

in touch

Spring 2019



News and Stories from across the Methodist Churches in Scotland

ARTISTIC WORSHIP

In the early autumn of 2016 the members of Stirling Methodist Church were challenged to produce a series of pictures and poems that depicted the story of the birth of Jesus. The themes ranged from the Annunciation to the Slaughter of the Innocents. In all 9 pictures were produced each accompanied by their own poem.

These were displayed one Saturday during Advent in the Church, when the public were invited in to view. Although the number of members of the public who accepted the invitation to 'come and see' were very few, the artists and poets, with other members of the Church, had an enjoyable occasion.

All the works were used a couple of weeks later in a meditative service.

The challenge brought to light a whole range of talents in the Church. It allowed us to express our faith in new ways and make our own unique contribution to the worship of the Church.

In 2017 the whole exhibition was displayed at a local preachers meeting in the Grahamston Church and later at Armadale.

In 2018 the collection was used again in worship at Stirling. This time with only a portion being displayed on any one Sunday and following the Christmas Story episode at a time. The Flight to Egypt and Slaughter of the Innocents being used post Christmas. It was also used, one Friday, in an evening of reflections upon Advent.

Members of the Church thought that it was well worth the effort and time.





It's great to welcome this new and fresh beginning for our Scottish Methodist newsletter. This is *In Touch* reborn. Not only will it be mostly available as an online publication – printed copies can be available for those who need them – but it is, as you can see, an all-colour production.

I am particularly grateful to the Rev. Chris Jackson who, before he entered the ministry, had experience of both publishing and IT – skills which he brings to what you are now reading. I hope you will support him in this by contributing and suggesting material for future editions.

The title *In Touch* reminds us that as God's people we are not in this business of living out the Christian faith on our own. One of the marks of Methodism is a sense of fellowship perhaps best illustrated by the weekly Class Meetings which Wesley expected his followers to attend so that they could encourage one another in their discipleship. I hope that the stories you read here will encourage and inspire you as you see what is happening across Scotland in our Churches and Circuits. Some of them, perhaps, will be about things that you might want to try in your own area or church.

As most of you will know, I come to the end on my time as Chair of the two Scottish Districts – Shetland and Scotland – this summer. Having begun my ministry in Lanarkshire in the old Motherwell and Wishaw Circuit, it has been a privilege to serve in Scotland again as I come to the end of my active ministry. I know that everyone says this, but the thirty-eight years in between have flown by. I am grateful for those faithful people whom I have met along the way including those in my first appointment who encouraged me as I started out: some of whom I am delighted to meet again whenever I preach in Netherton or New Stevenston; some no longer with us but whom I remember with affection and gratitude.

I am pleased that, after a time 'down south' – mostly to give my successor some space to feel settled in his new appointment – that I will be living in Scotland, a place and a people that have always been dear to my heart; especially dear is that small band of people known as 'Methodists'. Methodism has always been a small presence here but has been served by many faithful people since John Wesley first crossed the border in 1751. You are part of that bright succession. 'Thank you'.

As we look to the future, I hope that you will give Mark Slaney, presently the Superintendent of the Preston Ribble Circuit, not only a warm welcome but encouragement and inspiration as he takes up his appointment as Chair of the two Districts.

Our paths may cross before I leave but I would love to see you at my farewell service and 'bun fight' at Perth Methodist Church on Saturday May 11th from 2p.m., following the Synod.

Every blessing and kindest regards,

David



PLOUGH SUNDAY

Plough Sunday, or the blessing of the plough, was held for centuries early in the Spring as soon as the soil was ready for ploughing and sowing. It fell out of use as the industrial revolution began to take hold and many churches became town or city based.



*We pray
and ask God's
blessing upon all
agricultural
workers*

The tradition of Plough Sunday is slowly being revived and 2019 will be the fourth year that it has been celebrated in the Stirling Church.

massive international agribusiness take over land to produce crops that will be shipped to the rich developed nations depriving the people evicted of food and income. We all depend upon farmers for our food yet we rarely give them much notice except at Harvest. Plough Sunday is a time to recognise the hard work they have to do and

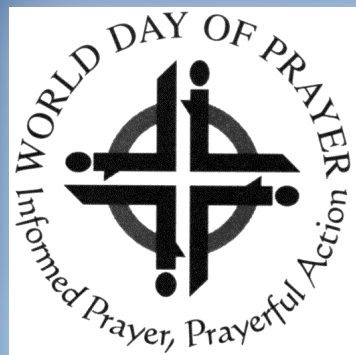
It is a service when we remember those who work on the land and ask God's blessing upon them. We have modified the service somewhat, we are not able to get a modern plough into the Church, and it would block the street outside. Members of the Church bring their gardening tools, seeds and soil to church for a blessing. Farm tractors and ploughs have been represented by toys.



Whilst we pray and ask God's blessing upon all agricultural workers in the United Kingdom we never forget the many millions of people who struggle to tend the land and produce crops for themselves and their communities. In the UK many farmers and agricultural workers struggle with loneliness and isolation. They live in communities which lack many of the facilities we take for granted. Overseas small scale farmers face forcible eviction as

upon which we depend and we ask God's blessing upon them.

We also pray that they receive a fair reward for all their work.



THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER is celebrated with an annual service on the first Friday in March. It's a global ecumenical women-led movement for justice and peace. It never ceases to amaze me how over 100 countries and one million people unite in prayer and action every year to listen and learn something new with our sisters. WDP has crossed generations raising awareness on issues that are relevant for our time.



In 2019 the message was written by Christian women of Slovenia and called *'Come – everything is ready!'.* At the core of the theme, an invitation – Come. And to enable the response – Everything is ready. Come to praise, thank and proclaim the kingdom of love. The invitation was grounded in the parable that Jesus told about a great dinner which was attended by the ones called off the streets, as the ones invited excused themselves. The community formed around the table was not enough to fill the house – there was still room for more. We were asked to consider who are missing from the table in our community?



I'm still involved after 11 years as Scottish National Committee, in Schoenstatt; to encourage as working on the preparation bible studies and meetings are already preparing our service Zimbabwe.

The International Committee reported to you that Scotland meeting in 2022. The National Northern Ireland is the writing successful and so from 5th-12th International Meeting in the John Halls, Edinburgh. Over 200 women a week. We will need a lot of help and denominations in Scotland. Details will follow later. However, we would welcome, as soon as possible, names and addresses of anyone who might be able to provide sponsorship or any trust that might be able to help financially. We hope to make this an event for all of Scotland! Please keep us all in your prayers.

Another movement we have supported during the year is **THURSDAYS IN BLACK**. This is the Churches' Advocacy against sexual, gender-based violence which is frequently hidden; victims are often silent, fearing stigma and further violence. We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence to ensure that women and men, boys and girls, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work and streets – in all places in our societies. This is why we are encouraged to wear black on Thursdays.

I would remind you that the World Day of Prayer is not one day only for women, but for everyone who cares about our world and those who live in it. Sometimes we see that it has been practised as a celebration of one day, and has not seeped into daily life. Celebration is a way of thanking God for what has been done in the past year and moving forward to the next year of action.

For details of services in your area, and further information and resources, please visit the WDP Scottish website: www.wdpScotland.org.uk

Mary Kidd

your Methodist representative on the Nationally, there is an overnight retreat, the building of relationships, as well for the year. Regionally, we share held to begin preparations. We are for 2020, written by women of

meets every 5 years and last year I had put in a bid to host the next Committee of England, Wales and country that year. Our bid was June 2022 we are hosting the WDP McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock from about 100 countries will meet for support from Methodists and the other

WHERE 2 OR 3 ARE GATHERED...

(Getting excited about Small Groups)

When it's done well, I find Sunday church worship moving and inspiring. I also love the thrill of the big gathering when thousands of Christian voices combine in praising God. But the gatherings that have meant most to me in forming and reforming and encouraging my Christian discipleship have been the small groups I've belonged to. It's also in small groups that I've seen people's faith deepen, confidence grow and delight in the scriptures flourish. So what's NOT to get excited about in small groups?

John Wesley saw the value and potential of small groups and in fact our Methodist membership was based on membership of the small group (the Class Meeting). Somewhere along the way we forgot how important the small group meeting is. So now rediscovering the potential of small groups is, in my view, very exciting indeed!

A new Methodist publication, "Talking of God Together", is an excellent resource for getting started with a new group. So clearly I'm not the only one who sees the potential of small groups.

Often though people worry about how to get a small

group started and whether enough people would be interested. But my proposal is that we start to take seriously what Jesus said.

"John Wesley saw the value and potential of small groups"

"And I tell you more: whenever two of you agree on earth about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them."

All it takes is two or three people. I've seen it happen. Two people prayed (about who to invite to a small group). They were led to invite people on the fringes of church life and people who were 'new' as well as one or two non-church friends. They made a list. They sent out attractive invitation cards as well as inviting each one personally. A group formed and people grew in faith, in confidence as Christians, in knowledge and understanding of the scriptures and in ability to share their faith with others. Some of the group (two or three) also went on to form a new group and so growth continued. And that's why I'm excited about small groups. And that's why I'm convinced of the importance of 'two or three'.

So if you and a friend are wondering whether you could start a small group, try praying (as above). You might be amazed at how God will respond!

KEITH PEARCE

And if you could do with a bit of extra support, you're welcome to get in touch with me, Keith Pearce (0131 663 2416 or e-mail pearce490@btinternet.com) or Nik Wooller (01250 870899) and we'd be delighted to hear from you.

For where
two or three
are gathered in
my name,
there am I
among them.
Matthew 18:20

Geoffrey Baines is an associate chaplain at Edinburgh University. Geoffrey seeks to come alongside staff and students alike in navigating both the joys and anxieties that accompany discerning one's vocation. From his fascination with mindful doodling to his passion for what he calls *Dream-Whispering*, Geoffrey brings to his work deep insight and an infectious energy, both of which he shares in this interview with Kayla Robbins of Crux

[Crux is the online platform of the New College Missionary Society, and this article has been adapted and reproduced with their permission]

Crux: *When was the first time you felt called to become a chaplain?*

Geoffrey: That will have happened back in 2005/2006. That was a time in my involvement with the Methodist Church in which I was looking to the future - particularly how I could continue to broaden the work I'd been developing with people on a one to one basis, helping them to identify talents and abilities. Eventually, one of the best opportunities to present itself was an appointment here in Edinburgh, which enabled me on one hand to assist Methodist churches in discerning their futures, and on the other hand, to take up the position as an honorary chaplain here. But due to all my time in the Methodist church and my growing interest in the notion of the future, I was very open to taking on board what was a great challenge in discovering what becoming involved in the life of the chaplaincy would look like.

Crux: *Thanks for sharing! Given that interest in helping people discern their gifts or skills and looking forward to the future, was there anything about working at a university in particular that appealed to you?*

Geoffrey: Very much so. I was an honorary chaplain for ten years, I've been an associate chaplain for a couple of years now. But here at Edinburgh University there's a great encouragement for all of us chaplains to pursue what we find fascinating and energising, given that it falls within the overall hopes and aims and goals of the chaplaincy as a whole. Helping students and staff alike discover their talents and abilities is very much at the heart of what I've been able to pursue within the life of the chaplaincy, which to me has been wonderful.

Crux: *What is the essence of what you would call 'dream whispering'?*

Geoffrey: Whispering comes from the fact that our lives are saying something to us all the time. I call them whispers because we can miss them, and I see it as my goal to amplify them. These whispers are to do with our talents and abilities - especially with the passions and dreams we may have (the things that most energise us, that is) and our life story being what are our experiences through life. I like to think that nothing in our life is wasted. That's what dream whispering is really all about. It's a gift. To me, one of the real gifts that the chaplaincy makes available to people is the ability to slow down and notice the things one might otherwise walk past without even knowing it. If you asked most people what their morning routine was when they awoke this morning, the vast majority would not say that they found time to focus on what they wanted their lives to be about today. Most likely, they woke up and it was quickly into something else. In terms of what dream whispering is about, I see it sometimes as being an interruption into someone's busy routine.

Crux: *So this gift that you seek to give people in allowing them to clear the noise and really listen - to what extent would you understand this as a 'mission' of sorts? Would you use that word?*



Geoffrey: In many ways, what I probably think of as being mission is not an orthodox way of thinking about it. To me, mission is about becoming who we truly are - something that has to do with the discovery of the gifts God has given us that inform who we are. The psalmist proclaims in Psalm 139 about how wonderfully and how marvelously we were created to be. I see dream whispering as learning what that means and looks like in one's own individual context. Additionally, I would say that the notion of being part of the body of Christ is crucially important. If you look at what Paul has to say in his first letter to the Corinthians, he makes it very clear that everyone has something to contribute, to fulfill, and to participate in as a member of the body of Christ in the world today. Many years ago, I would help Christians identify their spiritual gifts, but I now believe identifying how our talents are expressed is a much more detailed way of understanding what we should be doing. It is also something I do with anyone and everyone, not only Christians.

Crux: *What's a good starting point for those looking to explore and discern their spiritual giftings? Prayer? A Buzzfeed quiz? Where does one begin?*

Geoffrey: I think it all begins with what I call 'a journey of conversations.' In helping someone to initiate their dream whispering journey, I'd have a first conversation with them in order to determine whether this is something that will touch on a need they feel they have. This feeling of need can oftentimes be very critical to the whole process, because everything becomes sharper and brighter and more sensitive. Between that initial point and the beginning of the journey itself, there is also a crucial process of identification that allows that person to begin thinking about who and where they are - to slow down. There's a playful exercise I often recommend which involves taking a slow walk. Walk for twenty minutes at half your usual pace and notice everything that you like and that gives you joy. A twenty-minute walk will hold thousands of things! But the goal is to simply name one hundred. The idea behind the walk is to take it for its own sake, rather than to get through the exercise or to arrive at a certain destination. It's to notice what's on the way. And it's interesting that the word 'respect' means to give something another look; not merely to rush past, but to turn back. Re-spect. So if it's a person, you don't merely see them and walk on, but you turn back and notice what about that person is special. That's respect.

Crux: *I love that! I never would've thought to break apart the word like that.*

Geoffrey: Yes, again it's something we easily miss because we use words so quickly, but to slow down - to start noticing words and where they come from - that is at the heart of what I want to share with people. Another important thing I often encourage people to do is to identify one's values then to write them down. The importance and significance of journaling has grown clearer to me over time; our thoughts can often take on an almost wispy quality, but the act of journaling allows us to capture them, remember them, and continually build upon them and open them up. That to me is very significant. But regarding discernment of gifts, however, another thing I advise people to do is to take notice of energy. Passions and dreams have energy to them, and so I tell people to acknowledge the things that are especially energising to them; write those down. Also take note of the things that very much de-energise; write those down too. Also, what are one's skills and abilities? What do you think they are? Name them, write them down. These lists are your 'before picture.' They will essentially contribute to two questions: 'Who am I?' and 'What is my contribution?' That instantly makes the question not only about oneself, but it's about looking to others.

Crux: *There is such a vitality and depth that this imbues into Christ's exhortation to take up one's cross and follow, as well as into what that path may look like for individual believers. What are you most looking forward to in the present? What is currently making you most excited about the future?*

Geoffrey: There are several things I'm working on. I created a colouring book that's come out of my doodling challenge which is about mindful colouring. There are forty-five images in the book which are all reflections that begin with colouring, and there's an online guide accompanying each doodle, illuminating some of my own thoughts regarding each of the images and texts. I can update this as time goes on. I'm also working on "mindful doodling" at the moment and making those available within the University through the Chaplaincy. I think that the idea of illustrating and drawing out what is hidden in someone in this way is a beautiful thing. What better way to remember how those journeys have unfolded and the reflections we have made along the way?

To read the complete interview go to - www.newcollegemissions.co.uk/blog/2018/11/19/geoffrey-baines-1

WALKING BACKWARDS THROUGH SCOTLAND'S HISTORY



Gathered in the sacristy of St. Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow, a group of people, examined the 5 bible texts in the floor with interest. Each text mentioned walking, highly appropriate as the ten folk were about to set off on pilgrimage, to Whithorn in Galloway. St. Mungo, also known as St. Kentigern, is recognised as the founder of Glasgow around 558AD, before his missionary zeal took him into Cumbria, before returning to Glasgow later in life and dying there around 613 AD. The pilgrimage set out to link Glasgow with the earlier settlement of Whithorn and the pilgrimage sites associated with St. Ninian's arrival there in 397AD. The adventure was supported by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) to further pilgrimage as a means of grace and to offer experience to people who hope to find ways to incorporate pilgrimage into their lives.

Jill and Andrew Baker had devised the route, and they led the pilgrims – physically and spiritually – throughout the week. Each morning we read of the pilgrim people in the book of Exodus, and around midday stopped to reflect from Luke, picking up on the strong sense of travel in that gospel. Our evening reflections included words from Psalm 104 as we rejoiced in a week of open-air living, feeling connected to all of God's creation travelling through cities, along coasts, across rolling hills and into villages.

One of the aims had been to connect with contemporary Methodism in Scotland. Those who gathered at Andrew and Jill's manse in Glasgow on Sunday night were able to share in conversation with Gary Williams, about how Methodism works (or doesn't work) north of the border. Monday's walking ended at Paisley Central Hall, one of the iconic buildings of the 19th Century, where a wonderful tea was provided to refresh thirsty, weary walkers.

After time in Paisley Abbey on Tuesday morning, the pilgrims travelled by train to Troon and walked the coastal path to Ayr – delighted with the sight of a sea otter running across the beach as they paused for Bible reflection on the way. The Methodist Church in Ayr closed in 1929, but a faithful group of Methodists who now worship in other denominations have met together every quarter for the past 30 years for fellowship. The pilgrims enjoyed an evening with members of this group in the home of Sheila and Nazim Merchant, and were additionally blessed by the company of Roger and Marion Walton, also in Scotland at that time.

A train journey down to Stranraer launched us into Wednesday, which proved a long walking day through the beautiful, varied, Galloway landscape to Glenluce, pausing to sing and pray at the ruined Abbey just before arriving in the village. Here we were fed and watered by Rev. Clare Burl, supernumerary Methodist minister now working with the Church of Scotland in Stranraer. Clare and her friends had also offered bed & breakfast, for which we were most grateful.

Some stunning coastal walking on Thursday, took us onto the Isle of Whithorn to explore Ninian's chapel and the landing bay where pilgrims arrived to honour Ninian, before walking several miles to his burial site in Whithorn. That was our destination on Friday – we spent the morning in Whithorn, site of "Candida Casa", the 4th Century monastery and missionary training ground established by Ninian, so named for its shining white walls.



Whithorn now appears to be a sleepy, forgotten town, but, as we discovered, there is more there than meets the eye. The museum explained the history and we were delighted to attend the "Ninian Moment" at noon in the Roman Catholic church and meet the "living stones" of the area. This short act of worship is held daily throughout the summer and we were warmly welcomed as "real" pilgrims!

Friday afternoon offered the "sacred centre" of the pilgrimage – time on the beach in and around Ninian's Cave. The sea was sparkling, the huge variety of stones and pebbles on the beach all seemed to have their own stories to tell, the shadows of the cave seemed alive with the whispers of centuries of prayer. We shared together in our own prayers and hymns, in reflecting on the long chain of witness which linked us to Moses and Elijah and their cave experiences, to Jesus and Paul and their encounters on beaches, and to Ninian who is believed to have used the cave to pray. We remembered other links in that chain of witness – individuals whom we have loved and see no more – we laughed and lamented together.

"Learning to walk together" is perhaps the simplest definition of pilgrimage and one to which we aspired during the week. Soon this handful of people became a formational, caring, supportive band. There is much wisdom within the pilgrim ethos which can speak to our church life today – as it has done for centuries. We discovered such timeless spirituality in the prayers and blessings from Donald Smith's very helpful "Pilgrim Guide to Scotland" along our way; each day began with these evocative words:

*Following the rivers, walking ancient paths,
Kentigern our guide, Ninian our destination,
glimmer of hidden light on sacred ground.
May peace be in our steps, meditation in our rest
as all creation breathes the mystery.*

Jill Baker





A group from the North of Scotland Mission Circuit recently attended a Take Time training day at the Aberdeen Church. Run by Clive McKie and Elizabeth Smith, Take Time is a series of relaxing guided meditations based on the stories of Jesus and the tradition of St Ignatius.

If you would like to know more, please check out the link below.

www.taketime.org.uk

STOP CLIMATE CHAOS

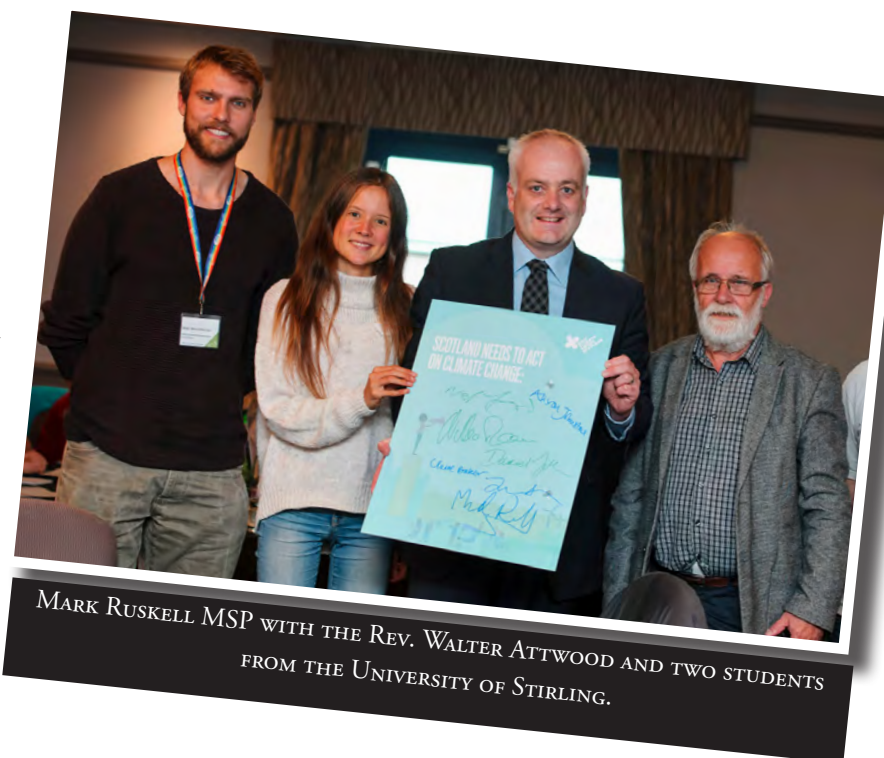
The Rev. Walter Attwood, Supernumerary Minister, Forth Valley Circuit joined with many others from all walks of life and all over Scotland on Wednesday 19th. September to lobby the Scottish Parliament on their proposed Climate Change Bill.

The lobby, organized by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS), was to encourage MSPs to strengthen the bill and set more ambitious emission targets for the future, reducing to net zero by 2050, at the very latest.

The lobby was calling for policies to be included to tackle the worst polluting areas of life, transport, agriculture and improving the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes.

The Rev. Attwood said after the lobby;

"It was good to meet with some of our MSPs and discuss this important bill with them. Global warming and climate change is the greatest threat facing the human race, and indeed all of creation. If we are to keep below the 1.5 degree Celsius increase in global warming, as agreed in Paris in 2015, then the proposed bill needs to be far more ambitious than has been proposed. As a pensioner with children and grandchildren I recognize that the latter years of their lives will be lived out in far more volatile and harsh climate than currently exists. It is only by taking bold, strong and urgent action now on climate change that we will be able to make their lives a little more bearable. I believe the net zero emissions target should be 2040"



MARK RUSKELL MSP WITH THE REV. WALTER ATTWOOD AND TWO STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING.

Nik Wooler and the Search for *Missing Methodists*

It may sound like the title of the next *Indiana Jones* film, however, it is not too far from the truth. The Rev Nik Wooler has been brought up to Scotland to engage with those people that are living in areas where there may be no obvious and physical contact with a Methodist Church.

The Spring edition of the Connexion Magazine describes it as...

"The massive challenge of creating new Christian communities across an area of 30,000 square miles"

It is a big challenge, but one that Nik is gladly picking up. But it is not something that Nik can do alone. There are many plans being put into place for meeting people at such diverse places as Highland Games and Farmers Markets to creating a strong online presence. All are designed to encourage people to engage with God through the vehicle of the Methodist Church. Visit the web site (details at the bottom of the page), chat with Nik, offer to help, become a "champion" in your area for this important work, and above all, pray for this important work, for ideas and inspirations, and for Nik as she balances the dual roles of this pioneering work and her role as a circuit minister with the congregations at Perth & Blairgowrie.

www.scottishmethodistsonline.com

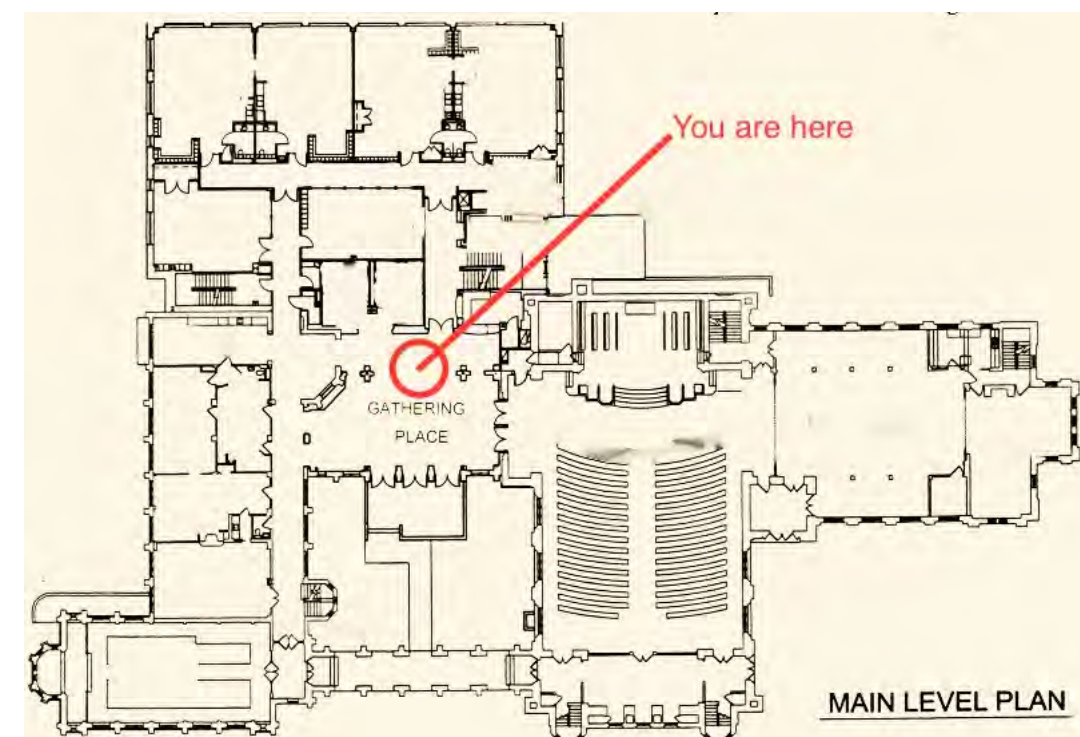


IMAGE FROM THE HOME PAGE OF SCOTTISH METHODISTS ONLINE

WELCOME
SERVICE

for the new
District Chair

*Rev Mark
Slaney*



This autumn we welcome *Rev Mark Slaney* as Chair of the Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland. Please join us for a service of welcome, followed by tea and cake.

Saturday 31st August 2.30pm

Perth Methodist Church

Scott Street PH2 8JN

Note from the Editor

I would love to include stories and articles from across the Scotland District. Please email articles and photos to:

chris.jackson7@gmail.com

Many Blessings

Chris