



WINTER 2019

ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society



RICHARD IS CHAMPION

A MYSTERIOUS VOICE CALLED HIM TO THE METHODIST MINISTRY. THAT JOURNEY HAS LED RICHARD TEAL TO EVEN GREATER HEIGHTS. CLIVE PRICE REPORTS.

Floods, miners' strikes, shipyard closures and horrific shootings are among the challenges Revd Richard Teal has encountered. Such experiences make him uniquely qualified to become president elect of the Methodist Conference.

'The clergyman who championed Cumbria' is how he was described by the *Cumberland & Westmorland Herald*. Married with two children and two grandchildren, Richard has been on our board for nine years. He has resigned to focus on his new role.

'I've represented chairs of district who shared concerns and joys, which I fed back to the Society,' he said. 'Ministers' lives have been really helped through those conversations.'

Richard becomes President when the Methodist Conference opens at Telford next June. 'I feel honoured, humbled, privileged and amazed,' is how he responded.



PIANO MAN: Richard leaves the MMHS board for something on a bigger scale

Photo: Clive Price

He is a warm, friendly giant – like your favourite uncle or kind older brother. But despite his pastoral experience, Richard isn't from a churchgoing home. Richard was born in a Yorkshire village in 1958. By the time he'd reached his teens, his musical skills drew the attention of the local Methodist chapel. They asked him to play piano. 'I loved every aspect of it,' he recalled.

When the preaching started, Richard would hide behind a screen and read a book. One day in 1973, he forgot to take

something to read. 'I had to listen to the sermon,' he said, 'and I was converted to Christ.'

Soon after, Richard was helping his father on the family farm. Out in the fields, he was shocked to hear a mysterious voice. 'Richard, I want you for the ministry,' came the audible message. 'I took that to be the voice of the Lord,' said Richard.

Mum and dad feared young Richard had religious mania. But he followed his calling. He took a job with a textile firm and studied preaching. He attended Wesley College, Bristol, from 1978 to 1981, and at 23 entered the ministry.

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OFFICE OPENING TIMES

Our Baker Street office will be open on the following days over the Christmas holidays –

23 DECEMBER
24 DECEMBER
2 JANUARY
3 JANUARY

For emergencies over Christmas when the office is closed, please phone Refurbishment Manager John Bailey on 07769 250426

A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



My roles in life – not least as the Society's CEO – open up many interesting opportunities to network with fellow charity leaders.

I think, rightly, we can be proud of our rich heritage in the UK. Did you know there are more than 180,000 registered charities employing thousands of people striving to make the world a better place? Our oldest registered charity dates back to the

12th century. That's quite something. Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with and listening to an inspiring talk given by a quadruple amputee (through meningitis), whose life's work is leading a charity that supports disabled people in deprived areas of the world. Incredible. She has turned her personal challenges into opportunities.

Here in the MMHS office, we face organisational challenges, not least the size of our team – it is small. We are very reliant on your grace and patience as we seek to run our charitable business in the best way possible. Every day, we work out how to turn our challenges into opportunities.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of *Roof 'n' Roots* with its inspiring stories of challenge and opportunity.

Warm season's greetings to you and yours.

● **Mairi Johnstone** CEO

'COMEDY BROUGHT ME TO CHURCH'

MEET SOCIETY RESIDENT REVD JOYCE BARRASS

Comedy brought Joyce Barrass to church. Her spiritual journey took her from playing in a bomb crater – to teaching in one of the highest cities in the world.

Now an MMHS resident, Joyce was raised in a Methodist family at the Yorkshire mining village of Bolton-on-Dearne. Her father was head porter at the train station. She was a real life 'railway child' who created stories and poems among the plants, flowers and trees.

'Between our cottage and the railway was an old bomb crater,' Joyce recalled, 'overgrown with moss and long grasses. That's where I used to play. I remember that idyllic countryside.'

When she was seven, her father had a stroke. 'My mum was looking after him,' said Joyce, 'so wasn't able to get to church. I didn't go to church until they needed somebody to write comedy material for a concert party in the late 70s.'

That took 15-year-old Joyce to Furlong Road Methodist Church. She went on to become a junior school teacher. 'I gradually got the call to mission work,' Joyce remembered. 'The furthest away from English soil I'd been was Aberystwyth! But I had a burning desire to serve God.'

She knocked on the door of the former Overseas Mission Department, never expecting it to open. But they said, 'How do you feel about Bolivia?' Joyce said, 'Where's Bolivia?' To top it all, she was a type 1 diabetic.

Armed with her O Level Spanish – and a fridge to preserve her insulin – in 1990, Joyce went to Sucre, the constitutional capital and Inca heartland, 9,000 feet above sea level. It was a fabled land of red-roofed white houses. Joyce became the first UK Methodist mission partner in that region, and one of the first to Bolivia.

She worked as an interpreter, dorm-mother and teacher at an 'internado' – halls of residence – and a preacher for a church. 'My life revolved around that,' she said, 'helping local people who would come knowing that the church was a presence in that place.'



MISSION MEMENTOES: Joyce has displayed Bolivian artefacts and musical instruments at church events

Living in Bolivia was beautiful, yet brutal. Joyce caught amoebic dysentery, an intestinal infection caused by a parasite. Soon after, she developed Myalgic Encephalomyelitis or ME, as it's commonly known.

Joyce was disappointed when time came to return to the UK in 1992. However, she

felt drawn to the ministry and was ordained in 1999.

For the next six years, Joyce looked after three churches in Southampton. After each bout of illness, she dragged herself back to work. But it became too much. Joyce retired on health grounds in 2007.

'I didn't want to retire,' she said, 'but by God's provision, I came here.' Joyce moved into an MMHS house in Yorkshire. 'It was a summer evening and I saw what I knew could be home.'

Later, she found out a member of her extended family had built that house. There were other discoveries that made it feel like home. 'Every plant in the garden has a biblical name,' said Joyce, 'from Joseph's Coat to Adam's Fig Leaf!'

Joyce continues to write. She wrote the *Companion To The Revised Common Lectionary*, contributed to *Touching The Pulse*, has penned two novels, and publishes a blog. Days are also spent gardening and bird watching.

Joyce is rediscovering the 'railway child' days, as once again she creates other realms with her words. ●

RICHARD IS CHAMPION

It was the decade of mine closures and shipyard shutdowns. 'That destroyed people's lives and communities,' he recalled. Richard and his church responded by running workshops and helping people back on their feet. 'It was heart-breaking,' he said.

Richard ministered at Berwick-upon-Tweed, Beverley, Yorkshire and Cumbria – where he stayed for 11 years. He helped establish Cumbria as England's first ever ecumenical county in 2011.

Richard's pastoral work as chair of Cumbria Methodist District was described as 'outstanding' by the regional press. Floods hit the area in 2009 and 2015. 'I went round and tried to encourage people,' he said.

In 2010, gunman Derrick Bird killed 12 people and injured 11 others. Richard visited injured victims in hospital. He joined church leaders in a statement of

The injured were simply glad to see Richard on his hospital visits

support and led a memorial service.

That shooting is recognised as one of the worst criminal acts involving firearms in British history. Yet Richard saw solidarity among the suffering. 'People came together in their grief,' he remembered.

He faced cutting questions from the media. 'This is the work of the devil, isn't it?' is how one reporter confronted Richard. 'If God is a God of love, how could this happen?' said another.

However, the injured were simply glad to see Richard on his hospital visits. 'They were thankful that people cared,' he reflected.

Rural communities remain a priority. They are a focus for this farm boy in his new circuit ministry at Drifffield,



RURAL PASTOR: Richard has travelled from farm to flock

Yorkshire, and will continue to be during his presidency. At 61, he isn't ready to stop being a champion for them. Not just yet. ●

Watch the new video about our clock's 'time travel' journey on our website – www.mmhs.org.uk

OUR 'TIMELY GIFT' TO THE CHURCH

A longcase clock made from an old oak wardrobe offers to guide people into another realm.

The clock will help people reflect on our work and marks the culmination of the Society's recent 70th anniversary celebrations.

MMHS have donated the clock to the wider Methodist Church. The impressive timepiece was installed ready for summer visitors at the Museum of Methodism in Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission, London.

Made by Society resident Revd Neville Pugh, the clock offers visitors a reflective moment or two, before or after they enjoy their tour of the museum. An information panel tells the story of the clock and the Society.

It was a long journey for the clock. A courier had to be found with a tall enough van to carry the time piece



upright for 200 miles – all the way from Neville's home in North Wales to the museum in London.

Neville travelled to the capital separately to set up the clock. We've since installed an information panel and commemorative plaque. The complete display was presented recently to Chapel and Museum Curator Christian Dettlaff by Society CEO Mairi Johnstone (pictured). ●

HOME CARE FOR WINTER

Here's a checklist of some of the simple things we can do to prepare our homes for winter.

DRAIN STRAIN
Clearing gutters and drains is an essential task. Debris such as leaves and mud can block the drains and cause leaks into the roof and walls. Making sure the gutters are clear will minimise the risk of water damage.

PIPE DOWN
The best way to keep on top of pipes during the winter is to protect them with a foam layer – called lagging – which will help to prevent them freezing and bursting.

POWER POCKET
Make sure you're on the best energy deal. It always pays to check whether you're on the cheapest energy tariff – you could save more than you think.
For more information, visit www.moneysupermarket.com/money-made-easy/seven-easy-ways-to-get-your-home-ready-for-winter ●



WINTER WARMERS

Yes, it's common sense to keep the fire lit on cold nights! Here are a few more tips to help you stay cosy.

Saving soles

Feet are important. We must love them! Wear shoes with good grip and warm lining. Put on thick socks. For extra comfort, buy memory foam insoles and fit them inside your shoes. Insoles can be purchased for as little as £1 a pair.

Hot stuff

Enjoy a stream of hot drinks and meals regularly throughout your day. It's amazing what a difference this makes. It's vital for energy and warmth. Fruit and veg boost your immune system and energy levels.

Festive wrap

Rather than one big thick jumper, layer up to stay warm. Layers of clothing trap air between them and maintain your body temperature.

Move it

Venture outdoors, if you are able to do so. It can boost your mood to get out into the daylight, and it's good for your muscles and bones. Woodland walks are great for your mental and physical wellbeing.

Stay connected

It can be easy to disconnect from people during the winter. But keep in touch with friends, family and others who may feel alone. It brightens up your day and encourages others, too.

Some of these points, and more, can be found in the free Independent Age booklet *Winter Wise*. Download your copy now from www.independentage.org/information/advice-guides-factsheets-leaflets/winter-wise ●

HOME TRUTHS

REFLECTION BY REVD CHARLES NEW

My wife Doreen and I have a special fondness for Lindisfarne, where Aidan and then Cuthbert centred their Christian ministries in the seventh century. For almost every one of the past 20 or so years, we've spent a week there with friends. It's a place of contrast, with a resident population of 160 hosting 650,000 visitors a year. Yet, just off the main route from car park to castle, it's a place of quiet beauty and, once through the dunes to the North Shore, even solitude.

Here is a 'thin place', where sea meets sand. Sometimes gentle and murmuring, sometimes raging and crashing – is it too fanciful to imagine the presence of the saints and those who followed over the centuries? Anyone sensitive to such things can find a pressing sense of continuity.

My route to MMHS meetings takes me to King's Cross Station, then along Euston Road. But rather than continue into Marylebone Road, I divert into Regent's Park. Here is another stark contrast – the noise and bustle, the jostling for space, the many languages on the pavements with the peace, quiet and calm of the park's paths. Dodging mobile-focussed pedestrians is replaced by fending off titbit demanding squirrels and the honking of horns with the calls of Canada Geese on the lake.

**Not everyone feels
the vibes on Lindisfarne's
North Shore, not everyone
is able to look beyond
immediate challenges**

As if they're not enough contrasts, the seasons remind me of more – an ever-changing canvas of colour and energy, the slowing pace of autumn and winter solace when Keats' 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' come to mind. On my way past the lake towards our offices in Baker Street, another contrast hits me – a gnarled and twisted tree, dark and leafless in winter, and watched over by a weeping willow in lush evergreen. The contrast was enough to spark off a parable.

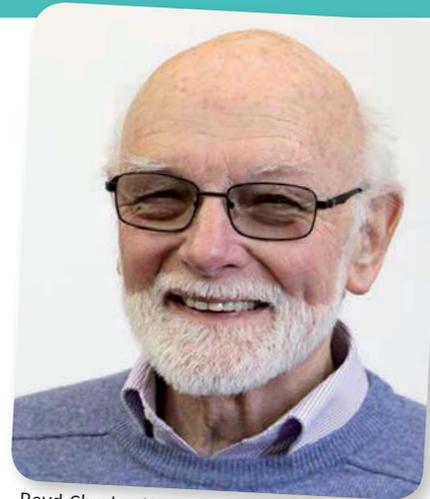


Photo: Clive Price

Revd Charles New is an MMHS resident and a member of our Board.

*Willow, are you weeping?
Is it for your neighbour;
twisted, turned, and warped
by unseen forces,
its once crowning glories
now in memory's keeping?*

*Soon season's cycling
will birth new life
despite this deformation,
and fresh leaves
on re-formed wood
will celebrate its growing.*

*Is this your autumn preaching;
a parable for passers-by
buffeted by life's caring,
God's image a distortion;
yet still the promise within,
their hope reforming?*

*Well, I take it so,
and am reminded
that it's not the cover
I should fix upon
but the spark within
that I and God both know.*

I don't think Keats has anything to worry about! I'm simply grateful for the juxtaposition of these two trees, reminding me to look for the promise that is in the autumn equinox, just passed, rather than regret the summer that has gone.

In much the same way that not everyone feels the vibes on Lindisfarne's North Shore, not everyone is able to look beyond immediate challenges. Would an encouraging word via phone call or email help someone we know to find hope in the autumn/winter contrasts? It's worth a try, don't you think? May we assist one another in finding those 'thin places' this season. ●

