

THE NEWSLETTER APPEARANCE

Over recent years much effort has gone into telling the church, the community and even the world about the New Room. It is much more difficult than it first appears, and we continue to marvel at how many people say that they did not know about it, or if they did, that they have never visited us before!

Now some of us are considering making a move which may help publicise the New Room – by changing the appearance of the Newsletter. Thanks to the hard work of many trustees, especially Philip Carter, Mrs Jane Cottrell has had a steady supply of news to pass on to our stewards and friends. The booklet form which is still used for this issue is easily recognised and convenient, but it is slightly dated, takes a great deal of work to produce, and then it is heavy to post - at a time when weight and bulk lead to high postal charges. So - as long as the result looks good and is acceptable – we are planning a possible new style for the New Room Newsletter for Summer 2010. I have had a very useful meeting with Ian Webb at Midland Road Methodist Centre, and he has kindly offered to help us with setting out the newsletter in a new style, as he has done with the Centre newsletter.

We will need to produce crisp short items, and we will have to find an amount of visual material – in glorious technicolour. The help of our good community of friends will be called on in new ways, and we hope that we can produce something worthy of our important mission. I use the word 'mission' intentionally, because a step forward makes us focus on whether we need a newsletter, and what it is produced for. We have every reason to believe in its worth, and we have already a Mission Statement, in which we say that we must continue to tell the world what the Gospel has to offer. Providing a medium which makes the message clear and even challenging is what we hope to achieve, building on all the good foundations of the Newsletter we have.

Keep in touch!

FROM THE WARDEN

Dear Friends,

May I wish you all the very best for 2010. I hope this New Year will see implemented many of the changes that so many people have worked so hard to achieve, not least the greening of the Broadmead Courtyard. I hope that we will be able to look in the coming months at ways of improving the displays within the building and seeing if it is possible to create an extension into the Horsefair Courtyard to provide much needed facilities for properly hosting visitors. One of the things that I am very conscious of as a new Warden is the buzz of ideas emerging from the various groups looking into what we do.

It is good that our efforts are finally receiving some recognition from the Connexion through the recent creation of a Methodist Church Heritage Committee. I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet up with those who are hoping to encourage the work undertaken at Methodist heritage sites, including representatives of Epworth, Englesea Brook and Wesley's Chapel in London. A new Heritage booklet about all the sites will appear this year (including an illustrated entry for the New Room) and new booklets on John Wesley, Charles Wesley and Susanna Wesley are to be produced by Methodist Publishing. I have produced the drafts for the latter three. The Methodist Church currently faces many financial problems but I hope it will maintain its initiative to offer more support to its heritage sites, not only because they enable people to draw strength from the religious insights of John and Charles Wesley, but also because they can still offer an important way of outreach.

I hope that whatever else 2010 brings, it will see new ways of outreach at the New Room, enabling us to speak of God's forgiving love with others, many of whom may not attend a church. One new venture for the spring of 2010 will be experimenting with a series of very short 'thought for the week' lunchtime addresses during Lent. Some city-centre churches (such as Bath Abbey) ran very successful twenty-minute 'Shoppers Carols' services and maybe we should try the same next Christmas. Getting people to pop in and think about Lenten issues might be more of a challenge – but worth a go!

One of the disappointments of 2009 was that the launch of the new 'Friends of the New Room' did not get off to a good start. Very few people have so far joined. I am not sure that we have given this enough focus, even though Ward Jones reminded us of its importance in the letter that was enclosed with the Autumn Newsletter. I suspect the letter and leaflet got put on a lot of people's shelves marked 'I'll think about that later' and then got forgotten. I know I only got round to responding at the end of November when I cleared my backlog of 'things to do'! **PLEASE LOOK AGAIN AT JOINING THE FRIENDS** if you so far have not done so. I know many of you give very, very generously of your time and that is more vitally important but if you can also give a token amount through joining the Friends that really will make collectively a big difference to our finances. **Simply send the form with either a cheque or a bank standing order to the Hon. Secretary Mrs Barbara Hickling (care of the New Room) – and do not wait!** If you do not do it now, human nature being what it is, you will not get round to it and your resolution to financially help will be forgotten! Equally if you know someone who is unable to physically help with what we do at the New Room but who would like to financially assist, get a Friend's form for them. **You do not join the Friends to get anything but to give something** – a small amount (£20 a year is less than 50p a week) that shows your readiness to help the New Room stay open and develop what it can offer.

My thanks again for all the work you undertake for this very special place,

Yours in Christ,
Gary Best

THE NEW ROOM OF 1739

Over the last 10 years I have had to revise my thinking about where the original New Room was situated and what sort of building it was. This change has come about through reading some of the research done by Revd. Wilfred Little in the 1980s.

I had originally thought that the 1739 room was at the Horsefair (northern) end of the chapel where the pulpit is and where the

foundation stone is situated. If you look however at the 1745 map in the Common Room you will see that it locates the building equidistantly between the Horsefair and Broadmead, making it much more likely that the original room was at the Broadmead end of the present chapel. This is confirmed by the deeds of the land that John Wesley purchased to extend the building in 1748. This states that the new piece of land is bounded by gardens to the north (towards the Horsefair), a path to the New Room on the east and the existing New Room to the south. This would mean that the foundation stone was moved to its present site when the New Room was rebuilt in 1748. It is unlikely that a foundation stone would be laid in its present position 13 feet above ground level. Perhaps it was removed out of immediate view because Wesley is incorrectly inscribed as Weeley.

Now to the matter of what that first New Room was like. It was much more than a single room with a gallery. The insurance policy for 1740 reads "from loss or damage by fire on his DWELLING HOUSE, SCHOOL and SOCIETY ROOM, all under one roof, also another small schoolroom adjoining thereto, THREE HUNDRED POUNDS".

The 'dwelling house' was like the accommodation in the present New Room, directly under the roof. John describes it in a letter to Whitfield as a 'garret room' where he kept a bed, and Charles writes of it as his 'lodging'. It was undoubtedly more than a loft room for John and Charles to lodge their sister Hetty there, when she was recovering from an illness in 1744. It was also of sufficient size for a housekeeper to be employed.

On the ground floor was the 'society room' with a gallery. It must have had a gallery as when the chapel was enlarged in 1748 John states that the accommodation was almost doubled. It is likely that under the gallery would have been a room or two to accommodate the school. Would they also have needed separate rooms for the pharmacy and the book room? It was, from the earliest days, a very busy space, meeting not only the spiritual needs of Bristol people but also meeting the physical needs of the poorest of its citizens by the provision of education, cheap books, medicine, food and clothing.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT FOR TODAY

It's a new year and no doubt many people will have made a resolution for 2010. Last year one newspaper listed 2009's Top Ten Resolutions as being:

1. Spend more time with family and friends
2. Get fit
3. Lose weight
4. Quit smoking
5. Enjoy life more
6. Quit drinking
7. Get out of debt
8. Learn something new
9. Help others
10. Get organised

I have been told that addiction to too much time on a computer is also beginning to feature in people's resolutions, as in the following examples:

1. I will spend less than eight hours a day on the internet
2. I will stop checking my e-mail at 3.00 in the morning and wait till at least 4.30
3. I will speak to colleagues rather than sending e-mails to them
4. I will try to stop backing up my new hard drive every hour
5. I will try to work out why I need 15 e-mail addresses

In practice as we all know very few people actually maintain their resolutions. A research study undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire found only 12% of people kept their resolutions. The other 88% failed. The easiest pledge to keep was 'to enjoy life more' (32% of those with this resolution stuck to it) and the next most successful was losing weight (28%) and being more organised (27%). It was far more difficult to quit smoking or reduce drinking. The research showed men stand a better chance of keeping a resolution if either they set more simple targets (e.g. instead of saying I will lose weight they say I will lose a pound per week) or if they give themselves an incentive (e.g. I will lose weight in order to become more attractive to women). Women stand a better chance of keeping a resolution if they tell others what resolution they have made. Both men and women

do better if they make only one resolution and base that resolution not on a whim decision taken on New Year's Eve but on a considered choice about what they want their life to be like.

John Wesley produced a New Year resolution for Christians to make to God. Many Methodists around the world still use it annually, even if they are not always very good at maintaining it:

I am no longer my own but yours.
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,
wherever you may place me,
in all that I do and in all that I endure;
when there is work for me and when there is none;
when I am troubled and when I am at peace.
Your will be done
when I am valued and when I am disregarded;
when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;
when I have all things, and when I have nothing.
I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you,
as and where you choose.

It still remains the best resolution we can make in 2010.

SEASONABLE HYMNS

Having had your fill of Christmas carols you may wonder why this is a subject for a January newsletter, yet this glorious Christian season which started on Advent Sunday (29th November) extends to the end of Epiphany - Sunday 31st January, just in time for Candlemas!

Were you able to come to 'Christmas with Charles Wesley'? The world premier of Brian Frost's imaginative script gave the good congregation a unique glimpse of Christmas in the early days of Methodism. Charles' hymns for this season are unique: 'Hark the herald angels sing' is the number one carol for a vast number of folk, even if the profound meaning is lost on many. Yet this is but one of the many Incarnation offerings to come from his pen. Our Singers and the congregation sang nine on this occasion and this was but a small sample. 'Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man' & 'Being's source begins to be, and God himself is born' are but two examples of Charles

Wesley's grasp of the mind boggling implications of our Lord's Nativity. May I encourage you to look again at our stunning heritage of his Christmas hymns.

'Wie Schon leuchtet der Morgenstern' ('How brightly shines the Morning Star' or in another translation 'O Morning Star how fair and bright') is the Epiphany office hymn for Orthodox Lutheran Churches. Had our Totterdown Epiphany Carol Service not been 'snowed off', the worship would have started with these tremendous words. This hymn did not appear in a Methodist hymnbook until 1969 when the much needed supplement Hymns & Songs was published and then failed to appear in Hymns & Psalms (despite protests!). Written by that great 16th hymnwriter Philip Nicolai, this hymn ranks alongside 'Now thank we all our God' and 'A safe Stronghold,' two examples of Martin Luther's own, and others, inspired hymns. The links between these and those of Charles Wesley's are no mere chance.

'Must we forever stay in the eighteenth century, or even earlier' you may ask? So let us come right into the twenty-first century. Many would assert that Bishop Timothy Dudley Smith is today's leading hymnwriter and it was for us a great joy to find his latest composition within his Christmas card. 'A glory fills the midnight sky and splendours blaze abroad' is a worthy twenty-first century successor to the hymns of Luther, Nicolai and Wesley. Dare I suggest that 'they are in the same Apostolic Succession?' Not really surprising, for Timothy considers that Charles Wesley is the greatest of all hymnwriters!

For Methodists, and gradually many others, this is also 'Covenant Renewal Time'. Why not look again at our own 'CW 300 Hymn Writing Challenge - winning entries' booklet. Phil Hewitt's 'Hymn for the Covenant' is well worth considering and our Junior Choir loves Frank Topping's 'Jesus Candles', which is great for Epiphany, Candlemass, or almost anytime.

Very recently twenty of the best and most successful hymnwriters have collaborated to produce 'Come Celebrate', 291 contemporary hymns that really deal with contemporary issues. This book is published by Canterbury Press and includes a CD Rom of texts for projection purposes.

NEW ROOM NEWS

The Greening of the Broadmead Courtyard

The Project One update is that we have raised about £115,000 to date. All of the appropriate permissions have been sought and gained including a revised location for the inscriptions which will now be at floor level and go around the statue. However, subject to the appropriate approval, we still remain committed to incorporating stone engraved panels somewhere within the garden. Whilst a revised design has been drawn up to reflect the amount raised, we would like to make one final attempt at securing further funding as once work commences it will be extremely difficult to secure new additional funding for an ongoing project. To that end, our thought is now to delay the commencement of the work until autumn 2010 and agree a specific start date to be publicised to local media outlets.

External Engagement

Through our membership of the Broadmead Forum, the Bristol Museums Forum and Destination Bristol, we have become an active stakeholder in the city and ensure that the New Room's views are fully represented in the decision making process. This higher profile means that we are now viewed as an organisation that is open to partnership working and seeking to positively engage with a wider community. We continue to see the impact of this wider engagement through increased visitor numbers. The opening of Cabot Circus and Primark has seen more people coming into Broadmead and this is reflected in our visitor numbers which were 26,500 for 2009; a 3000 increase on 2008.

Other examples of this external engagement include the hosting of the Destination Bristol Attractors' Forum which saw representatives from a wide range of visitor attractions across the city come to the New Room; many stated that it was their first time in the chapel! I understand that we are, once again, featured in the EasyJet magazine as one of the top sites to visit in Bristol!

The Sacred Bristol initiative and the accompanying website at www.sacredbristol.org attracted local press coverage and also featured in the Methodist Church Momentum magazine; our next step is to make

a podcast available on the website. The chapel also hosted the 'Down at the Bamboo Club' video installation which was part of an HLF funded arts project that looked at Bristol's slave trade legacy, and the artist that worked with us, Mark Wilshire, had been particularly inspired by John Wesley's sermons.

We will again be working with the Pierian Centre this year and be involved in hosting an event during National Refugee Week. Plans are also advancing for a council sponsored event to be held later this year in the city which will allow people to develop their understanding of different faith groups in the city. This event is being organised by the Bristol Inter Faith Group which we were asked to join through our involvement with the new Museum of Bristol.

This year will also see the launch of a new ambitious project, headed by the British Museum and the BBC which is seeking to tell 'a history of the world in 100 objects'. Regional museums across the UK were also asked to submit a Top 10 to reflect their local area and I'm pleased to advise that Charles Wesley and his hymnody is one of the selections for the Bristol & Bath area.

The Horsefair Courtyard

Our long-term ambition for Project Three remains the provision of improved toilet facilities and a catering facility. This will enable us to extend our provision of hospitality to visitors and help us to develop as a cultural venue and community facility in the heart of Broadmead. We have had some further exploratory meetings, including one with Ian Serjeant, the Methodist Church Conservation Officer, who has invited us to put together a paper for the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee to consider at their July 2010 meeting which will be held at the New Room.

BOOK BULLETIN

The sale of second-hand religious books from the shelves in the New Room has increased by over 25% this last year. We sold over 1250 books. I think this is partially due to moving the bookcases into the chapel itself and partially due to a sharp decrease in the number of shops that sell quality religious books.

I also raised a further £380 from the sale of books outside the New Room, some religious, others secular, both fiction and non-fiction. This unfortunately is down about 25% on 2008.

A big thank you to all who have donated books to the New Room or encouraged others to do so.

At present the stock of books I have waiting to go onto the shelves is very low. Please will you help, perhaps by doing a cull of your own books or keeping an ear open for those who are wanting to get rid of books. Remember we are willing to accept any books, they don't have to be religious. If you or others you know have quite a few books and would like someone to collect them, we can usually manage.

Please telephone me at home (0117 9109063) or at the New Room.

With thanks to these contributors:

The Newsletter Appearance - Revd. Gordon James

The New Room of 1739 - Revd. David Weeks

Eighteenth Century Thought for Today - The Warden, Gary Best

Seasonable Hymns - Philip Carter

New Room News - The Manager, David Worthington

Book Bulletin - Revd. David Weeks

Please send comments about future newsletters, and suggestions for items to include, to **the editor, Philip Carter**, either at the New Room or to pl.carter@btopenworld.com.

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