



THE GREEN SOCK

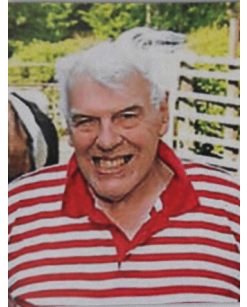
NEWS FROM THE SHROPSHIRE AND MARCHES METHODIST CIRCUIT

SEPT 2021

FITTING THANKSGIVING FOR SON OF THE SOIL

A

n outdoor *Service of Thanksgiving* for the life of Methodist John Beamond was hosted by his family at The Conery site of their Bishop's Castle farm, where John had lived until his death on August 5th, aged 90. During the service which was led by Circuit Superintendent Revd. Richard Hall, John, one of five siblings was remembered as a 'Son of the Soil' whose life was both long and well lived. He attended the local primary then secondary school, (where he was Head Boy,) whilst helping his father with various dairy farm tasks. John studied Agricultural Science at Aberystwyth University. He and his brother Harvey later took over running the farm. Throughout his Christian life, John worshipped at Bishop's Castle Methodist Chapel and was active in the chapel's Youth Group, organising activities, camping trips and the group's attendance at the annual Methodist Association of Youth Clubs' London Conference. He was a much-loved and well-respected church member supporting church events and regularly attending services, Church Council meetings and Friday Coffee Mornings.



John Beamond



Delivering the eulogy, John's son-in-Law Tony Graham described John's marriage to Methodist Deaconess, Jean Whitby as one between soulmates. The couple had three children Ruth, who sadly died of Leukaemia aged 6, Jayne and Howard. Jean passed away in 2000. In his address, Revd. Hall asked of those present, "What is it about John's life that you'll remember the most?" Giving pause for them to consider he surmised that a common theme of those recollections would be love. He concluded, "His death does not end that love. Farmers understand death better than any profession. It is not a defeat; it is not an end but an inevitable part of the ebb and flow of life itself, at the heart of which is love."



Church friends



Local performance artist Val Littlehailes honoured John with 'A Farmer's Day', a poem she composed for the Thanksgiving Service



Tony Graham



John's grandsons and granddaughter (foreground) with a friend



Harvey Beamond (r)

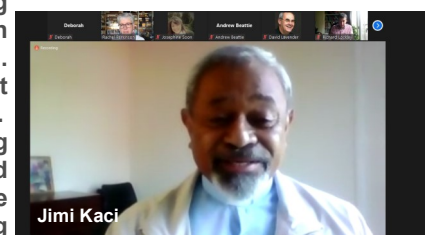
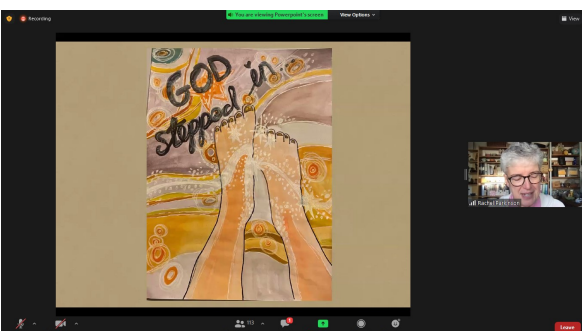


AUTUMN SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS

This year's Autumn Synod highlighted the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District's commitment to addressing Climate Change and environmental issues. Chair of the District Revd. Rachel Parkinson brought to mind the seventy million strong *Methodist global family*, to bring closer to home the affects Climate Change is having on the lives of our brothers and sisters overseas. Revd. Jimi Kaci from the Stafford Circuit, who originally from Fiji is responsible for establishing the Fijian Methodist Fellowship, spoke of the devastating impact of rising sea levels to the lives of the 170,000 population with villages becoming uninhabitable, saltwater pollution greatly limiting the ability to plant crops, sand erosion resulting in lost fishing grounds, the frequency of cyclones and the deterioration of coral reefs. Over the

past ten years, Jimi informed, forty percent of population have been affected. He recalled how during the 1960s his father remarked on the changes, with foreboding. Now Fijians are wondering what to expect over the next ten years.

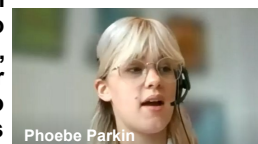
Following Jimi's sobering account, Revd. Parkinson shared spiritual insights gained while she spent her sabbatical walking and camping on England's South Coast. While contemplating the inevitability of some damage being irrevocable, she had had a vision of God healing the world.



Jimi Kaci

Acknowledging how deserving we are of God's punishment, she asked, "If God stepped in and put everything right, would we destroy it again?" Synod, she proposed, was a time to "give space for lament", consider our destruction of creation and come before God as a broken-hearted and penitent people. Repentance, she stated, is a way to differentiate the future from the past. A slideshow depicting images of our worst crimes against the environment was softened by Revd. Parkinson's message of hope. "We may deserve or want punishment," she said, "but this is not God's plan for us." Emboldened by God's promises to us she urged Synod attendees to live hopefully and to believe that there are possibilities for the future, far greater than we can imagine.

Youth President 2020/21, Phoebe Parkin in interview with Willa Swila, talked about her year in office, the relevance of her theme, *God's World Our Home* and her commitment to climate justice and climate activism which began during her primary school years when she first learned of deforestation. Letter writing, and, in particular a letter sent to the Prime Minister, brought to Phoebe the realisation that we each have the power to affect change and that the personal lifestyle changes we make also have an impact. Phoebe told Synod, "I believe the church has a voice and a unique perspective on Climate Change. I felt that up to this point the church hasn't been vocal on the biggest thing humanity has to face. We're in church to make change and now is the time to make change." Influenced by Greta Thunberg and a sense of "children and youth leading this", Phoebe was concerned that the church should be integral rather than left behind. Reviewing her presidential year Phoebe expressed her gratitude to the Youth President team for enabling her to share her theme, connect with a host of activist organisations and peers via Zoom, as well as receive a grounding in and understanding of Climate Change both practically and theologically that she intends to use across the Connexion as we grapple with the climate crisis.



Phoebe's interview was followed by a video presentation, with an introduction by Josh Evans of the Young Christian Climate Network which featured people from the District participating in the *Rise to the Moment* walk to Cop26 in Glasgow, which commenced in June. Participants will collectively walk 750 miles across ten cities in an appeal to the UK government to reinstate the Foreign Aid budget and to hold them, along with other wealthy nations, to honour promises to pay \$100 Billion annually in climate finance.

For further information go to: - <https://ukcop26.org/> and <https://www.yccn.uk/home>

Our Calling Turns Twenty-One

Synod paid tribute to twenty-one years of the Methodist Church's corporate calling to "respond to the Gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission". *Our Calling* was reaffirmed in 2018. It was in the spirit of marking the occasion that Revd. Parkinson reviewed the *God in Love Unites Us* (GILUU) Conference vote and its impact. She stated that the decision to live with contradictory convictions had received mixed feelings and it was too soon to evidence across the District, (whether through the migration of people or resignation of membership,) the full impact. She confirmed that there had been resignations, some from people in key roles and there was as yet no indication of how many people might cease to participate in church life. Revd. Parkinson also stated that within the District there had been one or two enquiries from people wanting same-sex marriage ceremonies. She went on to say that conversations around *GILUU* have been difficult and divisive but despite this, the process has seen the church at its best. In suggesting the next stage, Revd. Parkinson said it was important that Church Councils continued having further conversations in order that the right decisions are made for individual churches.

Mother and Son Joint Baptism at Brockton Chapel



Revd. Pauline Salter who visited to conduct the baptism (l) with Heather Holt

Prior to Covid restrictions, Jen Davies had planned to be baptised at Brockton Methodist Chapel but once lockdown was enforced, her baptism plans had to be postponed. She hadn't known then that she would become pregnant and give birth to her third child, Ben, during lockdown. Her daughter Leah and son James were baptised at the local parish church but when Ben came along it made sense for mother and son to be baptised together. Jen, who has attended both Brockton and Clun chapels for several years was adamant that her baptism take place at Brockton for it is there that under the guidance of Michael and Elisabeth Knight, Jen started her faith journey attending *Messy Church* Services with her children and embarking on the Alpha Course. Jen is eager to grow as a Christian. "Being baptised" she told the *Green Sock*, "is to learn more and to help my children learn more also." Revd. Pauline Salter who conducted the baptism commented, "I had the great pleasure of a 'ministry first' when I went back to Brockton to baptise Jen and her baby son Ben. I have known Jen many years through both Bishop's Castle and Brockton Chapels."

CIRCUIT WELCOMES REVD. PAUL ARNOLD

The Circuit warmly welcomes Revd. Paul Arnold to the ministerial team. Paul began to discern a call to ordination when in his 20s. He trained for ministry at Wesley College, Bristol before spending a year in Fort Worth, Texas. He returned to the UK and has since ministered in the Medway Towns, Winchester, Bridport & Dorchester and Yeovil & Blackmore Vale circuits, acting as Superintendent Minister in three of those Circuits. He has served as a Prison Chaplain and is also a Spiritual Director. Paul has a particular interest in issues around faith and the natural world. "God is the God of Creation and Redemption. I love to celebrate the wonder, richness and diversity of God's world and people, but we are seeing more clearly just how fragile these things are." he told the *Green Sock*. Paul has pastoral oversight of churches in the Leominster Cluster formerly cared for by Revds. Frances Biseker and Jon Chesworth.



Paul is married to Jean and they have three adult children, and one grandchild.



For more information on church services and events please consult the Plan or contact churches directly.

Contact us at: media.smcircuit@gmail.com 01588 630 769 or visit our website at shropshireandmarches.org.uk