



# ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

WINTER 2020

## MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR COMPUTER



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### **WE'RE LAUNCHING AN EXCITING NEW CREATIVE COLLABORATION WITH ABILITYNET!**

How do you make spaces between words? Tech support group AbilityNet faced that question in teaching basic computer skills at a care home in Scotland.

'The enquirer was a woman in her 80s,' said South West Scotland Co-ordinator Heather Sneddon. 'Her first question was just that. She'd never used a typewriter – let alone a computer.'

However, as soon as the woman received basic tuition – starting with the space bar – her attitude and approach changed. 'She started using Google Maps,' said Heather. 'She saw where she was born. By the end of the session she'd made friends with the technology.'

Making friends with technology is the aim of our new creative collaboration with AbilityNet. We've asked them to help MMHS residents make spaces between words – and much more.

We want all our householders to enjoy the benefits of computers and being online. As the world becomes increasingly 'paperless' – from banking to book buying – it's essential that we help all our residents to get to grips with technology.

AbilityNet provides free IT (information technology) support to older people and people with disabilities of any age. Their network of more than 300 disclosure-checked volunteers can help with:

- *setting up new equipment;*
- *fixing technical issues;*
- *staying connected to family;*
- *using online services.*

AbilityNet are making available to us those trained volunteers to help with most major computer systems, laptops,

**VICTORY LAPTOP:**  
Our attitude and approach change when we befriend the basics of technology

### ***By the end of the session she'd made friends with the technology***

tablet devices and smartphones. Support is available online and by phone, though home visits are suspended due to the Covid crisis. The website provides specialist advice services and free information resources.

'We show people everything from how to switch on an Apple computer to how to do email – and even how to host a Zoom meeting,' Heather explained. 'We cover the basics and promote accessibility.'

Calls for help can be sent via phone or email to their 'help desk'. A volunteer is assigned to your job. They have a ticketing system to track requests. Don't worry. You won't be overwhelmed with jargon. No one will try to sell you

## CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES

Here's how the MMHS office will serve you, over the festive season:

- **Up to 23rd Dec** – open normal hours
- **24th Dec** – open till 4pm
- **25th to 28th (inc)** – closed for a HAPPY CHRISTMAS!
- **29th, 30th and 31st** – emergency telephone service only
- **1st to 3rd** – closed for a HAPPY NEW YEAR!
- **4th** – open normal hours from 8.30am

**For other emergencies, phone 020 3848 6020 and speak to Refurbishment Manager John Bailey. For non-emergencies, please call back after Christmas. Also, check our website [www.mmhs.org.uk](http://www.mmhs.org.uk). May all your days be bright!**

Send us your news and views: [feedback@mmhs.org.uk](mailto:feedback@mmhs.org.uk)

## A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



Everybody needs hope. It is great when it's more than simply 'hoping for the best' – but a hope rooted in faith.

Hope is expressed in so many different ways. St Augustine wrote, 'Hope has two beautiful daughters – their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are'. Helen Keller wrote, 'Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible'.

Here's a familiar Bible verse – Jeremiah 29:11 – to encourage us no matter how rough our journey has been: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"*. Join me, as we step into the future, with renewed hope.

● **Mairi Johnstone** CEO

In the summer edition of *Roof 'n' Roots*, I wrote about love. Now I want to focus on hope! It feels timely. I've just caught the news that the UK is the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine.

Since last March, I think most of us will say we've been on a rocky journey, perhaps even to the point of despair.

## MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR COMPUTER

anything. 'We don't try to teach people everything about computers,' Heather pointed out. 'We look at what the person actually needs.'

That need is different from person to person. 'We look at what's suitable for the individual,' she said. 'In some cases it could be that the enquirer just needs a big button phone.' Many older people enjoy tablet PCs that allow them to 'swipe' a screen to find information. Some use such devices as a hearing aid by activating the 'speech to text' facility. 'There are all sorts of neat tricks,' said Heather.

The one thing AbilityNet cannot offer is 'rapid response'. As help is provided by a finite number of volunteers, response times are within five working days. 'It's not an emergency service,' Heather explained.

'There are various ways of contacting us. The main way is to phone. Another way is through the website – which is open all the time. You fill in a message form that's addressed the next working day. Some contact us through Facebook.'

What if you're already comfortable with technology? AbilityNet would like to hear from you, too. You could consider joining their volunteers – and help others to make spaces between the words. ●

### HOW TO RESPOND

- Fill in the request form at <https://abilitynet.org.uk/how-contact-us#Request-Help>
- Call AbilityNet on 0800 048 7642 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- Email AbilityNet at [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)
- If you'd like to volunteer, visit <https://abilitynet.org.uk/at-home/join-our-volunteers>

KEYS TO SUCCESS: There is a nationwide network of volunteers who are ready to help

## HOW TO PUSH THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

### CLIVE PRICE SPOKE TO BOB DAVIES ABOUT HIS COLLECTION OF LOCKDOWN ADVENTURES

Making masks from knicker elastic, telling Groucho Marx jokes, sharing 'worship workout' YouTube clips, cooking Bali-style on Zoom, trampolining for charity and recording a song a day are among the ways people have been coping with the Covid crisis.

Such pandemic adventures are revealed in a new A-Z called *Lockdown: Lexicon & Legacy*. More than 400 copies have already been sold by publisher Revd Robert Davies, an MMHS resident. And he's considering a reprint.

Bob had already written an A-Z of football as fanzine articles for his favourite club Wrexham. 'I always thought I'd love to do an A-Z of something else,' he said. 'I got this inspiration – why not about lockdown?'

He knew many people with stories. 'It came together in a haphazard way,' Bob confessed. 'I didn't make a list. I kept thinking of people – and pestering them with emails!'

Soon his email inbox was heaving with replies. 'Most were quick to respond – and it took off,' he explained. Contributions came from most of those contacted. He used them all.

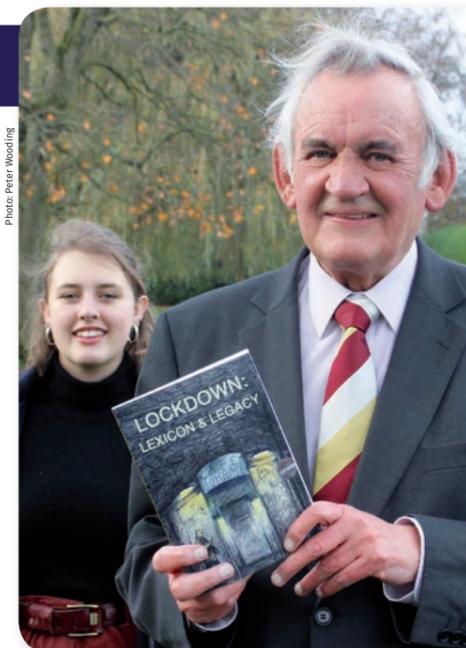
Some folk wrote prayers, others stories – such as church bells silenced for the first time since World War II. There were ripping yarns like a father creating 'cuddlesticks' with gloves mounted on long poles. There was a simple gift of flowers for a couple who felt alone.

Bob's granddaughter Emily created the cover, son Peter wrote the foreword, son Martin and grandson Leo both contributed to the book. Although Bob saw it as an A-Z of lockdown, a friend told him he had made a document of our time.

Feedback has been overwhelming. 'I'm getting letters, cards and emails,' he said. Success has come without any major advertising. Bob simply told friends, colleagues and churches.

It's just the latest of Bob's projects.

### ***A friend told him he had made a document of our time***



LOCKDOWN LITURGY: Robert and granddaughter Emily proudly display a copy of his book

He has no history in mainstream book industry, yet runs his own enterprise – Church In The Market Place Publications – as an extension of his pastoral work. He has published 200 titles over 30 years.

Bob never charges a fee. He's content to cover costs. He encourages authors to make a profit through sales. Proceeds from the lockdown book are going to the

## TELL US YOUR STORY!

Feel far from your family – but opening new channels to connect? Concerned about mental health – but finding firmer foundations? Shaken by lockdown – but someone helps you stand?

Let us know how you've been coping with the pandemic. Email: [feedback@mmhs.org.uk](mailto:feedback@mmhs.org.uk). You can also obtain a copy of Bob's book at a special price for MMHS residents of £9 (inc P&P)! Email: [robertdavies123@btinternet.com](mailto:robertdavies123@btinternet.com)

Red Cross, Emmaus Homelessness Charity and Gravelhole Methodist Community Shop.

North Wales born and bred, Bob felt drawn to Methodist ministry at an early age: 'I was influenced by parents, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders and ministers'. He attended Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, at age 20 in the early 60s.

Ordained at 26, Bob's Circuit ministry included 17 years in Buxton where the publishing venture started and was named after the main church in the Market Place. He was a prison chaplain for many years. On retirement, he sought the Society's assistance for a home, and was shown a property in Oldham in 2009.

### ***I made a list. Straightaway MMHS said, "We're going to do a lot more than that"***

'The house needed a lot doing to it,' Bob laughed. 'I made a list. Straightaway MMHS said, "We're going to do a lot more than that"...the Society were excellent.'

Bob keeps busy as a supernumerary in the Shaw and Royton Circuit. His next publishing assignment is a study of the Gregory's – a family that's produced several generations of Methodist ministers.

The irony is that Bob's football A-Z still hasn't become a book. He's busy helping others tell their stories. 'It's something that absorbs me,' said Bob. ●

## A GOOD DEED FOR HOMES IN NEED

Your stairwell would shine with a lick of paint – but it's a stepladder too far? Your lounge would light up with a spot of emulsion – but it's driving you up the wall?

Here at MMHS we've launched a unique £100,000 fund to help our more vulnerable residents enhance their home with *Internal Decorating Grants*. This funding is for householders who may not be able to maintain their property to a decent standard without friends, family or finance companies helping out.

The *Internal Decorating Grant* is above and beyond a landlord's duty, and is different from the external decorating programme which is already the Society's responsibility. But we recognise that some of our residents may not be able to keep up with the deluge of decorating needs at home.

If you feel you fall into this category and

wish to take advantage of this scheme, please complete an application form which you can find on the MMHS website. If you are unable to access the MMHS website, please phone **020 3848 6020** option 1 and

we will send you a form in the post. The intention is to carry out these decorations through 2021. This is a 'first-come first-served' basis. The grants will end once all the year's allocation is spent. ●



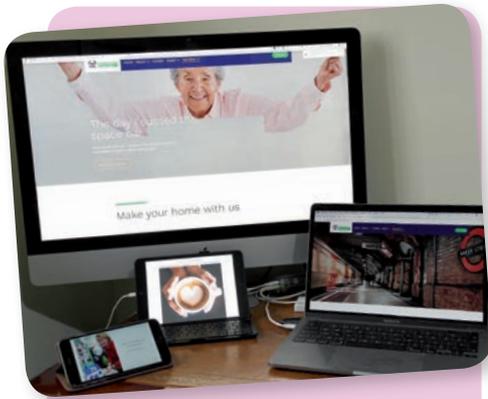
### MMHS SHARES CHRISTMAS HOPE

For the first time, the Methodist Church has joined with the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society and other charities to share Christmas hope through people's pandemic experiences.

Among the 'heroes' of the #GodIsWithUs campaign is our own Meryl Bedford. An MMHS resident, Beryl lost her husband Derek who died this year in a care home – but she found peace in her faith. Former MMHS board member and now President of the Methodist Conference Revd Richard Teal has endorsed #GodIsWithUs.

Alongside the stories of hope, a free CD has been produced to help people join in the campaign during Advent and Christmas. The Methodist Church has donated a copy for each MMHS resident – and this will be winging its way to you. For more about #GodIsWithUs, visit <https://findingourhope.co.uk> ●





## OUR NEW WEBSITE IS A WINNER!

Residents are impressed with the new MMHS website launched in time for Christmas. They've already been sending us positive feedback by phone and email.

The site reflects the latest trend in modular design. That means we can reshape it a little if we want a change.

For the first time, the site offers two separate streams – one offering residents all the information they need – and another telling guests about our work. Past issues of *Roof n Roots* and prayer resources remain available for download.

The main focus has been to make everything simple and easy to use, with well formed, readable letters. Latest technology helps the site load quickly on people's screens.

Content is framed with high contrast colours to help visually impaired visitors. For those using screen readers, the site will read out text and links, and describe images. We have reduced the number of clicks for visitors.

We are grateful to all the design houses who have brought us this far, taking us to new levels each time, including – Pedalo, Brace Design – and now Specky Media, who constructed this new build with our Operations Team.

### LET US KNOW

- Tell us what you think of our new website
- Share your ideas for content
- Please make sure you've given us your current preferred email address. Send your name and postal address to [data@mmhs.org.uk](mailto:data@mmhs.org.uk) to confirm this.

# HOME TRUTHS

## REFLECTION BY REVD RICHARD TEAL

Coronavirus locked us down – but computers set us free. That's been my experience during this historic year of the Methodist Church's first 'pandemic presidency'.

It started, as every presidency does, with the Methodist Conference in June. That event usually sees the President greeting hundreds of people to enjoy a time of worship together.

Lockdown led to the Vice President and I meeting at Cliff College for a virtual conference among a handful of people. Instead of speaking to a packed hall, I delivered my presidential address to a camera lens.

That's how technology transforms us. I preached to a green light – but our event was seen by more than 10,000 people across the globe. The world literally became our parish.

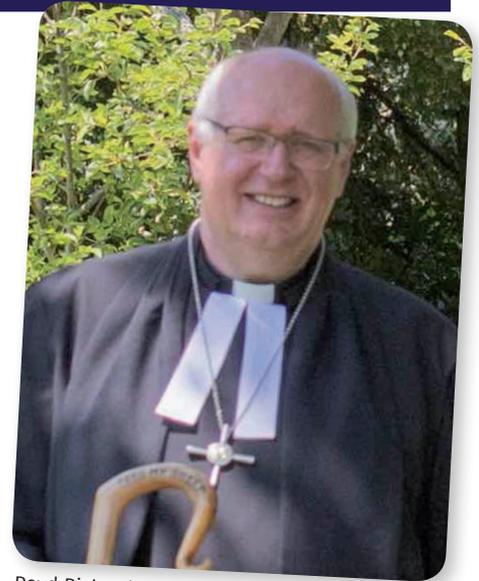
***I preached to a green light – but our event was seen by more than 10,000 people across the globe***

One Sunday, I preached at five churches at the same time. I'm encountering far more people in this way. Churches phone me, asking, 'Can you send us a recorded sermon, Richard?' So I send a talk to use on Zoom or YouTube.

On another day, I met with the Vice President and the Methodist Church media team to talk about a weekly lunchtime programme. Then I went to a 'Positively Rural' webinar, followed by a 'four nations' meeting with other church leaders about Brexit.

Among a President's duties is to go around the districts. I wondered how that could work? So I asked to meet small groups via Zoom. Suddenly, I found real relationships emerging – in a way that wouldn't have happened before.

I have talked to presbyters, deacons and lay workers about working in isolated communities that have become even more cut off because of Covid. I've met



Revd Richard Teal is a former Board member of MMHS and now President of the Methodist Conference. You can read his story in the Winter 2019 edition of *Roof 'n' Roots*.

with farmers and other people from the agricultural community. Those have been stunning online meetings.

One young farmer said, 'This is the first time I've felt the Methodist Church has begun to understand my life as a farmer'. Amid lockdown and restrictions, the quantity and quality of encounters have been enhanced by technology.

Past Presidents told me, 'You will feel the power of prayer from Methodist people as you travel round'. I wondered how that could happen through Zoom? But it does.

You might not be able to go far. You may not be able to leave your home. But the power of prayer is intangible. You can experience that yourself.

***We're all struggling. But we have a hopeful future***

Some of you have embraced computers. Others may be afraid. I would say, give it a try. Don't be frightened. I'm not a 'techie'. I've had to learn. There's help around. And the technology is getting cheaper.

We're all struggling. But we have a hopeful future. It will be different from what we've known in the past. Let's remember John Wesley's last words – 'The best of all, God is with us'. ●

