Morrison and Margaret Savage

Revd. Richard Hall still retains pastoral charge of Bishop's

Castle and Craven Arms churches.

The Commissioning Service which was led by Revd. Magowan and Chair of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District, Revd. Rachel Parkinson, did not include a sermon. Instead, Kathryn, the Methodist postholder, and Helen shared brief testimonies each highlighting a particular scripture verse they have drawn strength from throughout their journeys. Romans 8:31-39 paraphrased by Kathryn as, "God loves us passionately and we should passionately love him back" was, she said a reading she has carried with her all her life, which has included working as a teacher and youth worker. She spoke of having received a "tap on the shoulder" at various points, directing her working life and that having received the tap this time to work for the church, she would have been foolish to ignore it.

Revd. Magowan and Revd. Rachel Parkinson shared the pulpit to have a Desert Island Discs styled conversation revealing some of their own favoured Bible passages. Commenting on Kathryn's choice Revd. Parkinson remarked "What a fantastic passage. However hard it gets, however dark it gets, we've got the Good News." Revd. Magowan's enthusiasm was for the account of Jacob's life, "The mess, the deviousness, the struggle, the wrestling with God and God's unwillingness to give up on Jacob until he has finished what he is doing with him." Hymns selected by the two women were *How Great Thou Art*, *Amazing Grace*, *Give Me Joy in My Heart* and *I, The Lord of Sea and Sky*. Leading the closing prayers Revd. Hall, alluding to an observed trait among (some) Methodists of "not being great liturgists", emphasised the legacy of Covenant Service as "the golden thread that Wesley began, that every year we renew our covenant together," asked congregants to give voice to the Covenant Prayer, and together with the new layworkers renew that covenant "within the grace of God who will not let us go".

### DECEMBER CIRCUIT MEETING PROPOSES MUCH GOOD NEWS

Our final Circuit Meeting for 2019 ended on a particularly high note as several *good news stories* were told and proposals for fresh approaches to sharing the Gospel were put to a vote. There was delight over developments at Cleobury, despite the chapel's official closure in September last year. Revd. Kim Stilwell reported that the reopened chapel has been commissioned for use as a community hub overseen by Cleobury's St. Mary's Youth Project, who have leased the building at a commercial rent. The Circuit, in



bestowing a grant which covers this, has enabled the provision of a valuable space where “young people can drop in for *proper* coffee and a panini”, in the vestry which is now a café furnished, like the rest of the building, with furniture the youth group have assisted in repurposing. Funds for the refurbishment were secured through bids submitted by the Youth Project and appeals made to the local community both raised money and established new links between the church and residents. The building, which remains available for *Tea and Worship* activities, features a dance floor so the Youth Project can host dances for local youth and there are plans to add an indoor climbing wall.

**Revd. Jon Chesworth**, identifying a growing need for pastoral care in the Tenbury Cluster, asked the Circuit for an Intergenerational Layworker to help with giving focussed attention to the parents, guardians and carers who attend church activities such as the weekly *Tea & Tots*. It is through conversations with primarily mothers in this setting, Revd. Chesworth said, that ministry can take place. However, with ministerial staff already stretched in their roles and responsibilities, the growing need would be best met through employing a Layworker. The Circuit voted to support an application to the District to share with the Circuit the financing of this post.

**Forging forward** with progressing the Rea Valley society, Revd. Shalome MacNeil told the emboldening *Story of Vron Gate Chapel* informing the meeting of the difficult choice the society faces in addressing Vron Gate’s future. Despite the church’s lack of amenities local people keenly attend special services there, (eighty attended the recent anniversary,) however the roof requires extensive repair which will cost as much as the building itself is worth. One option, and seemingly the favoured one is to relocate Vron Gate locally and Revd. MacNeill-Cooper brought this proposal to the Circuit. The desired rural site would lend itself to annual Rogation and Lambing Services both of which have been extremely well attended when hosted locally over recent years. Revd. MacNeill-Cooper said that the benefits of pooling and sharing the resources among the society’s chapels are already being felt and include being able to draw on the gifts and skills of many as well as the support of an extended local population. Concluding her pitch for funds she said, “We need a spirit of Amish, meaning fellowship with this building project. We need to come together as a community to help build the chapel together with our spirit and our hands. Our last council meeting voted to build a new chapel so we’re asking permission to relocate and build a new, environmentally sustainable chapel,” adding that this would enhance the society’s outreach programmes for local communities. The Circuit voted in favour of the proposal which includes clawing back from the Connexion the proceeds from the sale of Plealey Chapel (which would have been part of the Rea Valley new society,) to part-finance the build with the remainder coming from the sale of Vron Gate and the Circuit.



Revd. MacNeill-Cooper

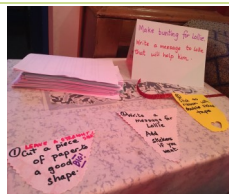


Deacon Carys Woodley

**Tiny Church**, as explained by Deacon Carys Woodley is a new initiative being pioneered by herself, Layworker Jacob Molyneux and Revd. Julia Skitt. Based on the concept of *Tiny House* a fully functioning house transported on a trailer, Tiny Church will see a customised van become a creative space, providing a church presence at events and places where people congregate. Recognising that there are geographical gaps in the areas they pastorally oversee, the three decided to tour, stopping and meeting with Methodist church members to pray and worship along the way and assessing how the van can assist with and maintain ministry in the northern area of the Circuit. “We had a lovely time. In the future we are looking for volunteers across the area to be able to work on it (the van).” Deacon Woodley said. Having secured a grant of £1500 from the Connexion’s New Places for New People fund, the three are reassured in taking the idea of Tiny Church forward.

### MESSY BAPTISM AT BROCKTON CHAPEL

Family and friends of Lollie Irvine gathered at Brockton Chapel for his Baptism in November. Revd. James Eaton-Challinor led a Messy Church styled service, (*Messy Baptism*) where the congregation and guests supported Lollie in taking this important step in his Christian journey through participating in worship, prayer, crafts and fellowship. Hereford and Bridgnorth



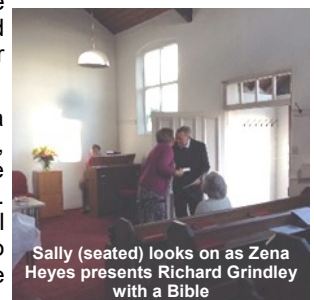
Revd. Eaton Challinor baptises Lollie Irvine assisted by Brockton Chapel’s Elisabeth Knight

Intergenerational Missioner Kate King who attended the baptism remarked on the “enormous joy” of the occasion.



### WELSHAMPTON WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Earlier in the year Welshampton Chapel held their first Welcome Service for many years adding two new names to their membership. Both Richard Grindley and Sally had lived in the village and been attending worship at Welshampton for some time. Sally had joined a Methodist church in Moreton on the Wirral many years ago, but since moving to the village some time ago had not been regularly worshipping at any church until she joined the congregation over a year ago and subsequently transferred her membership.



Sally (seated) looks on as Zena Heyes presents Richard Grindley with a Bible

Richard, although brought up in a Methodist family who lived locally, had not worshipped anywhere since attending Sunday School. He joined Welshampton’s small congregation a few years ago and decided recently that he would like to become a member.

“We had a joyous service, with an inspiring and encouraging talk from Revd. Neil Adams. We sang hymns that uplifted us all and presented Bibles to both Sally and Richard. After the service we enjoyed refreshments and stayed on to chat and share each other’s company. This is the first “welcome” service in our chapel for many years and we hope it won’t be as long until the next one.”

Gill Cartwright