

THE



Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit

INE

Summer 2025

A CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION

by Revd Michael Marsden

'Is this all you do?' or 'Have you got a church of your own?' These are frequently-asked questions by some of the patients I meet. After explaining to them that I work full-time in the hospital and that the NHS employs me, they will sympathetically put their hand on mine and say, *'Hopefully, one day the bishop will give you your own parish.'* This often-well-meant comment indicates how little some people understand about the Church and its ministry. For many, they can only think in terms of the parochial ministry and find it odd when a priest/minister is found working elsewhere. Even though chaplains are employed by the NHS, we must be *'in good standing'* with our Faith community and require a licence from the diocesan bishop to practise. Therefore, my ministry is the Church's ministry in a particular place; I have NOT left the Church as some may think!

At present the Church is struggling with its own identity and place in society, and through its various consultative bodies, in both the Province and the Diocese, is looking at 'new'

ways of being and doing Church. I wonder if anyone ever gives those of us who work in a chaplaincy role a thought, as many of us work with and for people who are on the 'edge' or on the 'fringe', probably more than our colleagues in the parochial ministry. I am confronted daily with spiritual issues which are expressed in questions such as, *'Why should this happen to me?', 'Why now?', 'What have I done to deserve this – it doesn't seem fair?', 'Where is God?'*, often from people who are vulnerable and are searching for some meaning and purpose to life. Theirs is often a need for reassurance of being loved, of sins forgiven, or the fear of being alone at the time of death. As the Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, Victor Frankl states in his book, **Man's Search for Meaning (1987)**, *'Man is not destroyed by suffering, he is destroyed by suffering without meaning.'* Whilst our ministry is not evangelistic, nevertheless we are able to reach out to others, at their point of need. Often the 'fruits' of the chaplain's ministry is rarely seen by him or her.

Whenever I speak to parish groups about my work, a question always asked is, *'Do you*



HOUSEKEEPING

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

Saturday, 28th June 2025, 7pm

Cwmbran Baroque Singers and Harmonize
Together in Concert
Holy Trinity Church, Pontnewydd

Sunday, 29th June 2025, 4pm

Farewell Service for Revd Stephen Boxall
Llanyrafon Methodist Church
Led by Revd Cathy Gale

Sunday, 6th July 2025, 3pm

Strawberry Tea
Glasbury Methodist Church
Followed by a service at 5pm, led by Revd Sue Lawler

Saturday, 26th July, 2pm

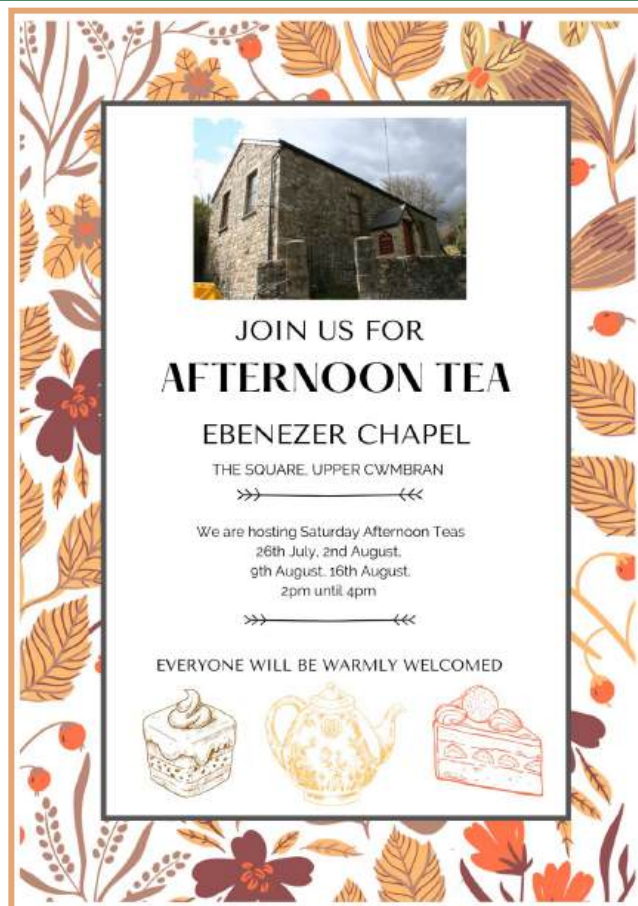
2nd, 9th & 16th August 2025, 2pm
Afternoon Tea
(see poster opposite)
Upper Cwmbrân Methodist Church

Saturday, 2nd August 2025, 2pm

Summer Fayre
Blaina Methodist Church

Sunday, 31st August 2025, 3pm

Welcome Service for Revd Raymond Borrett
Pontnewynydd Methodist Church
led by Revd Andrew Charlesworth



For more information on any of these events, please contact Joanna at the email/number below.

GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE

Every Sunday evening, 6pm. Here's the link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94168420492?pwd=cjFTbzZUejhwTFBtVXdL1lFVkdldz09>

Meeting ID: 941 6842 0492

Passcode: 831858

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Deadline for items to be included in the Autumn issue: 12th August 2025

A CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION

miss the parish ministry?' I try to be diplomatic when answering this. After pointing out that I don't have to worry about fund-raising and maintaining the buildings, which often takes up so much time, I explain that I believe hospital chaplaincy to be both the ministry and the place that God has called me to be. It is a ministry that enables me to spend time with others, trying to come alongside them and to listen to their stories. A patient once told me that she couldn't tell her vicar about her problems, as he was always too busy. Sometimes we like to create the impression of busy-ness and don't realise what message that may be giving to those who need a listening ear. The sacraments play a vital role in hospital ministry where Communion, Anointing, Baptism and Confession are frequently requested. A helpful model of chaplaincy can be found in the useful Palgrave book **Spirituality and the Practice of Healthcare (2003)** by Simon Robinson, Kevin Kendrick and Alan Brown. They use 'the three Ps', illustrated below:



Revd Michael Marsden

Pastor – offering pastoral and spiritual care for all, patients, relatives and staff.

Priest – providing religious and sacramental ministry to all who need them.

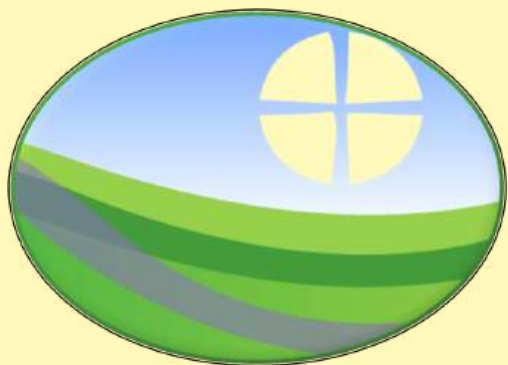
Prophet – this may involve acting as advocate for a patient or member of staff, or speaking out to management on matters of justice, such as work conditions.

In my first chaplaincy post back in the early eighties we worked as an ecumenical team, but these days many teams work closely with other faiths as well. This reflects the multi-cultural society we now live in. We work well together and minister to patients, their families and staff regardless of their denomination, faith, or for that matter no faith at all, whilst at the same time respecting each other's sacramental and doctrinal position. In chaplaincy this 'unity' works because rules and regulations do not tie us down as they might in the parochial setting. For when you are dealing with sickness many barriers and prejudices are removed and people are united in the 'fellowship of suffering' just as the ten lepers were united in their pain and agony, forgetting their many differences.

Finally, may I encourage you all, clergy and laity, to commend your church members to the local hospital chaplains. Due to the rules surrounding patient confidentiality we have no way of knowing who 'church' people are unless they or you inform us. Like the parish clergy, we have no crystal ball.

Michael is an Anglican priest who was ordained in Llandaff Cathedral in 1982 and has worked in a number of church and health care settings throughout South Wales. Presently working with the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, he is involved in nurse training and lectures regularly at the University of South Wales. He is married to Salli and has two adult daughters, Lydia and Lucy, and a granddaughter, Mali.

If you would like to order a copy of the new Methodist Prayer Handbook 2025/26 – "Our Story Our Song" (details on Page 6), you can do so for a reduced cost, as we usually put in a bulk order as a circuit. There will be an announcement coming to your churches in a few weeks, or contact me directly to let me know!



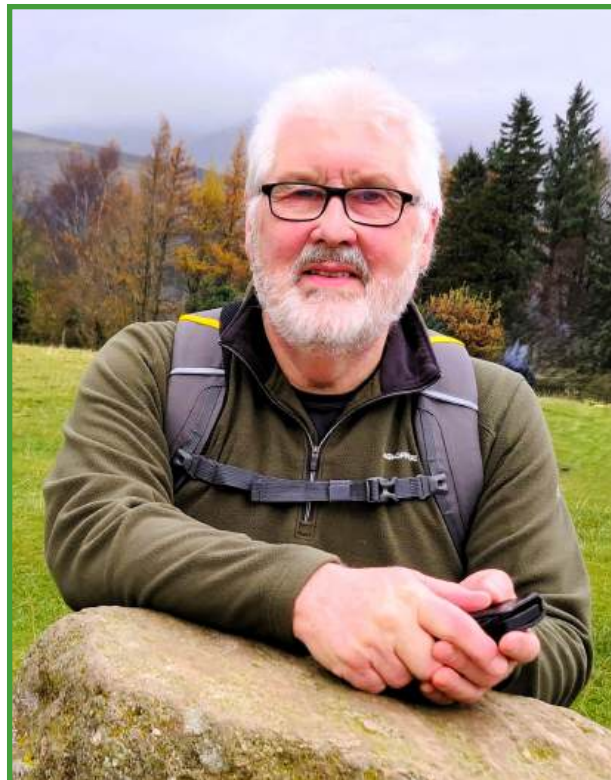
BRANCH LINES

News around the Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit

CHANGING OF THE GUARD...

This summer will see another change in the leadership of the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit as we bid 'farewell' to **Reverend Stephen Boxall** (*pictured right*). On 29th June, we will be celebrating Revd Steve's ministry and legacy as he embarks on the adventure of retirement. I put the word 'farewell' in quotation marks because he isn't actually going anywhere – but plans to live in Cwmbrân. Something tells me that after a decent interval, we may be seeing him back on our plan again!

I would personally like to say a special 'THANK YOU!' to Revd Steve, because he was one of the 'founding fathers' of **The Vine**, back in the days when it was created for the Pontypool section. His vision, support and encouragement were key – just look where we are now!



On Sunday, 31st August, Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit welcomes a new face to the team: **Reverend Raymond Borrett** (*pictured below*). Born in Harare, Zimbabwe and growing up in South

Africa, God called Revd Ray to ministry when he was a teenager, but he (in his own words) 'went off and got some life experience. I have also served in the ambulance service, fallen off more than my fair share of mountains, owned a climbing wall and served as chaplain to the Bluewater Shopping Centre, as well as being lead Chaplain for Kent Workplace Mission.'



Walking the Way is the podcast that Revd Ray hosts each weekday. 'Loosely based on "This Day: a Wesleyan Way of Prayer", I hope to give those struggling to get time with God, the space, inspiration and structure to develop their own walk with God.'

Revd Ray has been married to Deb for 20 years – they recently adopted two children and are 'loving becoming a family.'

Joanna Saunders and www.rayborrett.co.uk

CONGRATULATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS!



A special visitor for a special occasion: the President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Helen Cameron (*bottom row, third from right*) takes part in a special service on Saturday, 22nd March to commemorate Nantyglo (Wesley) Chapel's 200th anniversary year:

Top Row from left: Revd Steve Boxall, Revd Catherine Brobbey, Revd Andrew Charlesworth, Revd Lorette Hinson, Revd Manu Tu'ipulotu

Bottom Row from left: Joan Meredith, Deacon Gwenllian Knighton, John Mason, Revd Helen Cameron, Revd Jennie Hurd, Haydn Jeffreys



Wednesday, 28th May saw two celebrations in Pontypool Market – The Spirit Choir performed as part of their 25th anniversary year, and in celebration of 10 years of Pontypool Market Chaplaincy! Here is Musical Director Simon Oram with members of the choir presenting a cheque to Sadé Asker (in the NRAS tee-shirt)) from the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society, the choir's chosen charity for their anniversary year. Pontypool Market Chaplain and choir member Celia Price stands next to Simon.



CONNEXION CORNER

**‘Do not allow yourself one thought
of separating from your brothers and sisters,
whether their opinions agree with yours or not.’
*News from the Methodist Connexion of the UK***

THE METHODIST PRAYER HANDBOOK 2025 – 2026

‘O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day’

From ancient times, communities have defined themselves by the stories they tell and the songs they sing about themselves. In 2025 and 2026 we call upon the Methodist people to join us in a soul expedition deep into the heart of our calling, journeying afresh into the story of grace and the vocation that God has placed upon us.

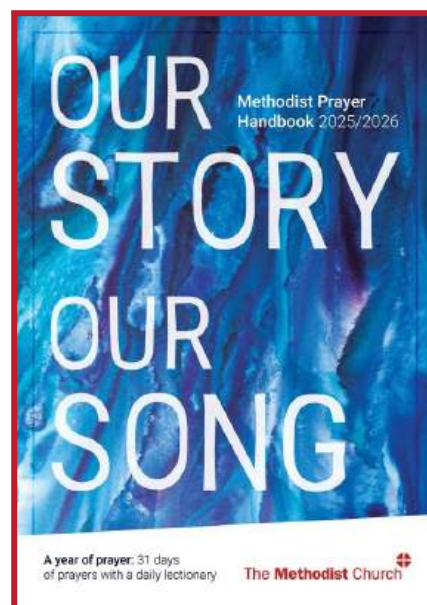
We invite you to immerse yourself in the story of grace – learning to live, work, pray and play in ways both true to our roots and open to the presence of God in the songs and stories of others.

We encourage churches, circuits and districts to ask some fundamental shaping questions about themselves: What story do we want to tell about ourselves? What song is God calling us to sing? How shall we sing our song in a strange land? How will the story of grace root us and shape us as we unfold the next chapter of our story?

The Methodist Church is committed to living out a story that calls us to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Jesus Christ by living out our discipleship in worship and mission. We seek to sing a song rooted in grace, deep memory and present experience, which yearns for the transformation of ourselves, our neighbours and our world, building communities that are growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice seeking – shaped by the pattern of Christ and empowered by God’s Spirit. The psalmist calls us to express this in vibrant, festal worship in the context of God’s glory and presence and a vision of all people and all creation bringing their praise.

As we explore this theme, we pray that as a people we will grow in hope and confidence learning to sing afresh, or perhaps for the first time, songs new and old, discovering:

- **A Shared Story** – exploring the richness of God’s love and grace to, with and for us in Christ, learning to live by hope for the future, and rediscovering our story by celebrating our roots.
- **A Shared Harmony** – responding by living in a way that draws others to bring their praise to Jesus and by longing and working for a world transformed.
- **A New Song** – sharing in a soul expedition as we journey with God’s Spirit to discover the new songs that God is inspiring within, among and around us.
- **A New Chapter** – rediscovering the gifts of testimony and storytelling as we commit ourselves to hear not only our own voices, but the voice of Christ amongst those who are marginalised, sharing stories of lament, hope, surprise, expectation and festal joy for opening a new chapter in our mission.



(text and image taken from the Methodist website)

PUZZLE PAGE

OUR STORY OUR SONG

CHAPTER
EXPLORING
FUNDAMENTAL
GRACE
HARMONY
HOPE
LAMENT
QUESTIONS
REDISCOVERY
RICHNESS
ROOTED
SONG
STORY
TRANSFORMATION
VOCATION

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Puzzle created by Joanna using wordmint.com

SOUL FOOD SOLUTION

COMPANIONSHIP
EACH OTHER
FORGIVENESS
HEART
MUSIC
NOURISHED
PATIENCE
REPAIR
REST
SHARE
SHELTER
SLOWNESS
SOUL FOOD
TOUGH TIMES
UNCONDITIONAL

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PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Creator God,
Today in a fractured world we pray for peace and justice;
your peace, not built on our broken promises and failing courage,
but your deep peace, through your creative power
and embodied in the service and sacrifice of Jesus.
May we follow Christ, seeking your justice, acting in solidarity and hope,
even when the way seems unclear
and the powers of our world don't reflect your Kingdom;
Your Peace, Your Justice, Your Kingdom, Your World;
In Jesus' name,
Amen.



John Brokenshire / Pentecost from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP, used with permission.
www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection