

THE GREEN SOCK



NEWS FROM THE SHROPSHIRE AND MARCHES METHODIST CIRCUIT

FEBRUARY 2019

TONY TALKS ENCOUNTERS

For Tony Hearle taking the opportunity to impart something of his faith through everyday encounters, is essential. Chronicling these experiences for those in the church is not. However, it is in so doing that this Supernumerary Minister has found a second calling: recounting such stories in the newsletter of Church Stretton Chapel, his home church since 1987. "We're a happy fellowship. We know one another and we support one another but so often it's the importance of people we meet outside that matters to the Christian faith." Tony told the *Green Sock*.

The son of a Methodist minister, (his brother was also called to ministry,) Tony confesses that he was "rather slow" entering ministry. "But I did ultimately find that I was called to be a Methodist minister. That's what I've tried to do all my life, be a faithful minister." Noticing that particularly during the quieter summer months, items for the newsletter were somewhat sparse, Tony set about filling the gap, "There was space there and I thought that something could be written with a devotional slant to it that could fill that space." he said. From week to week, both recent and distant encounters provide inspiration. "They may be past encounters that form my thinking and my attitudes. Very often I sit back and my thoughts just roam. But with an *Encounter*, something hits you and you say, 'Can I develop that thought?' and I sit down and just write. It's purely a focus for our Sunday Worship, so I think of something simple, that people can read when they get home and cogitate upon."



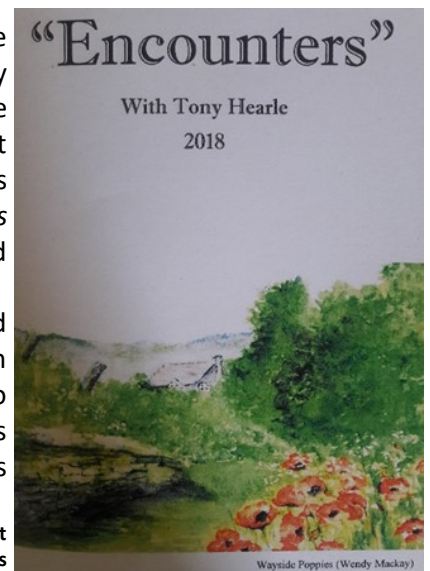
Not all of Tony's musings have led to a publication. "I have written a number of *Encounters* which I have rejected," he said adding with a chuckle, "I've even submitted some to Wendy Mackay (editor) and she's said 'No', but I'm quite happy about that. I'd much rather people criticise a thing before I commit it to be published.

Asked whether some encounters resonate more than others Tony recalled a recent journey to Wales' Llŷn Peninsula. "It was a day when I was very conscious of the beauty of everything. I think that there is so much in our world today that gives us cause for terrible anxiety and pain, that calls for us to be generous to what extent we are able. I think one's got to look for something which assumes the beauty of life, the goodness of life, the fact that we're in God's hands and whatever else happens that God is God and we are His children, embraced in His love." The trip took place at the time that the Chinese landed a spacecraft on the far side of the moon. "The moon was shining and then in the morning the sea was coming right up against the hotel and we looked at the little parish church, the sun was beautiful..." Tony said. Walking across the Whistling Sands he marvelled that something as minute as a grain of sand and something as infinite as the universe all come under God's concern and care. An *Encounter* resulted.

Other *Encounters* recall people who have influenced Tony's life and speak to the reciprocal; the giving to and receiving from one another. "So often we say 'My life is determined as I decide it to be', when in actual fact, it's really what we've received, by the grace of God. Of course one is always faced with the vast unknowable. The whole question of why people suffer, why am I here? what's the purpose of everything? it's all too vast a thing for us to grasp. *Encounters* encourages faith in God despite the unknowable. That gives us a sense of joy and peace which we have in Christ. I try to relate that to everybody."

As with many Christians, Tony has experienced moments of doubt and uncertainty. He accredits his late wife Iley, who as a tremendous help to him throughout their sixty-two years of marriage, leant her fortified faith to countering his doubts. "In her mind doubt took a very small place and she was very sure of what she believed." he said, paying tribute to her role in his achievements.

Tony wishes to thank Chris George for transferring *Encounters* to the newsletter, David Jandrell whose idea it was to create the booklet of *Encounters*, and Wendy Mackay. (*Encounters* has sold out but a reprint is possible depending on demand.)



Mission Sunday at Chirk Methodist

My mind goes back to August last year and reading an article in the *Green Sock* by Jo Yair, the new District Officer for Mission and Ministry. I realised that it had been a long time since we had held a Mission Sunday at Chirk and we were therefore pleased that Jo accepted our invitation to speak on the first Sunday in February 2019. Special envelopes were given out prior to the Sunday and other Methodist churches encouraged to attend. But this was not only a time for fundraising but most of all to hear how Jo was settling into her new role in the District and how this might affect us.

It turned out to be a well attended worship and we were pleased to see so many from the other churches who had grabbed the opportunity to meet and hear Jo. Jo spoke about her early days as a Christian and her journey of faith to taking up her new role. She works closely with the District Chair, Revd. Rachel Parkinson and stressed the need in the continually changing situation faced by churches, to look out and even move out into the community. Jo also spoke on the need for prayer, not only in groups but for and with individuals, (something I think many of us do not find easy,) ending her presentation with a DVD on this.

When making the initial arrangements for Jo to visit, I had not realised the relevance of the Lectionary readings for that day – Jeremiah's calling and mission. In fact, this was brought to us by Revd. Joan Warner at our evening service with her husband Royce speaking on prayer. So it all turned into a really dedicated 'Mission Sunday'.

Brenda Wilford

CIRCUIT CHRISTMAS PUZZLE 2018

Many thanks to all those who took part in the Circuit Christmas Puzzle. Twenty-two puzzle sheets from all around the Circuit were returned to me of which six had all forty-two correct answers. The were submitted by: Paul Johnson (Wem), Mrs Pat Edwards (Wem), Janet Griffiths (Pontesbury), Alan Priestly (Clun) Mrs Vera Roberts (Ellesmere), Mrs Mary Beaman (Oswestry)

Thanks also for the donations which amounted to £120 and is being forwarded to the Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District Office as a contribution to the Rwanda Charity. My thanks too to those who enabled the puzzle to be available in their church for anyone who wished to take part. I have to apologise for indicating that the first answer was 6 and 4 words when it was 7 and 4. Hardly anyone, to my knowledge, was put off by this and correctly gave the answer as Moreton Mill. In addition, it seems I used an out of date list of names of Circuit churches and have been advised that Mainstone church was closed some time ago. I'm sorry if this caused any difficulty and have told myself I must do better next time.

On Sunday 20th January, after the morning service, Revd. David Hudson drew out the winner which was Mrs Mary Beaman of Oswestry. My congratulations to her and all those who gave correct answers. For those who took part and are interested in the solutions please email: Keith.edlington@gmail.com

Keith Edlington

LUDLOW GETS A TASTE OF CHRISTMAS

Unlike Christmas 2017 when the event had to be cancelled due to snow, Christmas 2018 saw Ludlow Methodists participate with a stall in the Christmas Market. Volunteers gave out free hot drinks and Christmas themed booklets. People were invited into the church which had been decorated with lights and a Christmas tree, and the furniture re-arranged to create areas for prayer, for children to make Christingles, for carol singing round the piano, or just to sit down. In Wesley's Café other volunteers gave out free home-made soup with a roll and hot drinks. Visitors were invited to think about and share their ideas on: 'What does Christmas mean to you?' 'What does the world need this Christmas?' and 'What Christmas present would you give someone?' Their replies were shared through being displayed in the church over the Christmas period.

Minister at Ludlow Revd. Kim Stilwell said, "The atmosphere in the church was tangibly warm and friendly as people ate and drank, heard and sang carols, took part in craft activities and prayed. Many took the trouble to thank us, glad of the opportunity to pause in an oasis of sharing and friendship amidst the usual bustle of the Christmas Market." £74 worth of Traidcraft goods were sold and the event raised £118.70 for Crisis at Christmas.

Thank you to all who helped in any way with this venture. It is much appreciated.

Stephen Dalton

SHOEBOX APPEAL REPORT

Many, many thanks for your kindness and generosity in supporting the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal for another year. Your efforts across the Northern Area together with partner Anglican Churches and other community groups and individuals meant we were able to send 374 shoeboxes to children in Eastern Europe together with £442 in donations. What a splendid effort! Moreover, since the start of the Shropshire and Marches Circuit you have helped send over 3000 shoeboxes and raised over £4000 in donations. What a splendid record of Christian love in a box! If any other chapels would like to join in next year, please let us know; we will send you the leaflets you need to help pack a shoebox and we will collect your boxes from your chapel, whatever the number you are able to provide.

Christine and Henry White (01952 541504)

Bishop's Castle Cluster report that with help from the churches, "The Jolly Jumpers" knitting group at Stonehouse Care Home, and donations including £90 raised through hosting a *Shoobox Packing Party*, a total of 42 shoeboxes filled with Christmas gifts and £210 was raised for the scheme.

Heather Holt