

Wesleyan Reform Union
Church Street, Jump, S74 0HZ
Tel: 01226 891 608
Email: admin@thewru.co.uk
www.thewru.com
Charity No. 250315

Contact

Newsletter from the WRU Churches

Come Ye Thankful People Come

An agricultural harvest marks the end of a growing season for a particular crop and many cultures around the world celebrate this with a harvest festival.



While the crop may vary from country to country, a harvest festival has many common features—giving thanks, celebrating, community, religion, cuisine, music and dancing.

A harvest festival is, of course, steeped in tradition—some have been around for several centuries! Some parts of the festivals may have slowly changed over time but at the core is a community coming together to show gratitude for the crop and to celebrate.

The harvest season falls at different times of the year depending upon region, climate and crop but festivals celebrating its arrival are held the world over. Some are first-fruits festivals that recognize the start of the season and the first crops, while others are celebrations to give thanks for the blessing of a bountiful

harvest and to mark or ensure the recurrence of the process. In some parts of the world, harvest festivals have become largely secularized into a more-general holiday.

Harvest festivals are celebrated worldwide, reflecting diverse cultures and agricultural practices. From the grape harvest in Argentina to the rice harvest in Bali and the yam harvest in Ghana, each festival is unique, yet they all share the common theme of giving thanks for a successful harvest. I'm sure it won't surprise you to learn that China is the world's biggest producer, importer and consumer of food.

Chanthaburi, Thailand, is known for gemstones and for its profusion of beautiful native fruits, as colorful as jewels. In Italy, Magione's two-day festival celebrates



both the feast day of St. Clement and the local olive harvest, bringing together everyone involved in the production of olive oil.

Iceland's harvest is heavily influenced by its climate and geography, with a focus on geothermal-heated greenhouses for year-round production of vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers. Outdoor farming is limited by the cool climate and rough terrain, but crops like potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbage are grown. Additionally, Iceland has a robust aquaculture sector and a unique tradition of eiderdown harvesting.

In our Church in Staincross we still celebrate the harvest and display a limited variety of fruit, vegetables and flowers.

The important aspect of giving thanks to God for what has been produced and provided is celebrated.

Of course we also share a traditional pea and pie supper within our community; some traditions don't change.

Marie Nichols
(Staincross Church)



ARTICLES FOR “Contact”

We welcome inspirational stories, devotional and encouraging articles, news and events from the churches all enabling us to be inspired and to keep in touch with each other.

Some rules to remember:

- Articles must arrive on or just before the deadline
- If possible, a picture or a photograph should accompany the article
- Make sure that pictures/articles you send have no copyrights, or you have permission to use them
- Word count per article should not exceed 750.

Deadlines:

- 1st Dec – for **Jan-Feb** issue
- 15th Feb – for **Mar-Apr** issue
- 15th Apr – for **May-Jun** issue
- 15th Jun – for **Jul-Aug** issue
- 15th Aug – for **Sep-Oct** issue
- 15th Oct – for **Nov-Dec** issue

ANDREW GRAVES



Growing up as the son of a Wesleyan Reform minister (Rev Rowland and Mrs Graves) one of my earliest spiritual memories is of visiting the birthplace of the famous missionary to Africa, David Livingstone, just outside of Glasgow. I remember the pictures of Africa and the sense of the danger and sacrifice that compelled him to give his life in service to God. This was just one of many influences and witnesses to Christ that shaped my young life and prepared the ground for my own eventual experience of surrendering my life to Christ and receiving new life in Him.

It has been many years since I left the U.K. to follow God's calling in the U.S. I always feel a profound sense of gratefulness in looking back at my formative years. I am grateful that I was raised by parents that held to the authority of God's word and the reality of God's presence. And it is also with thankfulness that I fondly remember the spiritual influences and relationships in the Wesleyan Reform Union, that were such an important part of my spiritual life and Christ being formed in me.

I am currently working as a professor at Southeastern University in Florida. This affords me the great privilege of influencing a young generation for Christ. It also gives me an opportunity to return to the U.K. each year and lead a group of students on a study abroad tour of the U.K., an opportunity to engage with the rich history of the U.K., a history which in many ways has been HIS STORY.

My wife and I have three sons and two daughters and an unofficial adopted daughter. We have 14 grandchildren, with another on the way. Our youngest daughter, Alix (Alexandra), her husband, and three sons are full time missionaries in Tanzania, Africa. She has a degree in linguistics and works with Wycliffee/SIL to translate the Bible into languages that do not yet have a Bible in their own language. We just recently returned from spending a month in Tanzania with them.

This is where I felt something of God taking me full circle. We should always be conscious of God speaking to us in our daily lives. We should always be listening for the voice of God, sometimes even in the mundane tasks of life. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see God speaking to people in various ways and diverse means. God was speaking to me in relation to David Livingstone. We journeyed to Kigoma, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, in the West of Tanzania to stay with our son-in-law's parents. One of the places we visited was just a 15 minute ride out of Kigoma to the site of the celebrated meeting between Dr. Stanley and David Livingstone. A monument on the site commemorates Livingstone's death. The curator shared with us many details about Livingstone's life. Africans held him in such high esteem that on his death, they took his heart and buried it; in African soil, before his body was returned to the United Kingdom.

During our visit, our son-in-law's parents shared how difficult it had been in the early years of their ministry there, with no modern amenities. They were not talking about the absence of social media or television, but of plumbing and clean water, of electricity, and of roads. In their 42 years on the mission field, they established a network of churches; and Bible schools across Tanzania. The first of their Bible schools is in Kigoma, but it trains up local evangelists and pastors from all of Tanzania.

They house students on their campus and have classes, often taught by volunteers who come for an interim to teach. Their work in supporting missions also extends into Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. All of this has happened as they, like Livingstone, surrendered their lives to the Lord and lived in obedience to His voice. We visited one of their weekly meetings, a gathering of people who are extremely poor and who at the end of the meeting are supplied with some necessary food and supplies. My wife was privileged to share from the story of Hagar with them, encouraging them that our God is the God who sees us, who never leaves us alone, and who supplies us with the living water of life. Each week at the end of the meeting, one person is selected for help in starting up a business. For the cost of roughly £40, they are provided with the tools and materials to become self-supporting. These are things like sewing machines, embroidery yarn, and cloth. The ministry continues to support them until they generate enough income to support themselves, typically in about six months. Most are the poorest of the poor are women who have been abandoned by their husbands. There is no legalized divorce in Tanzania. If a man

tires of his wife and family, he is free to simply disappear.

It was exciting to visit our daughter and her family; and to spend cherished time with our grandchildren. But in the midst of all the joy of being with our family, there is always the voice of God speaking to us. It has not been easy to transition back to a culture that obsesses over material and carnal things, things that will pass away, and misses the real life that Christ offers and which is eternal. God is using the legacy of Livingstone, and being back in the U.K., and being with missionaries who are following in his steps cause me to reflect on my past, the influences that He has brought into my life then, and what obedience to His voice will look like now and in my future. He desires for me to faithfully live my life for Him.

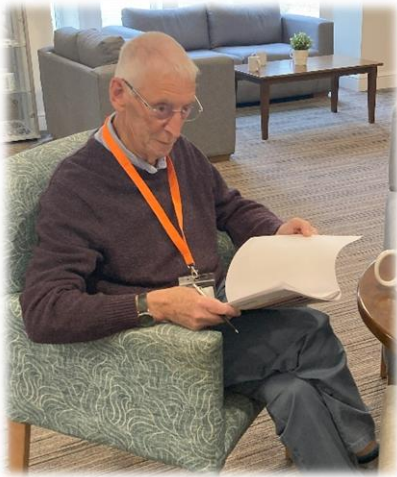
Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."



Florida beaches



Tanzania, Kigoma, Africa



ONCE PEOPLE STOP BELIEVING IN GOD

“Once people stop believing in God, the problem is not that they will believe in nothing; rather, the problem is that they will believe anything.” (C.S.Lewis)

Our Bible study recently focussed on ‘hearing’, both on how and what we hear and also upon what God hears.

What and who do we hear, and what do we choose not to?

There’s a lovely phrase in some translations of the Bible which talks about people wanting to have their ears tickled (*2 Timothy 4:2-4*).

We have for some time been living in an age where people are seeking spirituality, but only on their terms – sounds and words which are soothing and sweet and which, much like a friendly cat who has its ears tickled, makes them purr with delight.

Is that how we would like our church to be also? Better to have soothing words that stimulate inaction (if that’s

not a contradiction in terms) than challenging words that discomfort us into repentance and work?

Paul starts this paragraph to Timothy with these word, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

This is not the time “to believe anything.”

Cliff Darby

WHO WILL FOLLOW JESUS?

Carl took off his football boots and rubbed his aching legs. He smiled wryly and breathed deeply. He was getting older, perhaps too old to hold the weekly Youth Club in his barn on the farm. As he stood up to close the barn door, a young man appeared walking up the yard. Carl stared at him. He knew the face, but what was his name? Suddenly he remembered. Yes, of course, it was Johnny. He used to come to the Youth Club years ago. Well, would you believe it! Johnny smiled and hugged Carl and said “Great to see you after all this time. How are you going on? You’re still holding the Youth Club here in the barn and I bet you’re still ending the evening with the God Slot”

“Of course I am Johnny. Nothing changes but tell me about you. What are you up to?” “Well,” replied Johnny “I’ve been working with “Youth for Christ” in Nottingham for the past five years and really, it’s



all thanks to you and your God Slot. You were the one to tell us about JESUS and how he died to save us. I wanted to know more, and I went to a church to learn more and it's six years ago now that I gave my heart to the Lord!

Carl smiled and gave Johnny a hug." It's great that someone was listening. Not like Pete, who needed to go to the loo every time I mentioned God. Then there was Simon. He was really interested in what the Bible said. So much so that he asked his dad if he could have a Bible for his birthday. He even brought it along to the Youth Club, but then he got a new bike, and he went along to the bike track and

spent most of his time there, and that was the last time we saw him. A great pity!

PETES THOUGHTS

I wonder!

Have you ever wondered what happens to the things we do in life or inadvertently leave behind?

Will someone, way in the future, come across these things, think to themselves? I wonder what was happening when this got lost, got dented or damaged? I wonder who it was and what they were doing. I do!

Our eldest son turned up one day and informed me that I needed a project to keep me going. Two weeks later, a 1964 Lambretta scooter turned up at our house straight from Italy.

Having never even touched a scooter before I could never have imagined what stories it would reveal as I dismantled every nut and bolt. It still had the original number plate and tax disc so I could trace it to an area just

south of Milan. The last owner must have been a builder of some sort as the tool box was full of nails, screws and cement dust. He must have been a real 'handyman' because as things wore out or broke, he just modified the scooter to work without them. Some of what we would call 'bodges' were really clever stuff.

I discovered every bit of extra wiring, every extra bit welded on to extend the life of the brake shoes, the changes made to make the bent main stand work and the clever extra bolts welded in to hold the bodywork together.

I often wondered if that chap ever thought that one day, years in the future, a guy in England would take everything apart that he had done, to keep the scooter

Having said that Johnny, you were the one to listen and allow God's love to grow in your life, God bless you for coming back to the barn to tell me. It's great news!

Daphne Hodkinson

I took the parable of the Sower from the New Testament and wrote a modern-day parable about a retired farmer. Could we challenge someone to write a similar type of story, or could you illustrate the idea of an elderly farmer playing football with the Youth Club? We could then publish the story or picture in the Newsletter. We would love to see some children's art work.



running and know exactly why he'd done it and did he realise that he had actually built stories into the machine for me to discover (or make up!)

Incidentally, the scooter is now restored and enjoying a second life.

After 50 years working in various industries, I bet I've left loads of stories (and tools), all over the country, just waiting that future "someone" to discover and have a little chuckle thinking "what on earth has he done here!"

THE LADIES, GOD BLESS THEM

I, like many others, was so saddened when the “Women of Action” was officially drawn to a close, I had been a member for many years, but I want to urge ladies to continue to meet in whatever way you can and share Bible reading and prayer together. It is not just about entertaining one another but sharing your faith. I contacted Alice Cartledge from “Bonnie Scotland” for any ideas that she has come across, and these are her suggestions.

“It seems to be a trend now that ladies wanting to meet are older and less able to take on the tasks required to host a weekly ladies fellowship meeting. It therefore seems to be a new trend to smaller, more on-the-doorstep types of get together, always involving food from coffee and cake to a full meal. ALL the examples I heard of involved at least one “younger” person coordinating the activity. The “young” person all knew when and where, organized everyone getting there, liaising with the premises, providing the refreshments (not always free to those attending). I surmise that each meeting is unique to those attending, so there is no one pattern that fits all. It is clear that the move is away from the midweek mini-Church service with everyone sitting in rows.

It may be a weekly or monthly women’s association/guild type meeting in the Church Hall but sitting round small tables ready set for tea and goodies (very important) at the end of the program. The program is not heavy or long or always religious. They may sing together or listen to a solo or duet. The program might include a few paper and pen activities, guess the song/hymn from a few bars played on the piano or other instruments. Have a bundle of old photos and get the ladies to identify today’s pop stars, politicians or other notable folk, although one of the subjects could be local folk. Sometimes one of the groups could start off the session with “I remember when...” Chatting round tea is predictable!



You could tackle a book club idea. One member could bring along a book that they had enjoyed and tell the group why they enjoyed it-without revealing the details of the story line, or crucially, the ending!

There are all sorts of craft groups possible. Knit (or crochet) and Natter, where you don’t need to do both at the same time. Then a cup of tea and biscuit halfway through, and maybe a Bible reading and prayer at the end or the beginning. Marking birthdays are special with a card and a cake. Lidl’s sells a small cake which would be ideal if no bakers were available.

Then there are demos of flower arranging, plate painting, embroidery, quilt making etc. etc.

Just a visit for a blether and a cup of coffee is sometimes the highlight of the week/month.”

Thank you, Alice, bless you.

Daphne Hodkinson

STAINCROSS CHURCH

ANNIVERSARY

On the beautiful weekend of 12th and 13th July 2025, we at Staincross Christian Fellowship Wesleyan Church, celebrated the 118th anniversary of our present building being built in Mapplewell, Barnsley.

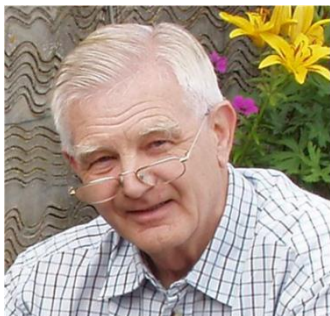
The first original Church building was built further down Spark Lane and on the opposite side of the road. We are told that members worked together raising the funds to build our much bigger, more modern building to accommodate the rising number of believers. They even “sold” and “bought” bricks within the community to help swell the fund, a whole congregation backed project, blessed by God.

The Church opened in July 1907. Our building is typical of other WRU Churches in Barnsley, having a stone front with brick built sides. We have a large pipe organ, choir area, balcony and schoolroom/hall to the rear.

We celebrated with a meal and games evening on Saturday for Church members and friends. Then we enjoyed a special anniversary service on Sunday morning when our friends from Jump Church joined us, giving thanks and praise to God for His love and faithfulness to us.

Staincross, here's to the next 100 years.

Marie Nichols



Obituary

DAVID CARTLEDGE

David grew up in Muffield WRU – Sunday school, youth fellowship, and scouts and was converted in 1955 after attending a relay in Bradford of the Billy Graham All Scotland Crusade. He studied at Cliff College, Calver in 1961-62 and in September 1962 he became the first Youth Secretary of the WRU when he organised the annual Swanwick convention which grew until more than 300 young people regularly attended. He introduced summer holidays for young folk in Avon Tyrrel, Troon and Projhol in Cornwall in 1969. In 1969 David was ordained and was minister in the Ashby circuit. After 4 years he felt the need to further his

knowledge of the Word of God and theology so spent 5 years at London Bible College, graduating in 1978 with a BA in theology. He married Alice in August 1978 and became Sharrow Vale's first full time minister. In 1982 Iain was born and the next year David answered a call to the United Free Church of Scotland and served as minister of the Milngavie congregation for 21 years. He served the UF in various capacities and was Moderator in 2007-2008 when he represented the denomination at centenary services in Botswana, the missionary interest of the UF.

In 2004 David and Alice retired to Hilton of Cadboll, Easter Ross and was soon taking services all over the highlands in every denomination. Iain married in 2008 and had two sons who loved the naughty streak in their Grampa. David died on Sunday, July 13th which was 21 years to the day that we moved into our home in Hilton.

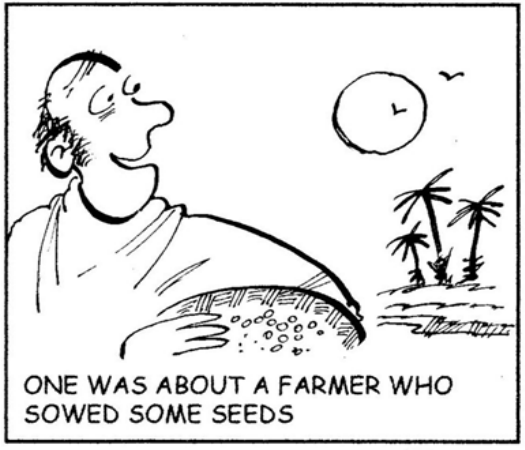
the
PARABLE
of the
SOWER



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE WAS ABOUT A FARMER WHO SOWED SOME SEEDS



MOST FARMERS DIDN'T BURY THEIR SEEDS IN THE GROUND. INSTEAD THEY THREW THEM IN THE AIR!

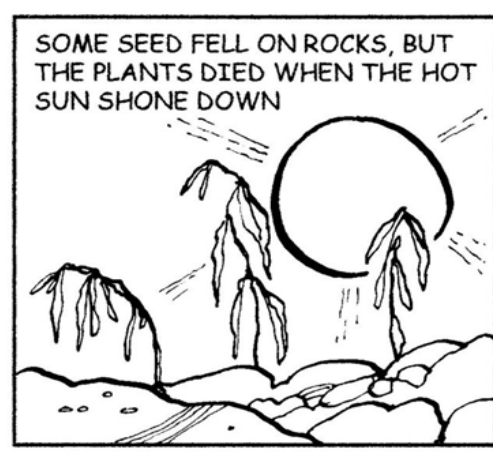



THE FARMER HOPED THEY WOULD TAKE ROOT JUST WHERE THEY LANDED

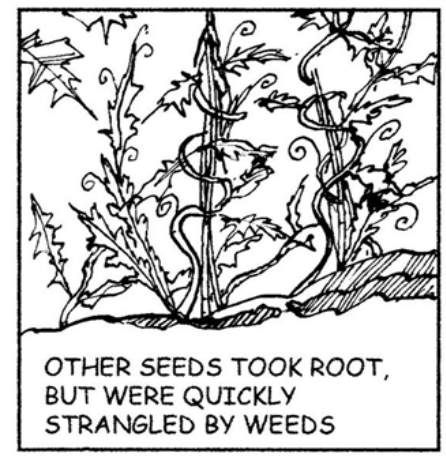
BUT SOME SEED WAS EATEN BY BIRDS!



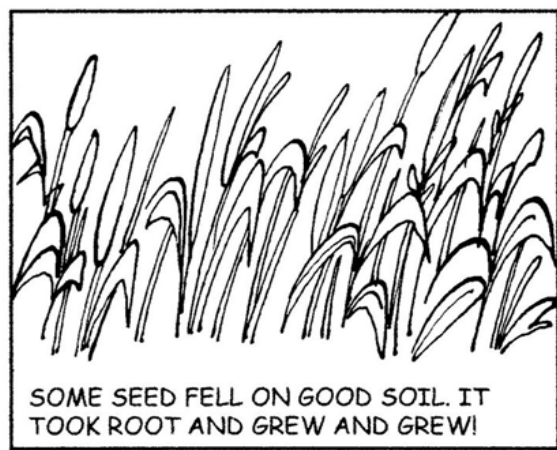
SOME SEED FELL ON ROCKS, BUT THE PLANTS DIED WHEN THE HOT SUN SHONE DOWN



OTHER SEEDS TOOK ROOT, BUT WERE QUICKLY STRANGLED BY WEEDS



SOME SEED FELL ON GOOD SOIL. IT TOOK ROOT AND GREW AND GREW!



SOON THERE WAS A FINE FIELD OF WHEAT!



JESUS EXPLAINED THAT THE SEED ARE 'WORD OF GOD' AND WE SHOULD LET THAT WORD 'GROW' IN OUR HEARTS, JUST LIKE SEEDS IN GOOD SOIL.

