

Wednesfield
Methodist
Church

Silver Jubilee

1983 – 2008



MILE STONES

We have reached a milestone in the life of the church in Wednesfield, at Wood End. Looking back we can see different points in that journey, where changes have been made. Some of the changes have not always been what we would have hoped for, but these changes are all part of the tapestry of life. In our own lives we have not always liked the way things have gone, but we have to accept what is happening.

In the life of the church, the members, and also those who join us in the various activities each week, all play a part in the changes that take place. To be honest no one likes change. Let us relate two examples to help us understand what we mean. Some years ago the Methodist Church decided to produce a new hymnbook, the one that we use today. This caused a certain amount of dissent, and a number of the members stated quite forcibly that they would not be attending any of the services if it were introduced. The new book was introduced, and they did continue to worship. On another occasion we were told that the next minister to be appointed was to be a woman minister, and again this raised some members blood pressure. But again we know how well this turned out, as she stayed with us for seven years.

This place has always been a welcoming place, as we know, because we were welcomed when we emigrated to Wednesfield from Bilston over 40 years ago. We have welcomed members from Low Hill in the last few years, and for this we give thanks.

It is our good fortune that we are members of a caring, sharing, welcoming community. As to the future, we can only hope that we are able to continue to care, and share, our good fortune, allowing ourselves to be guided by the love of God in all that we do.

The next 25 years are a book that will be written, by each of us, as we try to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, hoping that we can continue to spread the Good News in the local community.

In the following pages are letters we have received from past Ministers who have been part of the journey over the last 25 years.

Pearl & Geoff Forrest

Greetings from Rev. Donald H. Ryan. 1971-1981.

As I write this greeting for the Silver Jubilee of the new Wednesfield Methodist Church I recall the very many happy memories of those eventful 10 years. My ministry at Wednesfield and Wood End was challenging, very fulfilled and rewarding. The friendship of all the members and friends was and is very precious to us. When Alma and I came to view the appointment in 1970, Cyril Squire who was the Circuit Steward met us as we left the M6 Motorway.

We were kindly welcomed when we went to see Fallings Park and Wednesfield Trinity Churches and given warm hospitality. We were shown around the Manse where we met Harry Griffiths. The long journey from Barrow in Furness was soon forgotten as we had a whirlwind tour of the circuit ending at Darlington Street to meet Rev. Joseph Dowell and the Circuit Stewards.

My ministry in the Darlington Street Circuit started on the 1st September 1971. On Monday the 13th September a large and impressive car drew up at the Manse and Cyril Squire got out of his pride and joy the "summer car" he called his "one extravagance". Cyril said, "come on and I'll show you round your parish". As we drove along Wood End Road, past the church, Cyril, pointing to the church said, "that is the church we want you to help us unite with".

No one had spoken to me before that moment about the existence of Wood End Church let alone that I was expected to chair a joint committee of both Churches to explore the possibility of joining the Wood End and Wednesfield Trinity Churches and find a new site for a new Church. At the first Leader's meeting at Wednesfield Trinity it was agreed that there should be a joint meeting "on neutral ground". The ToCH room was suggested. This diplomatic suggestion was not proceeded with. We agreed that we wanted to talk as friends to friends and fellow Methodists and we did not want to suggest that Wednesfield Trinity was anything other than an equal partner in the venture.

Wednesfield Trinity sent an invitation to Wood End Church asking for a joint meeting. I was soon to meet Leslie and Gerry Hughes who gave me wise and helpful insights into the situation in Wood End Church. Edie Walters sought me out and further filled in the picture for me.

At the initial meeting at Wood End it was proposed to hold a joint general Church Meeting at Wood End where anyone from either Church could express his or her vision, or reservations about a joint Church.

Following an honest, forthright and harmonious conversation, listing the advantages and the concerns of the people about the joining of the two churches a vote was taken which indicated a large majority wanted to proceed with joint conversations. One of the stumbling blocks was that the Wood End Church was in the Willenhall Circuit, and the Wednesfield Trinity Church was in the Darlington Street Circuit. At a subsequent joint meeting it was proposed to the two Circuits, that there should be a Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Commission to revue location of the Churches and make recommendations on the staffing of the Willenhall, Darlington Street, and Bloxwich Circuits.

In 1972 the Commission met and in 1973 recommended that Wood End Church should be transferred to the Darlington Street Circuit with me as the minister. The Commission also recommended that the Willenhall and Bloxwich Circuits should unite. In September 1974 the Bloxwich and Willenhall Circuit was formed and at the same time the Wood End Church was transferred to the Darlington Street Circuit.

Following several searches for a new site on Wood End Road and other parts of Wednesfield it was decided that a new Church should be built on Wood End Church site. A new Allen Classical Digital Organ was donated to replace the old tracker action organ at Wednesfield Trinity with a view to it being transferred to the new Church when it was built.

By the time I left in 1981 an architect had been commissioned to design the new church, and the Church Council and the Methodist Property Division in Manchester approved the plans. The two churches were to hold weekly-united services and were on the verge of building the new Church.

It was a great joy to me to be invited to take the evening service on the Sunday when the new Wednesfield Methodist Church was opened. In my retirement it has been for me a special privilege to conduct worship at Wednesfield and always a pleasure to meet you all again. My prayer is that God will continue to bless you all and the Wednesfield continue to prosper. With God's Richest Blessing Donald.

Greetings from Rev. Alan Merchant Minister from 1981-1984.

I well remember the three years spent at Wednesfield, which included having the joy of seeing both Churches at Wednesfield and Wood End working together and accepting one another. For both Churches it meant losing their existing buildings, which must have been very difficult and upsetting for many long-standing members. However, for both Churches, the prospect of a new joint Church was a challenge they both accepted graciously.

I recall the meticulous care taken over the building of the new Church supervised by the owner of a local building firm owned by Harry Griffiths who was also an active member of the Wednesfield Church. The new Church is a lasting memory of his achievement of which he was justly proud. Everything had to be perfect and it was, Harry made certain of that.

To my mind the design of the Church was first class including the provision of a room(s) separated from the Church by a concertina screen where meetings could be held and where very young children could be taken with the option of listening to the service. The Church was also a brave venture in the fact that from the outset it encouraged ecumenical participation. Many will have noticed the foundation stone laid by the Rt. Rev. Barry Rogerson who had at one time been a much-respected vicar at Wednesfield and was at the time Bishop of Wolverhampton.

Madge and I have very fond memories of the folk at Wednesfield whom I hesitate to name but I will mention just one, Evelyn Griffiths who became Madge's closest friend and a very wise counsellor and a wonderful Christian. Suffice to say it was one of the happiest times of our lives in ministry; I treasure one photograph, my favourite, taken on the newly laid lawn at the opening of the new Church. We are most grateful to Pearl and Geoff who over the years have kept in touch.

We send our good wishes and God's richest blessing to everyone at Wednesfield, it doesn't seem like 25 years ago we were with you. May you grow from strength to strength in the power of the Spirit.

Love Madge and Alan

Letter from the Rt. Rev. Barry Rogerson.

Olga and I were travelling recently to see my Mother in Newark, Nottinghamshire. We were caught up in a traffic queue in Mill Street, Old Basford, which is a suburb of Nottingham. There alongside us was a late Victorian Methodist Church with its numerous foundation stones inscribed with the names of what must have been two important Methodist families. Far from having numerous foundation stones, the then new Wood End Methodist Church has just one. The symbolism at the time was not lost on me. The one foundation is nothing other than Jesus Christ, by whom we are saved, but more importantly by whom we are recruited into the Mission of God.

The photograph of that event is in a scrapbook, reminding me of that day 25 years ago. I still had dark hair and was somewhat slimmer. There was your minister Rev. Alan Merchant of whom I have many fond memories and Rev. Tony Kinch, who I gather is still ministering in Wolverhampton and above all Rev. Nigel Gilson, then Chairman of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District. Nigel was the minister at Victoria Street Methodist Church in Newark and he and his family lived in Milner Street, Newark, where I grew up. I was then only a teenager.

If I am allowed I would like to mention the path we trod together in Wednesfield, Methodists and Anglicans alike, a path to Unity. Since that time Anglicans & Methodists have had hopes and disappointments. I was privileged to share with Dr. John Taylor in the Joint talks on Anglican-Methodist Unity, which produced the Covenant, which I gather is somewhat stalled. The differences between us are so small and the agreements so broad that making visible the Unity which God has given us, should not be beyond our capabilities and will.

In asking me to lay your foundation stone you made a public statement about the relationships between Anglicans and Methodists, that we are one in Christ. Wednesfield was the first place I had lived in, in which the relationship between and Anglicans and Methodists was so relaxed, friendly and positive. May your celebrations bring back happy memories. May your celebrations encourage you in making the Unity, which God has given us, visible. May God's grace encourage you in the mission we share, which is so much effective when we combine our resources.

Barry Rogerson.

Rev. Nigel Gilson former Chairman of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District.

Many thanks for your letter earlier this year informing me of the Silver jubilee of the United Church in Wednesfield.

Time passes very quickly and I was glad of the reminder of what was a significant event.

Warmest congratulations on the continuing life of the church. I trust that all goes well with the congregation and the members who were involved in the union. Closing churches for such a union is never an easy matter but it would appear that you continue a healthy church life. My prayer is that you will continue to be blessed by God in all that you do together and maintain an effective witness in the community.

These are not easy days for the life of the church, and moving beyond ones earlier traditions leads a deep dependence on God and a living faith in His love and strength, enabling you to be sensitive to, and respond to Him and the contemporary needs of the world.

I pray too that you are developing your membership and appropriate activities and finding joy in doing so. I offer greetings to any who remember me, and prayers for the future to you all. I am not often in the Wednesfield area in these days but look back with appreciation to an area which was close to my wife's home area of Wednesbury.

I am afraid age and its limitations, and especially a very poor memory, means I am unable to make a great contribution to the life of the Church these days but my wife is active in the Church and we are regular worshippers in Oxford. She joins me in my greetings and good wishes for the future.

God bless you all and give you joy and peace in His service. We trust the Jubilee celebrations will be worthy of the occasion in every way.

Very sincerely yours

Nigel L. Gilson

Rev Roland Bamford is unable to write anything for this special publication so we have selected his first letter to our New Church in October 1984.

Dear Friends,

I am beginning to settle in and find my way around. When the new room at the house is built we shall really be settled. I am beginning to know one or two of your names and recognise a few faces, but I shall go on asking you who you are until you are thoroughly fed up. Please be patient with me.

Please let me know if anyone is ill or in hospital or just come out of hospital. It is much better for me to know twice than not at all.

I passed a church the other day with a notice outside that said, "Christ is the answer". Someone had scribbled beneath "What is the question". I think that is a fair comment. We know that Christ is the answer to all men's needs, but we must make our message relevant and understandable to ordinary people. By our life together we need to show them that Christ is the answer to their loneliness, their guilt, their fear, and their uncertainty. I cannot work miracles but I am happy to bring what gifts I have. When we all do this we become the body of Christ revealing his love where we are.

We send our love to you all

Roland, Glennys, Ruth and Rachel.

Roland had articles published in the Methodist Recorder between May 1998 – December 2005 under the heading "Lessons from Life". These articles have been brought together in a book called "Lessons for Life". Copies of this book are available price £3-99. Profit from the sale of this book is being donated to Christian Aid.

**From Rev. Tony Kinch, Superintendent Minister of the
Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District. 1981 - 2008.**

Wednesfield Methodist Church is a success story. When the then Bishop of Wolverhampton Rt. Rev. Barry Rogerson, laid the foundation stone in 1983, it was for a church that was happily settling into its new shape. The amalgamation of the two societies of Wednesfield High Street and Wood End went smoothly, and the church became a welcoming community in a busy and thriving neighbourhood.

It is appropriate that a Church of England Bishop should have been present at the opening, as Wednesfield Methodist Church has always had a strong ecumenical outlook. The members have played a leading role through the years in Wednesfield Council of Churches as well as having some strong traditions of their own. The church has been well served by its ministers, all of whom have found it a joy to work in such a society.

Local preachers too have never found it a chore to conduct worship in such pleasant surroundings, and with such enthusiastic friends. Down these 25 years many names have served as leaders and members within the building on Wood End Road. It would be foolish to attempt to name them, but we owe them all a debt of gratitude, for sharing their varying gifts and talents.

The present building is beautiful and adapts to suit all kinds of purposes within the life of the community. The main purpose of course is to glorify God through worship and service. In recent years, some of the members of Low Hill have been added to the numbers and have brought to Wednesfield their own personalities and expertise. Again this has been seamless. The warmth and welcome at Wednesfield is very real.

Tina and I wish you well as you sail into your next 25 years.

May God Bless you, each and everyone, and may his Spirit be with you in the days ahead, as you continue into the future, united and confident.

Tony Kinch

Congratulations on the occasion of your 25th Anniversary from Rev. Colin Barrett.

Muriel and I have some very fond memories of our time in Wednesfield. We arrived 15 years ago when the Church on Wood End Road was still relatively new, and I was "new" too. It was at Wednesfield that, as a Minister, I took my first Baptism, my first Wedding, my first Funeral and my first Communion service. All very significant steps along the way. At the time it was a steep learning curve for me, which, without patience and loving support of the congregation, would have been much more difficult. I have always been deeply grateful that you were "there" for me, and sometimes your love was expressed in a very practical way. Shortly after I had shivered my way into church at the head of a funeral cortege you had a whip round and presented me with a wonderful warm woollen cloak, which I still wear, and have used many times when talking about Blind Bartimaeus and his cloak. I think of you all whenever it comes out.

Where to start with memories? There are so many. I remember somewhat in awe of my predecessor Roland Bamford and promising myself I wouldn't tell any jokes, as he was matchless at that. Nevertheless there was a lot of fun and laughter, and quite a bit of hard work. Muriel wasn't around much on Sundays but she pitched in with the new Moms 'n' Tots and Shell Groups. In a day when church wasn't especially "cool" we were dealing with Waiting Lists and charging admission. They were lively days when we achieved much, both in the church and in the local community, and touched a lot of people's lives.

The system of itinerancy that we have sometimes brings difficulties with it. We sometimes wish we could work with a long-term plan and regret broken partnerships. One of the great strengths of moving around, however, is that it enables experiences to be shared. Although you may not know it, the experience I gained at Wednesfield with a young congregation which had recently come together and was building its life and mission and making plans for the future, with all the joys and frustrations that entails, has been the source of insight and inspiration for many other groups and congregations. God has called you to be the Methodist Church on Wood End Road, and that makes you uniquely special and locally important. At the same time your story is being told and your faith and witness is reaching out into the life of the wider world more than you perhaps realise. In the last 25 years you have played, and continued to play, a significant role in the building of God's Kingdom in the world.

I thank God for the last 25 years and pray God's Blessing in your life and work in the next 25.

Colin Barrett.

From Rev. Christine Giles - St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

Derek and I have many happy memories of our time serving in Wednesfield from 1997-2004. It is hard to believe that four years have passed since we were there. On arrival I remember being presented with a Black Country dictionary to try and learn the new language! It did take a bit of tuning into, even for a Birmingham-born girl like me, and I have amusing recollections of phone calls in the early days when I simply couldn't understand a word that was being said. I smile, too, when I recall the numerous phone calls I answered in the early days at the Manse and people asked to speak to the vicar or my husband! For some, a woman minister was a new experience and for some, it was a challenge!

A few memories that stand out for me... the fun times at Shell Club, the church brimming with people for Baptisms, NCH Garden Parties in the back garden, outings to the Wacky Warehouse with Moms 'n' Tots/First steps, the sad loss of faithful members, the church filled to capacity for the Carol Service when the children sang so beautifully, a big cake with candles for our 20th Birthday, the start of the Munchly lunches, and the Over Sixties afternoons with Ada in charge and many, many more. Undoubtedly the most precious memories are of people – wonderful, caring, generous, faithful people of all ages worshipping, serving, living out their lives in commitment to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and seeking to share the good news of the gospel in the local community and beyond. There is no greater calling than this and no greater privilege, than to be counted among those who have answered the call of Jesus to be His disciples and His witnesses.

So my message for the future? Let's keep our eyes on Jesus, be persistent in prayer, be faithful in serving, and leave the rest to God. Thank you for the friendship and fellowship that we shared and continue to share. May God Bless you each one, and I do hope you enjoy your Silver Jubilee Celebrations. Derek and I send our love to you all and a special word of welcome to those new members whom we have not yet met. Keep up the good work. We serve a gracious, faithful God, whose love never fails and whose grace is sufficient for all that lies ahead.

Chris Giles

Methodism celebrates another 25 years of Witness and Service on Wood End Road, Wednesfield.

Dear Friends,

It has been a privilege to be the minister of a Methodist Church with such a long and faithful tradition going back 148 years to the mid 19th Century. Then the Society first met in what was known as the 'big entry' near the Castle Inn. The first Church was built on the site in 1860. The construction of the existing Church was started in 1982, and was completed twenty-five years ago in 1983. The present Church was born out of the amalgamation of two Churches, Trinity, which had already been joined by members of the Hickman Street Church, following its closure in the 1950's, and Wood End Church.

In 2006, the now called Wednesfield Methodist Church, received some new members from Low Hill Methodist Church, which declared its work accomplished and closed. The Living God is present everywhere in heaven and on earth and his glory rests on places where he has set his name. The buildings that have stood on this Hallowed ground have been places where prayer has risen and continues to rise for the worship of God and the service of his Kingdom.

This would not be possible without the faithfulness of God and would not be possible without the faithfulness of its committed membership. So we must always remember with thanksgiving the founding members, the vision they had, and the unstinting support they proffered. We must give thanks for the Presbyters, Local Preachers, the Leaders, Sunday School Teachers and Youth Workers who have inspired many generations. And we must give thanks for the people who have worshipped here, who have given generously and have worked in many ways to maintain it.

**May the Lord God continue to bless you
with the vision of his everlasting light
and fill you with the knowledge of his eternal love.**

May the Lord create a new heart in you.

May the Holy Spirit, help you to bear much more fruit for his glory.

**May the Lord God show you his ways, teach you his paths,
and give you the grace to remain faithful
from generation to generation for evermore.**

Amen.

Every Blessing

Lawrence Wallace

How did I land this job?

Twenty-five years ago I was still working full time and was fairly busy on the home front. My mother had recently passed away following a long illness, and we still had the two boys at home, always hungry and wanting clean shirts! I had to spend a lot of time preparing lessons and marking, so regular church attendance was quite difficult.

I became actively involved with church activities when we were raising funds for our present building and as I had always been involved in the Sunday School Anniversaries I eventually took over as choir mistress. We had always invited other singers to join us on Anniversary Day and as some of them were members of Trinity church who were to join us at Wednesfield when the new church was built and we decided to have a choir and so Friday night became 'Choir Practice Night'. We produced some quite creditable performances with works such as 'Greater than Gold', and 'A Grain of Mustard Seed'. Dare I say that the male choir members were far more trouble than any of the children? Nevertheless we had great fun.

Other than occasionally playing the organ I took no other active part in church activities and didn't have much idea about the actual management of church affairs. I retired in 1989 and in 1990 I was approached by Rev. Roland Bamford and asked if I would consider taking on the office of Church Council Secretary. I was not at all sure that I was fitted for this position, but was assured by Roland that if I could write a letter I could write a set of minutes; nothing said about having to sort out what was said at the meeting, what of importance had to be minuted, and what letters would have to be written etc., A very persuasive man was Roland! I finally agreed to try it out for a year. 1990-2008. Work it out for yourselves!

I worked with four Ministers in that time; Roland, Colin Barrett, Chris Giles and Lawrence Wallace, all quite different in their approach to meetings.

I've advanced from using a cheap typewriter to a word processor and eventually a computer, and I've made mistakes on all of them! Now I'm waiting for someone to take pity on an aging lady and take over the reins. Perhaps for a year? Enid



