

Triangle



The quarterly magazine of the
Methodist Churches of
Wombourne and Springdale

Summer 2014

Holidays, holy days

David Hotchkiss, editor



Hello and welcome. Thank-you to everyone who has provided material for this summer edition, which I think you will agree is full of interest, from matters that affect us all arising from Conference, to dear friends fondly remembered and the marking of some special anniversaries, among much else. If you are going away in the coming weeks why not slip Triangle into your suitcase to peruse at your leisure, beside the pool, perhaps, or at the top of that mountain . . . ?

The Bible doesn't have much to say about holidays – holy days, maybe, but not holidays. If you surf the internet you soon find various people arguing that Christians shouldn't celebrate conventional holiday periods at all, never mind 10 days in Tenerife.

Pauline and I are off soon for a few nights in a posh hotel in Somerset, and have also booked a return visit in October to a self-catering apartment high up in the Forest of Bowland, which so impressed us last year, despite its mile-long, rocky driveway. Hold on tight and try to avoid the sheep.

The first holiday I took without my parents was with a youth group based at Darlington Street Church. It was 1972. We piled into two minibuses and headed for the quiet North Wales seaside resort of Llanfairfechan, now bypassed by the busy coast road. We caused good-natured mayhem in a rambling Christian hotel, even smuggling in an extra guest who couldn't afford the trip, some of the leaders taking turns to skip a meal so she could eat.

The call was irresistible and I made a commitment that was to last my whole life long. I drifted away as a young man when the world beckoned, but found my way back, largely thanks to Pauline, who had become a firm friend at that Welsh hotel long before there were any wedding bells (we married in 1981).

Of course, we've had many and varied holidays, at home and abroad (we were once taken to lunch in California by John Wayne's daughter!), but none I'm sure to compare with that innocent week in North Wales, when lives were changed forever.

The deadline for the next edition of Triangle is

September 21, 2014

Articles can be given to me or your stewards, sent by post to David

Hotchkiss, or emailed to triangle@springdalechurch.org.uk

Our urgent mission

The Reverend Christopher Collins



Dear Friends – There are a few things in church life which we make into the perennial jokes. For us Methodists they always seem to be about alcohol and meetings – perceptively picked up (and possibly promoted) by the comedian Adrian Plass. However are the perceptions true?

Three of us from the section have just returned from the Methodist Conference, which is often thought of as one long Methodist meeting lasting five days. However I think that is a little of unfair, as is the perception that the Conference holds little relevance to what happens at Springdale and Wombourne, because it is all about church politics rather than the real-life stuff that happens locally. But perhaps we are too quick to write it off?

This year the Conference dealt with matters of policy and made decisions such as encouraging the Methodist people to engage with the ongoing situation in Israel/Palestine by reading, studying, praying and acting on a document called “Time for Action: Kairos Britain”. Conference felt the campaign to stop the Trident replacement was important enough to encourage us all to engage with our local MPs on the matter. Methodists have been reminded of the need to pray for Syria and Nigeria. The Conference decided to ask all Methodists to support the “No More Page 3” campaign. In a graceful and respectful debate, the Conference reached a mind that we should all spend time actively reflecting on what it means to live with “contradictory convictions”, as the legal definition of marriage is now different from the Methodist Church’s understanding and agreed new pastoral guidance in the light of the same-sex marriage legislation. The Conference also challenged us on our ecumenical relationships and the ways we invest our money.

The glue that holds all of this together, which was discussed time and time again, is the deep theological understanding of Methodists that God’s love is for all. And that is why Conference is so important, because it not only reminds of real and important ways we can show God’s love is for all, but it directs the work of the Methodist Church to ensure that God’s love is lived out not just where it is needed but where it is needed most. It does this by ordaining and stationing ministers, through grant-making funds, such as World Mission and Mission in Britain, and reminding the whole church of where work is needed.

Finally, friends, we do all of this because we are co-workers in God’s mission for the world and I hope the urgency and imperative of God’s mission will always flow through all of our meetings so that we are not just “talkers about the kingdom” but we are workers in our acting, our praying and our giving. It is my hope and prayer that we feel that vibe in our meetings as we start to configure ourselves differently over the next twelve months. Watch out for more news about that and all the things Conference has asked us to think about in the next few weeks.

All this talk of meetings has made me tired so I hope we all find peace and refreshment over the summer and energised for our work for the glory of God’s kingdom.

In peace and fellowship . . . *Rev’d Chris*

Friendship of the people's preacher

Wendy Gould

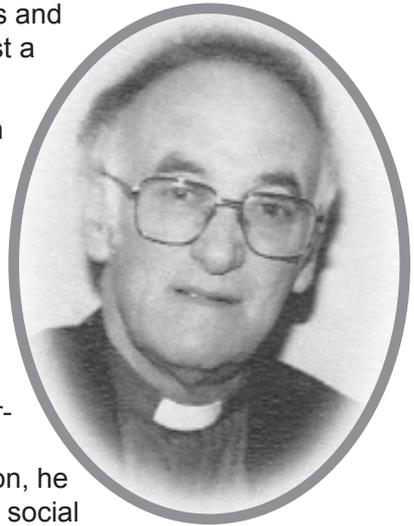
Alan A Francom, April 16, 1936 – March 13, 2014

As I started to think about writing this, I was preparing to preach on Trinity Sunday. "The preacher's Waterloo", Alan used to call it. I think many of us, from Springdale, Wombourne and Gospel Ash, and maybe from around the circuit too, find these phrases and sayings of Alan's popping into our minds – just a small part of the legacy of his ministry here.

Alan came to Wolverhampton Trinity Circuit in September 1990, after ministry at Camborne in Cornwall. His reputation came ahead of him – a well-loved minister, a really good preacher, a lively sense of humour that could occasionally get him into trouble. We looked forward to him coming, and were not disappointed!

Alan was a man of the people – a "people person". From working-class background on the Wirrall, with not much family church connection, he had struggled at times with the academic and social expectations of his call to the Methodist ministry. But as a result, he was comfortable with all sorts and conditions of people. They felt comfortable with him too, and all were made to feel that they mattered to him and mattered to God. This was the basis for his wonderful pastoral ministry, and his outreach to the community, through ordinary conversation with anyone he happened to meet. We cannot know how many people who never came through the doors of any of his churches were helped and inspired by their chats with him. This was also the gift that enabled him to minister so effectively as a prison chaplain at Brinsford Young Offenders Institution, where staff and inmates alike regarded him as their friend, and respected the message he had to give.

For, of course, essentially Alan was a man of God. His faith shone through word and action, and made him an inspiration to his churches and people. His life story – his background, the ministry he and Maureen shared on the mission field in Central America, his experiences in Manchester, Birmingham and Cornwall – these gave a fascinating picture, and a fine example of what could be achieved in God's name.



And Alan was not one to let his understanding of faith, or his preaching, become stale. He was always reading, famously acquiring piles of books – often heavy tomes of theology, or substantial biography – and reluctant to part with any! He continued reading avidly until his final illness, and always had suggestions or recommendations to encourage reading in others.

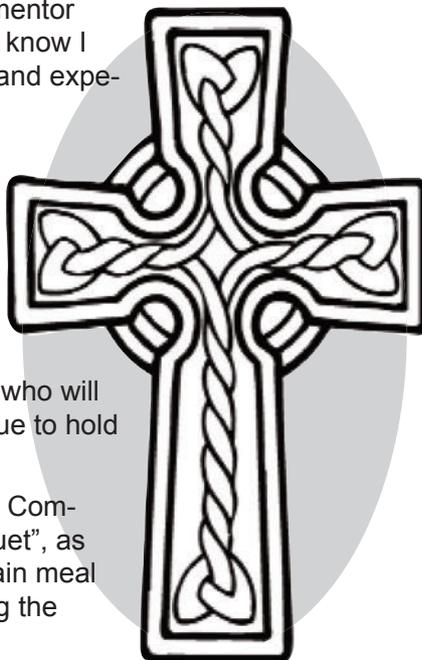
As a mature student, he studied through Westminster College, Oxford, for what eventually became a M Th in pastoral theology. It was a proud moment for his family and his churches when he had his degree conferred at Oxford University. I hesitate to say it was a proud moment for Alan, always a most humble man, but he was pleased to have achieved his objective.

His preaching was always to the point, and many of us will remember a particular sermon that seemed to speak directly to us. We were privileged to see his preaching develop, especially from the moment when he left his briefcase behind on the manse doorstep, and found that to preach without notes enabled him to engage with his congregation in a new and powerful fashion.

He had a reputation as a terrier, snapping at people's heels, and I certainly found this in relation to my own call to preach ("You could do this," he used to say). He was my mentor during my time "on note" and "on trial", and I know I owe him a tremendous debt for the wisdom and experience he brought to that role.

I could say so much more – of his collegueship, his friendship, his "going the extra mile" in pastoral care, his fund of stories, his experience of personal tragedy, his anger – we'll all have our particular memory and story to tell. How much more does this apply to his family, Maureen, the children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren, who will continue to miss him so much. Let us continue to hold them in our prayers.

But for Alan – well, he used to speak of Holy Communion, "the foretaste of the heavenly banquet", as "the hors d'oeuvre" – an appetizer for the main meal to follow! May he now be thoroughly enjoying the company and the feast!



Springdale pastoral news

Jane Rawlings, pastoral secretary

Well the summer is here and everyone has been away or is considering it in the near future. Whatever you all decide to do during the summer months, hopefully you get the weather you want and all enjoy yourselves.

It has been a time for exciting news since my last message, with several people announcing the arrival of new babies over the coming months. Emma and Tom Varty are expecting their first child and Caroline and Magnus Weighton are expecting their second. Best wishes to all the families concerned – what an amazing time for everyone.

Unfortunately, during the last month we have also received the sad news of the deaths of Joyce Elwell and June Radford. Joyce was a regular worshipper at Springdale and a committed member of Wives and, in later years, the Ladies' Fellowship. Unfortunately, over the past 12 months her health stopped her attending on a regular basis. June Radford has been a resident of Cheshire Homes and attended Ladies' Fellowship as and when she was able. Again, due to health issues she has been unable to attend during the last year. We pray that both ladies receive everlasting peace and comfort in the arms our Lord.

We also continue to remember their families and friends, and ask that God will give them strength over the coming months as they come to terms with their loss.

Our best wishes and love continue to be sent to Alma Ryan as she settles into Engleberg. May God give all the family the strength to manage during this time of change. Congratulations to anyone who has recently celebrated or is looking forward to celebrating a special birthday or occasion. May you have a wonderful time. Enjoy your summer as the Lord's amazing creation blooms all around us.

60 years of Scouting at Springdale

John and Jean Hodgson

What a wonderful afternoon and evening we were able to spend with the 21st Wolverhampton Scout Group, and so many other people, at Patshull Scout Camp Site on June 21, to celebrate 60 years of Scouting at Springdale. It was good to see so much support and in such perfect weather.

It was evident from the outset that everything was particularly well organised, from the archives display to the refreshments, which were more than sufficient, the activities for children and the superb campfire to finish what, for us, was a perfect day.

We enjoyed being able to walk around the whole of the campsite, remembering the days of yesteryear when we had the pleasure of camping there on many occasions with Cubs and Scouts (the last time must have been some 35 years ago), seeing the improvements and additions which have been made to the site and meeting people

we had almost forgotten – Scouters and Scouts – and being able to reminisce with them about the “good old days”.

It is good to recall that so many Scouters have all played their part in ensuring the continuance of Scouting at Springdale over the years since 1954, and for their dedication we should all be most grateful. Many people who have passed through their hands have become much better citizens as a result of their efforts. But we sincerely believe that Scouting at Springdale is much stronger today than it has ever been in all its history, and that is a tribute to the current incumbents who we are sure are much more accomplished and professional as Scouters than any of their predecessors.

We pray that God will continue to bless them all as they continue on their Scouting journey. Long may they carry on with their excellent work. We are sure Baden Powell would have been proud of them and their achievements.

Wombourne vestry news

Diana Beaumont, senior steward

At present we are enjoying lovely summer weather, appreciating being able to spend time outside, and the flowers and fruit in our gardens. As we walk up the path to church we can admire the beautiful tubs of flowers that Sandra looks after so well, and we thank her for her continuing care and hard work.

May means Christian Aid week. This year's theme was “Fear less”. our Good News for Kids club thought about why our homes are important, and found out how Christian Aid partners in areas of conflict are providing safe places to live for the many people affected. Our church raised £1,368.15, and we thank all those who delivered, collected, counted and donated for giving their time and money.

We had a chance to support Action for Children in early June, as three of our young people, Olivia, Charlotte and Jakob, took part in the annual sponsored walk.

Each year in June we celebrate our Church Anniversary, when we can think about those who have gone before, as well as those active today. Our church family week is always enjoyed. We had a quiz on the Wednesday, provided by David and Pauline Hotchkiss, and a skittles evening, arranged by Val and John Philpott. We thank them and all others involved in the two evenings. We finished the week with an anniversary service led by Chris Collins on the Sunday morning.

In the evening choirs and congregation gathered in St Benedict's to open Wombourne Music Festival – the fourth so far. We had a good evening, singing and listening to choirs from Wombourne and the surrounding villages.

I shall end by thanking Louise, our retiring senior steward, for all she has done for our church over the last four years.

50 years with Wombourne Wives

Founding member Pat Beddall looks back on half a century of fellowship

Who would have thought, 50 years ago, that the little group of people at Wombourne calling themselves a “Young Wives Group” would still be going today? It was started under the guidance of Mary, the wife of our then minister the Reverend Alan Kinsey, to cater for those ladies who were unable to attend other meetings because they had young children. Those present at that first meeting were

Mesdames Moorhouse, Butterworth, Wardle, Crossfield and Beddall.

It was agreed that our first meeting would be on Thursday, September 10, 1964, starting at 8pm in the church school-room – a very different place

now, since this was before the church had all the building work done. Our kitchen then was a small space at the back, with a shallow stone sink and one cold tap – not the best of places on a winter’s night – and one socket for the kettle.



The young Pat Beddall is centre of attention as bonnets are judged in an early Young Wives meeting



Members visited a premature baby unit to find out about its work and to donate clothing

During the building work we were fortunate to meet in members’ homes, and once the alterations were complete we returned to a lovely schoolroom and kitchen. There was more building work and we tried several different times for meetings before ending up with our present Thursday evening slot.

Looking back, it is difficult to remember all the



Flour power – members manning the cake stall at an annual church bazaar



Can you name the familiar faces pictured facing the camera after their well-received dinner?

things we have done in the past 50 years. Suffice it to say that we have had many and varied speakers (thanks to all our many secretaries) and many trips out and weekends away, and I feel that our wives have been richly blessed.

For obvious reasons, along the way we changed our name to “Wives Group”, although,

of course, we are all still young at heart. We are organising a service of thanksgiving for Thursday, September 11, 2014, to which we are inviting all former members as well as the present ones.

If you are one of the former members and would like to attend, we will be delighted to meet you, and ask that you let us know if you are coming (Ann Illidge or Pat Beddall).

May I take this opportunity to thank all former and present members for all their support along the way, and wish the Wombourne Methodist Wives a and long and prosperous future.

Wombourne pastoral news

Pauline Hotchkiss, pastoral secretary

Another year has gone by and we celebrated Church Anniversary and gift day on June 22 at the end of Church Family Week. A quiz was held on Wednesday, June 18. The occasion was well supported and enjoyed by all. The annual skittles evening on the following Saturday was a noisy, joyful occasion and very well supported. Well done Bob Hughes, who won the knockout.

Gill and Ron Groves were delighted to announce the safe arrival of a grandson, Samuel Jacob, born on May 18 weighing 7lb 10oz. Samuel is the first child to Katy and her husband. Margaret and Bill Higgs were also pleased to announce the arrival of their third great-grandchild, Lily Grace, to Samantha and Nik on May 22 and weighing in at 6lb 7oz. Many congratulations to both families.

Joyce and Bob Hughes celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on June 20. Congratulations to them and other couples who have celebrated special anniversaries recently.

Our prayers are with those who are in hospital, or have been in hospital. We remember especially Doug Monckton, who at the time of writing is still in Russells Hall Hospital. We also pray for Kath, Doug's wife, as she comes to terms with his illness. We remember Cintra Beaumont in our prayers. She too has recently been in hospital. We also remember Cathy Anderson in our prayers.

Robyn Walker, the grand-daughter of Carole and Eric Walker, fell from the sea wall in Sunderland last week and suffered severe damage to her spine. She is now at home and is able to walk and we thank God for this. However, she will need all our prayers as her recovery will be slow. Our love and prayers go to Robyn and all the family.

Our prayers are also for the family of Elsie Martin, who passed away in the first week of July. We ask that Jesus will be with them at this very sad time.

At the May meeting of the prayer circle we prayed for the families of those who had lost loved ones. We also remembered all those who are sick and in need of God's healing hand. We always remember our older loved ones who are no longer able to care for themselves and are in residential care.

We continue each month with our ministry to The Maltings sheltered accommodation in Wombourne. It is always a delight to share with this wonderful group of people. We were sorry to hear that two of the ladies who have attended the group regularly since the beginning have now moved on to residential care. God bless you, Flo and Kath, we shall think about you both when we meet. We celebrated Pentecost at our June meeting with an action-filled lesson using play bubbles to demonstrate the wind and home-made flames and doves for the tongues of fire and the Holy Spirit. We even had some of the ladies speaking in other languages!

This was an interesting and happy occasion. We also visit Himley Mill Nursing home each month and minister to the residents in two of the units there. They always appreciate us being there and join in with the singing.

David and I were fortunate to be able to share in Phil Moyle's wedding to Dorothy in June. This took place in Devon and was a wonderful, joyful occasion for everyone. God bless you both.

Our prayers will be with Tracy Hancox and her husband to be as they will be celebrating their wedding in August. God bless you both.

Many thanks are due to Denis, our Lay Pastoral Worker, and all the Pastoral Group visitors, for the work they carry out in caring for us in many ways.

As I am writing, exams are in full swing, as are the "Prom Balls". We didn't have these when I was at school – I don't mean the exams! Our prayers are with all our young ones who will be anxiously awaiting results and who will then be leaving or moving to school/college and taking the next step. For all those in our families who are at this stage in their lives, I pray for God's blessings.

Our congratulations go to Edward (Teddy) Martin on being awarded the Sir Digby Jones prize for Enterprise at Oldswinford Hospital School.

If I have failed to mention anyone with a need or with good news then I apologise. Jesus knows our every need and will watch over us.

Finally, I would like to share these few words with you.

Good days are not hard to find – but a perfect day? What would be involved in making one of those?

A wise lady called Ruth Smeltzer offered this suggestion:

"You have not lived a perfect day, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to repay you."

Maybe this is something to think about as we begin a new year in the life of our church!

Former Junior Church member Jenni Knott writes: I am a volunteer at the owl and falconry centre in Bobbington and have been for two years. I handle birds of prey, for which I am qualified. I work at Muckley Farm, handling the birds of prey and cleaning out other animals, including meerkats, chinchillas, horses and many others. With my job I have the opportunity to travel around the world, as my boss goes worldwide showing his Gyr Falcon (Fern). I am also at college studying animal management Level 3 diploma, which is a two-year course and I am enjoying every minute of my life at the moment.

The Fairtrade Phoenix

Brenda Shuttleworth



Phoenix-like, the Fairtrade shop, which was the seat of the fire at Darlington Street Methodist Centre, has risen from the ashes and is now open for business!

Unlike the re-creation of the Phoenix, however, a lot of hard work has gone into securing new premises, decorating and furnishing the shop and finding volunteers to keep the shop open from Tuesday to Saturday each week.

This work has been spearheaded by David Fulljames, the shop manager, with the support of the board and volunteers.

I joined a group of volunteers just before Easter, trade justice being one of the interests I am keen to develop now that I am retired. I had not expected to be painting shelves as one of my first tasks, but the result of the labours of many volunteers has been a beautifully decorated shop with a very attractive display of food goods and craft items.

Large boxes of goods arrive at the shop each week – it feels like Christmas as we check off items, price them up and restock shelves.

Getting used to the computer program that the shop uses at point-of-sale is quite a challenge and I'm grateful that, having managed to find all the items and their prices, it tells me how much change I have to offer the customer!

Business can be slow, especially on rainy days, but all our sale and return customers, predominantly from the churches, are dropping in again, along with passers-by, many of whom say that they were not aware of the shop when it was at the church. There are interesting conversations with all kinds of people who are happy to hear about what the fair trade mark means. One of these was with a man from the Gambia who asked how the peanuts from his father's farm could become fair trade. He had stories of how he helped on the farm as a young man.

The board has now to decide on an official launch date and will prepare marketing material to support this, but in the meantime do drop in and say hello.

Wolverhampton Fairtrade 10 Salop Street, WV3 0SG

<i>Tuesdays</i>	<i>10am – 4pm</i>
<i>Wednesdays</i>	<i>10am – 5.45pm</i>
<i>Thursdays</i>	<i>10am – 4pm</i>
<i>Fridays</i>	<i>10am – 4pm</i>
<i>Saturdays</i>	<i>9am – 1pm</i>

Springdale vestry news

Philippa Cooper, senior steward

The past two years of stewarding have flown past and I now find myself trying to follow in the footsteps of Sheila Sanders. I am very grateful to Sheila for her superb work last year, which included the start of our 60th anniversary celebrations.

There have been a number of changes to the vestry team. Many thanks are extended to our retiring stewards, Bernard Davis, Sheila Evans and Dorothy Clulow, for their sterling work during recent years. We are extremely fortunate to be able to welcome Samantha Cartwright and Paul Merchant to the vestry team.

Our Diamond Jubilee celebrations are continuing. On Saturday, May 10, there was an MAYC reunion. More than 100 people attended, with quite a number travelling a considerable distance. We are really lucky to have had many superb youth fellowship and youth club leaders since October 1953. I appreciate the huge amount of preparatory work that was put into the organisation of the event.

A week later our junior church members delighted us with their presentation based on "Firm Foundations". This really brought home the importance of every member of the church in the life of Springdale.

Following the Summer Fair in June we looked forward to the Community Tea in July.

Our Scout Group continued the celebrations with an afternoon tea followed by a campfire on June 21. It has certainly been a summer packed with a wide range of events.

Sincere thanks are extended to everyone involved in the preparation and running of these activities. In the words of Joseph Hart's hymn: "We'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come."

Dry sense of humour

Crossing the water this summer? On a ferry to one of the Western Isles of Scotland, a passenger was amazed to hear the captain confess that he couldn't swim, and decided to tease him about it once safely on the other side.

"You should be pleased I can't swim," the captain replied with a straight face. "It means I will try harder to make sure my passengers don't have to!"

Most airline pilots, you will find, can't fly. Spot the connection.

A story of four shepherds

Lesley Cook

"I am the good shepherd." John 10 v. 11

In May this year, my husband and I were lucky enough to be able to join the District Pilgrimage to the Holy Land led by John Howard and Ivor Sperring – something I had always wanted to do. This was a chance literally to walk in the footsteps of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, albeit more than 2,000 years later. Would it be tacky? Would it be ruined by the politics of the present day? Would I meet with that Good Shepherd?

The answer is a resounding yes. Not in every place, I admit. It was difficult to find him in the eight-deep, hour-long queue to see his tomb, deep beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but there was a kind of cumulative effect. As I stood on the still shores of Lake Galilee and took communion there and as I travelled through the Judean Desert, realising how many miles Jesus must have walked along rocky desert paths (the road to Jerusalem was not easy and the road to Jericho was mountainous, rocky and hot!), also when I stood in the cell beneath Caiaphas' house where Jesus probably spent the night in total darkness, he had been there too. All wonderful memories – all snapshots of a life put into geographical context. Yes, I felt my Lord, the Good Shepherd, in these places.

But four shepherds? Well we had our own shepherd – Ben, our guide. He pointed out to us the rather obvious: "Palestinian shepherds are different from European ones. They lead their sheep, whilst yours walk behind." Such an important thing to know when reading the Bible!

Ben was certainly a good shepherd, taking us to all the best places, at the best time of day, never over-stretching us, giving us advice ("No stopping, no shopping. Keep together. Keep hold of your handbags") then getting us back to the safety of our hotel before trouble broke out on Jerusalem Day. (This is the day when some of the Jewish people celebrate the unification of Jerusalem in 1967. Unfortunately some of them take this too far, throwing tear gas and hurling abuse at Christians and Muslims in the Old City opposite our hotel.) The Israeli army protected this parade, using tear gas, stun grenades and horses in riot gear – all very interesting to watch from our hotel roof garden!

Ben was a Palestinian Christian and this meant we had a special bond with him because we share the same faith. We were able to share (unofficially) how his life has been affected by the fact that although he is an Israeli citizen, he is definitely a third-class citizen, unable to pursue his chosen career, and instead becoming an excellent guide with a superb memory and repertoire of interesting stories.

We were all very moved when he shared communion with us on the shores of Lake Galilee, and when he asked us to pray for him and his family as he headed home to the Old City through the disturbances.

The third shepherd was a real one. He must have been about 12 years old. On our journey from Jericho up the Jordan Valley to our new hotel on the shores of Lake Galilee, John had suggested a diversion so that we could see some of the troubled areas of the Palestinian Occupied Territories (West Bank) where he had spent his sabbatical as part of EAPPI. This was an area where Jewish settlers were driving Palestinians from their houses and farm land, forcing them to live in tents and to become low-paid hired hands.

The coach pulled off the road at the sight of herds of cows and sheep drinking from a small stream while this shepherd boy looked on, in the searing heat. Our guide asked him what he was doing and he replied that he had brought his herds to drink as it was the Jewish Sabbath and so there was no need to fear harassment from the settlers.

The fourth shepherd had a flock too. On Sunday we celebrated communion in Christ Church Anglican Church in Nazareth, together with a group from New Zealand and the Palestinian Christian congregation, the “Living Stones”, as he called them. As the service and hymns were the same as ours, we were able to follow the service in English while they used Arabic.

After tea and coffee and biscuits in the church hall, the Reverend Naseem told us about his life. He told us that he is a man of four parts. He is an Arab, a Palestinian, a Christian and an Israeli citizen. He explained what life is like for a Palestinian Christian in Israel. He gave an example: “If a Jewish child grows up wanting to be a pilot he can do it. A Palestinian child can never do that ‘for security reasons’.”

He asked us to tell as many people as possible about what is happening in Israel/Palestine and to pray for them.

I shall do so. Please join me.

**Ben and Naseem are not their real names – Ed*

Making headlines

News of the new toilet for disabled visitors to Wombourne reached the press, and steward Brenda Shuttleworth was quoted, explaining the need and the way funds were raised (more than £5,000). Our friends in Queen Street couldn’t resist a parting shot which reads: “Ms Shuttleworth said: ‘The project will be complete by the end of March and we will all be very relieved’.” Your editor was reminded of a headline he wrote many years ago for the Express & Star when an ancient church in Staffordshire was similarly equipped. It said: “Blessed relief as church gets loo after 500 years”. Quite a wait.

‘Always be a Lay Witness’

Eric and Carole Walker

It was with sadness and joy that we drove to Toton Methodist Church, Nottingham, on Saturday, June 14. Sadness because the Lay Witness Movement had finally come to an end after 38 years, and joy as we would be privileged to share our faith with many old friends, and to put faces to numerous names of those who had encouraged and uplifted us through their letters, cards and telephone calls during the last seven years, and to be able to thank them in person.

The church was “full to bursting” and after coffee and a time of worship there was an open session when several members spent a few minutes, each telling us what Lay Witness had done for them. A buffet lunch (enough to feed the 5,000) was available, and as the sun shone most of us ate out in the church garden.

After lunch we were treated to a very moving speech by the Reverend Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Britain.

One thing we particularly remember him saying was: “You can count the number of pips in an apple, but not the number of apples that come from one pip.”

He rounded it all up by telling us to “always be Lay Witnesses”, and not to stop telling our stories of faith, and to move forward in the knowledge that God will always show you something else to do in his name in the future.

And from Ecclesiastes 3:1 – “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.” It was a day that we will remember for a long time – a truly spirit-filled day.

It's here again – your annual feast of fairly traded goods! The shops have already let us know that Christmas is not far away and perhaps you are looking at last year's gift list and wondering how you can ring the changes!

With our fashion show and a variety of craft and food stalls, we give you the opportunity to purchase all those presents while supporting some of the world's poorest producers at the same time.

No need to cook lunch – come and enjoy a bowl of soup and delicious home-made fair trade cakes.

Just Fayre, Wolverhampton Methodist Circuit