



## West Bergholt Methodist Church

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# THE LINK

SEPTEMBER 2019

### SUNDAY SERVICES

**Please note** that we are no longer holding Sunday morning services in our Chapel. Transport will be arranged to a service at Mile End Methodist Church, leaving the village at 10.00am for the 10.30am service. Please contact Judith, 01206 241969, or Andrew, 01206 242511, if you would like a lift.

**WORSHIP at Mile End at 10-30 am** will be led by  
Sept 1st Rev Ken Chalmers with communion  
Sept 8th Mrs Rachel Allen  
Sept 15th Rev Ken Chalmers  
Sept 22nd Mr Brian Clow  
Sept 29th Rev Sue King-Harvest Festival

### OTHER MEETINGS

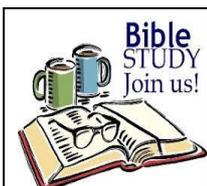
*Please feel free to join us at any of these – you will be made most welcome...*

Please join us for our monthly **mid week informal worship** activity in our hall on the first Wednesday of the month at 11.00am. The next such event will be on **Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup>** led by Rev Ken Chalmers  
All are welcome.

The next **COFFEE MORNING** will be on  
Weds. 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 10 - 11.30am  
**BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU**  
*Coffee or Tea and Biscuits - 50p*  
Gifts for Cake and General Stalls  
will be appreciated.



**Books and Greetings Cards will be on sale**  
Thank you for your support. Results – July £33-10,  
August £38-30.



**Bible  
STUDY**  
Join us!

Our Bible Study Book Club starts again in **September** and meets every third Wednesday, next meeting **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September at 10.45am** at Sylvia & Andrew's home, 76 Mumford Road  
All are welcome.

### FELLOWSHIP



We start again in September and our meeting will be in the Hall at 2.30pm  
**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September**  
The speaker will be Mrs Susan Windscheffel on her trip to Cuba.

### QUIZ NIGHT SATURDAY 21<sup>st</sup> September at 7pm IN THE HALL

TABLES OF FOUR at £20 - Light Refreshments will be served. You are welcome to bring your own nibbles and soft drinks (sorry no alcohol allowed). Book your table by contacting JUDITH (01206 241969)

### SO WHAT'S THE STORY

*The Revd Barbara Glasson was inducted as President at the Methodist Conference in Birmingham, on Saturday 29 June 2019. Barbara's ministry has worked with the Bread Church working with diverse people in Liverpool, Touchstone, a Methodist interfaith project in Bradford, and with people who have experienced abuse following the Past Cases Review. There follows extracts from her presidential address.*

....Chair, John Taylor alone knows why I was lobbed into the centre of Liverpool to make bread, but in this unlikely venture I began to see the fractured and broken world that lay below the surface of people's lives. I began to hear stories that did not yet have a polished narrative or a triumphant conclusion. I met troubling and confusing people and there we sifted through the spoil heaps of bewildering pain. I heard coming out stories of transformation, where the 'Conversation on marriage and relationships' turned into people with faces and 'issues' were enlivened. I heard from people who had attempted suicide because the church told them they could not be who God had made them. I heard the unbearable stories of abuse and degradation and loss and brokenness. I heard what it was like to live in a wheelie bin because that was safer than the streets. I heard of abuse in churches, by churches, in families and by families. And I met Donald Eadie, and through him the PH7 group grappling not only with disability but with being an uncomfortable presence in the church.

I heard survivor voices, vulnerable stories, coming out narratives, from people who had never been listened to by anyone much, least of all the church. As we kneaded and shaped and baked and ate bread, the stories cracked open on the flour-covered communion table of our community, messy, incomplete and fragmented, from the silent, the silenced and the unheard. In the untold, untellable truth of our inhumanity and our carelessness with each other, and in all this confusion and mess, we uncovered small surprising things, some essential, precious, lovely pearls that bore our true name, our glorious fragile strength.

And these people taught me in my heart what earlier had taught my head that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus - even though our inhumanity to each other can certainly get close to doing so. These people are gifted with a deeper knowledge; their bodies, their unhealed wounds, their multiplicity of grief, are the calligraphy of a counter-narrative, the discourse of vulnerability. They live litanies of disappointment and embody unsettling stories of brokenness. Yet, mysteriously from this contradictory space also emerges the holy belly-laugh of liberation.

So I want to thank you for your vulnerability and wisdom, all you incomplete, grieving, troubling friends,.... too many of you to name and some of you with unknown names, some of you here and others in heaven.... for showing me who you are through your broken vulnerability, your glorious, fragile strength that shattering glimpse of holiness.

But of course, this is still not the end of the story, because God continues to tap us on the shoulder and call us to give account of what is going on in the world. Our question, 'So what's the story ...?' can have a hand-on-hip accusatory air to it. It is not sufficient for the church to go about telling good news stories, nor even good enough that we are contrite and apologetic for the things we did badly wrong, either to nations or individuals. We are called to give account for what is happening around us in the world. We cannot be present to the struggles of the world around us and just offer tasteless, pappy marrows: we need to offer proper food. Something that's going to make a difference, something that offers nutrition and flavour, energy and life. We need to give account of what good can come from following Jesus.....

We may think that humanitarian and environmental disasters are a million miles away, but what these and many other humanitarian crises show us is what happens when we other the other, when we divide along lines of faith, gender or ethnicity or for any other reason; when we forget that the human being in front of us is as much loved by God as we are. We can no longer say 'It's another world' - it is the same world.

And othering the other, wherever it occurs - in Myanmar, Serbia, South America, Pakistan .... Brexit Britain, Bradford, our church or our living room, Methodist Conference - then we are not true to the faith that has the unique call to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us. Make no mistake; there is an imperative to our calling to 'live with contradictory convictions' that is not simply about inclusion but about an urgent need for reconciliation and peace, not just for Methodists but for the world. People of faith are not the only people called to respond to this imperative or love: many can and do, but we must.

....I knew that I was called to be a minister, but that wasn't allowed for women then. But I saw what sort of story I wanted my life to be when Jill Bowden landed in our comfortable suburban church on her moped, wearing a bright yellow crash helmet. Jill was and remains all things strange, a northerner, a socialist and a rebel - she was as great then as she is now! Jill probably doesn't remember preaching this sermon, but it soaked into my adolescent brain with sharp illumination, she said 'Christianity is not difficult, but it is costly'. She was right, at one level there is nothing

simpler than saying yes to faith and standing up and following a path of peace and love, especially if you are an adolescent hippy, but it will cost a great deal, not just individually but as a church. If we are really going to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us, then we will need to remain present in difficult places, in places like Bradford and Myanmar, where we are a minority alongside a minority, working out how to build communities of faith across different cultures and religions. We will need to challenge food poverty, not just offer our surplus. We will need to support those who work alongside abuse survivors on our behalf. We will need to continue supporting All We Can and Christian Aid and World Church partners in their work amongst vulnerable and traumatised people across the world. And we will need to find ways to stay in communities that can't afford us, but we cannot afford to abandon. **We will need to be people of reconciliation and peace in an increasingly angry and divided Britain.** We will need to commit ourselves to not only making the church inclusive, but allowing those who we might think 'on the edge' to challenge and transform us. We need to listen in three dimensions to what is told and what lies in the dark spaces between the words.

If all this last paragraph feels too full of 'oughts' and 'shoulds' then let me remind us of what we already have. We are an organisation with a unique mandate for unconditional love and this means we are one of the few organisations in our society that doesn't work with 'clients' but with anyone, with people in all their magnificent complexity. We don't have to prove learning outcomes, or increasing profits, or value for money. We are simply offering grace and love - simple and costly. We know that if we mess up, we can start over, and this gives us a glorious assurance of freedom. With proper attention to safeguarding, we can offer intergenerational conversation, a place for children to be heard and accepted, a place where the story of the elderly can be honoured and held. We can celebrate new birth and accompany people in their last hours. We can - when we stop being so anxious about our buildings, statistics and rotas - be places of peace and restoration. We are people of a multitude of wise, troubling, hilarious, faithful human stories - so let's tell them, and surprise ourselves once again with the way of Jesus. And let's find new confidence in the story of God, not as a mallet to knock in stakes of certainty, but with hearts strangely warmed with the assurance that the world can be changed through unconditional love.

....We who are Methodist and Methodish, we who are marinated in faith or just dipping a tentative toe, big wigs and small fry, gay or straight or trans or undefined, broken, diffident or downright scared, all of us, each of us is called to this simple, costly way, living out our stories within the eternal, challenging, costly, glorious stories of God - because nothing in all creation can separate us from it!

*For the full address go to [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk).*

#### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Wed. Sept 4<sup>th</sup> Mid week worship in the hall at 11.00  
Sat. Sept 14<sup>th</sup> Free Family Fun day in the Castle Park.  
Sat. Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> – Quiz evening in Hall at 7.00pm.

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**Copy for the October edition should be with Andrew Wilks by the third Sunday in September – September 15<sup>th</sup> please.**