

Baptists and Methodists together at Hampton Methodist Church



September 2026



Ruth Wadey - God's promise to us

Hampton Methodist Church, Percy Road, Hampton, TW12 2JT

Hampton Mission Partnership is a member of Churches Together around Hampton

Church website <https://hamptonmissionpartnership.org.uk>

We have had and indeed are still having a terrific summer of sport this year, not only in the UK but throughout the world. There has been the World Cup in football, the Wimbledon championships, the Open Golf Championship, a multitude of cricket activities ranging from Test matches to 20/20 and Hundred matches and even into mid September there are world class athletic events and motor racing. We have had the European athletics championships in Birmingham and the Commonwealth games in Glasgow. There have been many things to appreciate and enjoy.

However only last night I was reminded of how life so intertwines good things and bad things when the winner of the long jump competition said that her grandmother had passed away on that self same day.

In the world there have been many horrific and sad things happen. There have been earthquakes in Venezuela and in Indonesia. There has been a horrendous mud slide on the Nepal/ Tibet border which has killed many hundreds of people.. The war in Ukraine goes on and on with both sides having to cope with the numerous victims of a war which has now lasted longer than WW1. Problems and lack of resources still underly the position in Gaza in spite of all the promises that have been made. There is continued aggression in the gulf area shown by Israel and the USA and conflict between other states in that region.

In Matthew's gospel chapter 24 Jesus speaks of the signs of the ends of the age, when he will return to reign in glory. Two men walking up a hill one disappears and one is left. He warns us to keep watch for none of us knows when God will exercise the power that is in his hands. On many occasions people have warned that the end of the world is near but I think never before has there been so much unrest in so many different areas of the world. We as Christians believe that Jesus will come back to reign as king, there will be justice for all and those who put their trust in him will be saved.

So what, you may be thinking has all this got to do with sport and do the results of sport competitions matter at all? Well they do matter but only in the human mind for a short space of time. Whilst some of us at least can remember who won the World Cup we may not have any recollection as to who won at Wimbledon or the Open Golf Championship.

What I do remember is the Ghana football team all kneeling to pray at the end of their matches. What I do remember is members of both the England and French football teams kneeling to pray together at the end of the 3rd/4th place play off match. What I do remember is athletes, tennis players and golf players all thanking God not necessarily for victory but for giving them the gift of being able to compete in their sport.

Let us remember this is God's world. We live as stewards of the resources that he has given us and that what awaits us is something far greater than anything we can experience in this world. When we are long gone, if he has not come back, all of the world will still be his.

God bless you

Philip Slater your pastor and your friend.

Football and faith

Have you ever gone to a church service and walked in with Shakira singing Dai Dai (the official World Cup anthem 2026)? This is what greeted us at Goring one early June Sunday.

Our preacher for the morning, Billy, an Everton Fan, had decided to do a World Cup Football themed service as part of an all age service. Jeremy (my husband for those of you who don't know us) had got up extra early to get to the church at 8am to ensure his three Manchester City flags had prominent place - one hanging as you came in above the door, one in front of the piano and one on a music stand. Everyone else came in just scarves or tops of their clubs.

Billy gave a very interesting talk about the role of God and Christianity in football. We explored the various songs associated with certain clubs i.e. When the Saints go Marching in (Southampton), The Lords my Shepherd, Psalm 23 (West Bromwich Albion) who had the first verse woven into their kit and the words are in the stadium so fans sing it before matches. Abide with Me is sung before the FA cup final.

We then heard video testimonies from premier league footballers like Jeremy Doku, who was recently baptised by full emersion and talked openly about his faith and how he lives his life. He was heavily criticised in the media for returning home in the middle of the competition to witness his baby being born.

We were shown videos and photos of teams praying before matches including players who were not all on the same side, getting together for prayer beforehand.

A very enjoyable and different service, but one where we learnt a lot about how faith is growing amongst young people and in sport.

Pam Harrison



Chairs v pews

When Mum passed away in January 2025, our family was keen to honour her love of the church in a meaningful and lasting way. Paul suggested we might contribute towards purchasing new chairs to replace the remaining pews – something that Mum had always been passionate about. After thoughtful discussions, the proposal was approved, and we are delighted that the project is now complete. Of course, the church is far more than just its building and its seating. It is a place of worship, friendship and community, somewhere for quiet prayer and reflection, and even a hub of dedicated voluntary service. It was very much at the heart of Mum's life, indeed she was even present in 1963 when the original pews arrived.

In 2021, Mum played an influential role in organising the initial move from pews to chairs. She believed it would make the space more welcoming, flexible and accessible for everyone who walks through the doors. Mum would be absolutely delighted that the project is now fully completed and that she was able to contribute to bringing her vision to fruition.

We hope that the new chairs will serve the congregation faithfully for many years to come, supporting future generations and continuing Mum's legacy and memory within the church she loved so dearly. Finally, a very heartfelt thank you to all at the church who have helped to make this possible.

Alison McWilliam

A little bit of the background history of pews in the Circuit:

- The current church at Sunbury was built in 1968 and has never had pews.
- At Hanworth pews would pre-date the 1990s if they had them at all.
- Teddington removed their pews in the late 1990's.
- The pews at East Molesey were removed in the early 2000's.
- Hampton church council agreed to the removal of the pews on one side of the church on 20 January 2022, to be replaced by the blue chairs that had been gifted to us by Twickenham Methodist Church, which had closed in December 2016. The second phase of replacing the rest of the pews would be decided at a later date. Wendy would have been thrilled that this has now happened thanks to the generosity of her family. The long blue cushions that had made the pews slightly more comfortable have found a new home at Crane Park Primary School. Wendy taught at Crane Infants which closed in 2001 and joined with the Juniors to become Crane Park Primary.

Liz Windaybank



Reclaiming the Prayer Room

I have been asked to write a piece about why I had such a strong feeling about reclaiming the Prayer Room.

The truth is that I really felt that we needed a clean, uncluttered space for group or individual prayer, a welcoming environment. I believe that a Prayer Room should be a sanctuary, away from daily distractions, where people can focus on connecting with God.

There was so much junk from over the years stored in the Prayer Room and it had just become a place to dump anything that wasn't wanted, everything gathering dust. No-one seemed to know who some of the things belonged to or why they had been kept. The mess masked the wonderful handcrafted treasures that are in there, real labours of love, and that was so sad to see. They are now beautifully displayed.

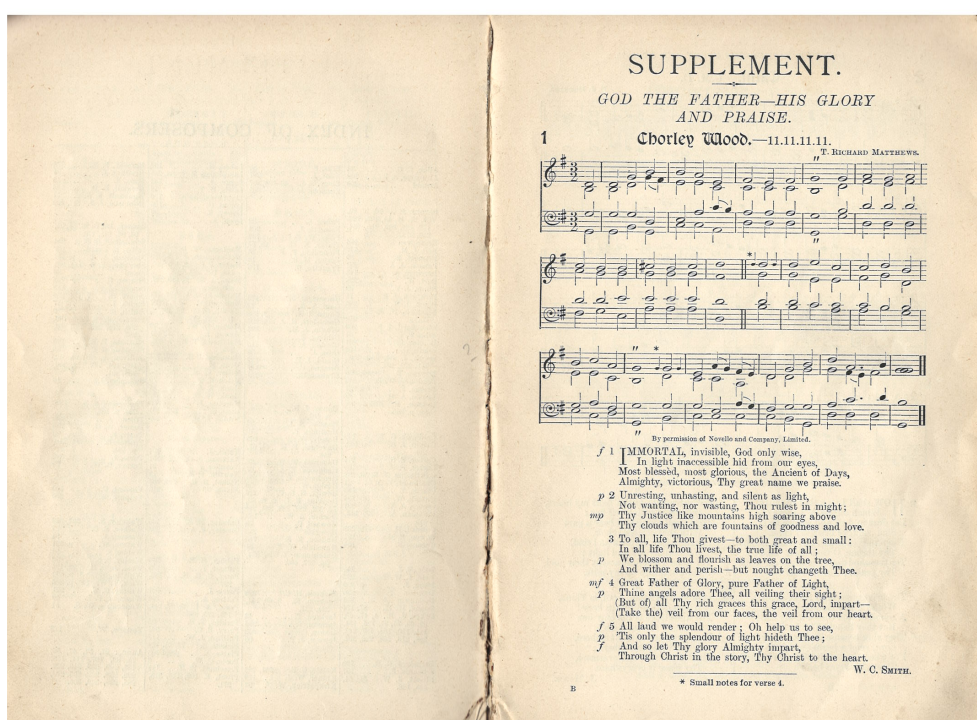
Finally, huge thanks to all who helped with the clearing and cleaning to provide this precious space.

Linda Akkad



A Page in the Life of my Sabbatical

My sabbatical began with something that, at first, seemed very familiar. I opened the 1912 Primitive Methodist Hymnal Supplement to look at hymn number 1, “Immortal invisible”. A stately hymn that is very well known. It speaks of God as the “Ancient of Days”, “Father of Glory” and “Father of Light”. It doesn’t mention Jesus or the Holy Spirit. It tells of a hidden God whom we can’t see because of his great light. It would be the perfect choice for a formal service in a cathedral.



The first thing that I noticed was the hymn was set to a different tune. Almost every hymn in the 1912 hymnbook is set to a different tune to the ones that we know today. The tune was called Chorleywood and was composed by T. Richard Matthews. Matthews was born in Bedfordshire, trained as an organist at St. George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle and became a priest in Nottinghamshire and then Lincolnshire. I’ve not traced his connection to Chorleywood. I had intended to go to the service at Windsor Castle on the first Sunday of the sabbatical, but all of the trains were cancelled because of engineering work and signalling problems.

Then I noticed some extra lines in my hymnbook’s version of “Immortal Invisible.” The current fourth verse is split into two with a couple of extra lines to finish each verse. The current hymn talks of angels veiling their faces at the sight of God. The extra lines ask for our faces and hearts to be unveiled so that we can see God. The other extra lines bring Jesus into the hymn, praying for God to give us his glory “through Christ in the story, thy Christ to the heart”. These different lines make it a much more Christian hymn about God revealing himself to us in Jesus and very different from the current version which could be sung by anyone who fears God, but doesn’t know Jesus personally.

The hymn writer was Walter Chalmers Smith. He spent almost all of his life in Scotland where he was latterly minister of Free High Kirk on The Mound, right at the centre of Edinburgh. But the first three

years of his ministry, including his ordination, was at a tiny London church near the Angel, Islington. It was built by Calvinistic Methodists in 1824 who called it Providence Chapel, then sold for a few years to the Free Church of Scotland (which is where Smith comes in). As soon as he left in 1853, it was sold again to the Strict Baptists who at first called it Mount Zion Chapel and then later Angel Baptist Church. Even though it is tiny, it has a gallery around three sides. It is so compact that it would be impossible to photograph the inside.



It is a lively church. The minister has been there for 19 years and had a strong rapport with his congregation. He was very excited when I explained that we were there because of W.C.Smith. The church's welcome booklet included a page about Walter Chalmers Smith and Immortal Invisible.

During the service, we were given a topic to discuss in small groups. The pianist came across to join Dorothy and me as we were sitting near the front. "I know you from somewhere", he said. This seemed highly unlikely, then we realized that we'd been to the same birthday party a few years ago in Chorleywood. The party, for our son Peter's godfather who was one of my students in Glasgow, had been a big celebration with 150 people there. I'd sat opposite this man who had quizzed me all evening with theological questions. I don't even get an evening off if I go to a birthday party! So, we had found a connection to Chorleywood.

So what happened to "Immortal Invisible" and why was it changed? I much prefer the original words. They not only speak (like the modern version) of the greatness of God, they tell of a God who comes to us and reveals himself to our hearts in Jesus. The problem with the old words is that they don't fit to any tune. Smith wrote Immortal Invisible as a poem, not a hymn. One of the lines has too many syllables. The high church hymnbook, the English Hymnal, created the modern version in 1906 by combining two verses into one, removing 4 lines, but completely changing the meaning of the hymn. It is now a very high church hymn, but it has lost its main message that God is revealed in Jesus.

David Innes

The Gospel I Needed to Hear

In September 2025, my life changed completely when I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back, I can only describe what happened as salvation: not the adoption of a new philosophy or simply finding a religion that suited me, but being confronted by the reality of Christ and understanding that I needed Him.

Before coming to Christ, I had spent many years searching for truth and meaning in places that ultimately led me further away from God. For thirteen years I was deeply involved in occult and esoteric practices. At the time, I believed that I was searching for knowledge, spiritual understanding and answers to some of life's deepest questions. Yet the further I travelled down that road, the further I was moving from the One in whom those answers are ultimately found.

Then, in September 2025, Jesus Christ called me out of that life.

There is much more to my testimony than I could possibly fit into a short magazine article, but what matters most is remarkably simple: Jesus saved me. I came to understand the truth of the Gospel — that I was a sinner in need of a Saviour, that Christ had died for my sins and risen again, and that the proper response to Him was repentance, faith and surrender.

What continues to astonish me is that Christ did not wait for me to make myself worthy of Him. He met me in my sin and called me out of it. As Scripture tells us, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

That experience has profoundly shaped the way I now understand both the love of God and the responsibility of the Church.

A Gospel That Loves Us Enough to Challenge Us

One of the things I have learned since becoming a Christian is that God's love should never be confused with simple affirmation. Jesus received sinners with extraordinary compassion, but He also called people to repentance. At the beginning of His ministry, His proclamation was: “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

Repentance is therefore not the opposite of grace. It is part of our response to grace.

I am deeply grateful for this because I needed a Gospel that challenged me. Had I encountered a Christianity that simply told me that everything I believed and practised was acceptable, it could never have called me out of the life I was living. The Gospel was good news precisely because Christ offered forgiveness, freedom and new life.

This is why I believe Christians must be very careful not to soften the Gospel through fear of offending others.

We live in a culture in which disagreement can easily be interpreted as intolerance and in which there is enormous pressure to make our beliefs acceptable to everyone. As Christians, we should certainly examine the way we communicate. Scripture tells us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and Peter tells believers to give the reason for their hope “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). There is no justification for arrogance, cruelty or treating another person without dignity.

But gentleness must not become silence, and love must not become fear.

Jesus Himself warned His disciples about fearing human beings more than God and said: “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). These are challenging words, but they remind us that Christian witness will not always be comfortable.

Loving People Without Hiding Christ

This matters particularly when the Church reaches beyond its own walls. Christians are called to love their neighbours without qualification. We should feed the hungry, help those in need, welcome the stranger and show compassion regardless of someone's background, beliefs or circumstances. Christian charity should never be a transaction in which kindness is offered only in exchange for conversion.

Yet neither should our desire to serve others make us ashamed of the reason we serve.

Jesus Christ is not an embarrassing addition to Christian charity. He is its foundation.

If we feed someone, clothe someone, comfort someone or welcome someone, we should be able to do so openly as followers of Jesus Christ. We can offer the message of the Gospel without coercion. The person receiving it remains completely free to accept it, reject it, ask questions about it or walk away from it. Our responsibility is not to force belief; it is to remain faithful witnesses.

Paul asks in Romans: "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14). That question has stayed with me

Someone who does not know Christ cannot be expected to proclaim Him. We can.

The Gospel Is Still Good News

The world has changed enormously since the first Christians proclaimed that Jesus Christ is Lord, but the human need for salvation has not.

The Church therefore does not need to reinvent the Gospel for every generation. We need to proclaim it faithfully in every generation.

That requires courage, but it also requires humility. Before I ask whether somebody else is willing to submit to Scripture, I must be willing to let Scripture challenge me. Before I speak about somebody else's need for repentance, I must remember my own. Christianity leaves no room for self-righteousness because every Christian stands before God as someone who needed grace.

I certainly did.

September 2025 will forever mark the moment when my life changed because I encountered the saving grace of Jesus Christ. I did not need a Gospel that left me where I was. I needed the Gospel that told me the truth, called me to repentance and showed me a love greater than anything I had previously known.

There are many people outside our churches today who need that same Gospel.

May we love them enough to serve them, humble ourselves enough to listen to them, and respect them enough never to force our faith upon them.

But may we also love Christ enough never to be ashamed of Him.

The Gospel does not need to be made less Christian in order to reach the world.

It simply needs Christians who are willing, with love, gentleness and courage, to proclaim it.

Debora Dyos



* SATURDAY * 9AM * 5 KILOMETRES * ALL WEATHERS * ALL ABILITIES * ALL AGES * FREE *



This is parkrun! (with a lower-case ‘p’ as park runners will often be quick to point out!) And, more specifically, this is Bushy parkrun, a Saturday-morning fixture that has become a much-loved part of my and my family’s routine.

Our parkrun story began in February 2020 when one member of the family decided it was time to get fitter. So, as a family of four we headed to our local event at Bushy Park to see what we could achieve together. Our first attempt was tough. We alternated between walking and running before eventually crossing the finish line together in around 47 minutes. We wouldn’t say we were immediately hooked, but we kept coming back. Then, just a few weeks later, everything stopped. The country went into lockdown, mass gatherings were prohibited, and parkrun was suspended across the UK and around the world. Exercise was still permitted, but only within the rules and restrictions in place at the time. Not to be deterred, we carried on running, keeping active through the summer of 2020 and into the following year. Finally, in the autumn of 2021, parkrun returned to mass participation, and we were ready to come back.

Five years on, this weekly event has become a firm fixture in my family’s lives - and it isn’t just about running. We have all taken our turns volunteering, with roles including course marshal, funnel manager, volunteer coordinator, car-park marshal and barcode scanner. Cameron has even become one of the youngest Run Directors, taking overall responsibility for an event and bravely standing in front of a crowd that can number as many as 1,800 participants, microphone in hand. Georgia is also a regular volunteer and has become something of a legend among the volunteer team for bringing along her famous chocolate brownies!

For me, volunteering has become one of my favourite parts of parkrun — perhaps even more enjoyable than running it. Recently, I have taken on the role of timekeeper, which is certainly not for the faint-hearted when you have a large field of runners coming through the finish funnel. The process itself is remarkably simple, but when you see it happening at scale, it is quite something! Runners cross the finish line and enter a queuing funnel (there are usually three due to large numbers) and are ultimately handed a finish token showing their finishing position. The timekeepers’ records are then matched with those finish tokens. If everything goes according to plan and people stay in their correct finishing position, every runner’s position should correspond with a recorded time. It really is a fine art — particularly when hundreds of runners are coming through in a matter of minutes!

One of the highlights of Bushy parkrun is meeting up afterwards with fellow parkrunners from Hampton Mission Partnership: Struan, Bronwen and Graham Fisher and Mike Dennison; occasionally Sue Dennison who mostly runs and volunteers at the nearby Hanworth parkrun. By the time I have made it through the finish funnel and collected my token, the others are usually well into post parkrun chat (I am considerably slower!).

It is important to point out that parkrun is not just about running. A great development in parkrun’s history has been *parkwalk*. Introduced just a few years ago, it has become a popular part of the event and is for those who prefer to walk the 5 kilometre course at their own pace, chat to others and enjoy being part of the occasion. There are usually around 30–50 parkwalkers at Bushy parkrun each week, and there is even a dedicated volunteer role. I have taken on that role too, accompanying walkers and chatting along the way.

There are inspiring participants at Bushy parkrun, including the annual octogenarian event, when people aged 80 and over — including a few in their 90s! — come together to walk or run. For younger participants, Bushy Park also hosts junior parkrun on some Sunday mornings — a 2-kilometre event. The main Saturday event welcomes children from the age of four, provided they are accompanied by an adult. There are even dogs at parkrun running with their owners.

And that, perhaps, captures what parkrun is really about. It is certainly about fitness, but it is also about community, connection and wellbeing. People come along for all sorts of reasons. Some are experienced runners; others are taking their first steps towards becoming more active. Some walk the entire course. Others volunteer without running at all. For some, the social contact and sense of belonging can be just as important as the exercise. At parkrun there are particular milestones that one can achieve with t-shirts available at reaching various milestones, eg. 100 runs, 250, 500 etc.

There is also parkrun 'tourism' where participants aim to attend as many different events as possible, for example parkruns starting with every letter of the alphabet or attending as many overseas events as possible. Bushy parkrun often attracts participants from as far afield as Australia and New Zealand with scores of new visitors each week wanting to run at the 'home of parkrun' – where it all started. Yes, Bushy parkrun has a particularly special place in parkrun history. It was the very first parkrun, held on 2 October 2004, when Paul Sinton-Hewitt welcomed just 13 runners. From those modest beginnings, the idea spread across the UK and eventually around the world. Its founding principles remain simple: **weekly, free, for everyone, forever.**

There is no cost to participate, other than perhaps investing in a reasonably decent pair of running trainers! Today there are more than 1,400 parkrun events in the UK and a total of around 2,300 worldwide. Bushy parkrun (and some others) also run on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, regardless of the day of the week! I have completed the majority of my parkruns at Bushy Park, but have also ventured further afield to nearby Hanworth parkrun, Eindhoven in The Netherlands, and Gothenburg, Sweden. Cameron has also run at a parkrun in Warsaw.

Parkrun often welcomes celebrities! A regular volunteer is course marshal, John Altman (Eastenders' 'Nasty Nick'), and more recently we have welcomed paralympian swimmer, Ellie Simmonds, actor Joe Wilkinson and in May this year, double Olympic gold medallist, Dame Kelly Holmes.

Bushy parkrun is a one lap course; quite unusual as most parkruns are several laps. As you edge towards the end of the course there are always enthusiastic spectators cheering runners and walkers towards the finish. The final stretch, along the path beside Heron Pond, is often the toughest and then you're through the finish line and into one of three funnels – it's a small scale military operation getting so many people through and processed. There may be aching muscles later, but what you remember most is the feeling of crossing that finish line — the sense of achievement, the camaraderie and the knowledge that, whatever your pace or ability, you did it!



Sign up to register and obtain your personalised barcode at: www.parkrun.com

On a hot summer day, in a Church side room,
Three teammates start their shift.
They open windows and doors, for air,
And survey their customer lists.
A basket, with sling, for a baby girl,
A basket for a baby boy,
A trove of basics for another babe,
All three topped with a cute toy.

Three cartons of soap are put into stock,
Maternity pads and nappies too.
Four new baskets are filled, according to rote,
To be ready for the next week's queue.
Now and then, a choc is snaffled,
To keep their sugar levels steady,
With sips of drink to replace lost sweat,
And a last check that all was ready.

Ding-dong, "Who's that?" "I'll go and see."
"Hello, welcome, come in. Yes, it's hot."
Three full bags of babygros and vests,
All washed and folded, plus a cot.
"Oh, thank you, thank you, they'll all be used."
"My Grandson's just turned one."
"The Extra Mile helps children to ten."
"That's great, his out-grown clothes will come."

Ding-dong. Ding-dong, more clothes and a new breast pump –
"Goodness me, put it on the shelf."
An hour later, a Midwife arrives,
"We need a breast pump." "Help yourself."
This helps to prove there's no such thing as chance,
That gift was answer to prayer.
So often, donations go home to home,
Bringing smiles as they disappear.

The team works on, hot and streaming sweat,
As two hours tick and shift-end draws near.
"We have to close at about three o'clock,
I hope the last Midwife gets here."
Ding-dong, another huge donation comes,
Wrapped in a humble, black-tied bag.
Willing hands sort and file the tiny clothes,
Storage boxes filling, teammates glad.

At last, ding-dong, ding-dong, the Midwife comes,
"I'm sorry, got a busy day."
"Calm down and pause, all is ready for you."
Her car is loaded and she's on her way.
Tick-tock, the clock brings the session to an end.
Three hot folk, from the Baby Basics team,
Mop their brows and smile – a good job done,
Then wander home for a well-earned rest, dreaming of a cool ice cream.

(Written by Holly Trundle, remembering a fun session helping at Baby Basics, Sunbury, alongside Pam and Jill,
and Liz from The Extra Mile.)

Doris's journey

Tonight brings both overwhelming joy and tears to my eyes. Watching Joshua walk into his leavers' party, dressed so smartly, with excitement written all over his face, reminded me just how far we've come.

This journey has not been easy without Jeffrey. There have been days filled with questions, silent tears, fears about tomorrow, and moments when the weight of raising a child alone felt almost unbearable. There have been milestones I never imagined reaching without him standing beside us.

Yet tonight as I watched our son smile, I realised that God's faithfulness has carried us through every single chapter. We are still standing. We are still moving forward. We are still finding reasons to celebrate.

This can only be the doing of the Lord.

If you're reading this while your life feels cloudy, heavy or painfully uncertain, don't let today convince you that this is how your story ends. Some seasons are meant to stretch us, not destroy us. One day you will look back at the road that almost broke you and realise it became the road that built you.

The tears you cry today will not be wasted. The prayers you whisper in the dark are not unheard. The strength you don't think you have is already being formed within you.

Tonight I thank God for Joshua. I thank Him for sustaining us when I didn't know how we would make it. I thank Him because every milestone is a proof that His grace is sufficient. Keep trusting. Keep walking. Keep believing.

The same God who carries you through the night will one day give you a morning worth celebrating. To God be all the glory.

Doris Bramson



I am sure most of you who ever watch the BBC Weather Forecasts will have seen the beautiful photographs taken locally by “ruthiebabes”. I have always wondered who the photographer actually was. Somehow Liz Windaybank managed to find her contact details, and we were delighted when an invitation to speak to Ladies Guild was accepted. Ruth and her husband Gordon duly came and told us how they had moved to Twickenham and how Ruth’s contributions to the BBC had begun. In addition, Ruth agreed to write an article for our church magazine. It follows here and is both an inspiring and encouraging testimony.

Janice Thompson

Never Too Old to Begin

**Weather watching, painting, and God's faithful guidance.
by Ruth Wadey – aka 'ruthiebabes'**

Old Age Is a New Beginning

It was a normal working day in London. You know the sort — people everywhere, power walkers clutching takeaway coffees, and the constant hum of the city.

My heart was pounding as I looked up at the huge sign above my head that boldly declared BBC.

I was about to be interviewed on the BBC National Lunchtime News and then head to a nearby park for a video shoot with the formidable Matt Taylor. Surely life could not get much more exciting than this.

Yet this remarkable day had begun with a single photograph taken in the rain.

A Rainy Beginning

A year earlier I had signed up as a registered BBC Weather Watcher and chosen the nickname ruthiebabes. Having always loved both weather and photography, it felt the most natural thing in the world to do.

One day I took a photograph of Eel Pie Island in pouring rain and sent it in. Within minutes, that very picture appeared as the backdrop to the BBC London weather forecast presented by Matt Taylor.

I was awestruck.

And completely hooked.

Over the following months hundreds of my photographs were featured by various presenters, including the lovely Carol Kirkwood.

The BBC had invited me to represent all Weather Watchers on this the celebration of the first anniversary.

During a tour of the building, Elizabeth Rizzini took Gordon and me around the building. To our amazement, people began leaving their desks to meet the person behind the name ruthiebabes. I was being treated like a celebrity. The surreal feeling intensified when the legendary Tomasz Schafernaker greeted me with a hug.

Lizzie then took us into the weather studio and, to my delight, let me try presenting a forecast. Seeing myself appear on the green screen was unforgettable.

It was brilliant.

I was terrible.

And I loved every minute of it.

The moment had arrived. I was sitting in the BBC newsroom facing cameras from all angles while being interviewed about my Weather Watcher journey, I found myself thinking back to a moment in Australia in the early 1990s. During a time of prayer with friends, someone shared a message with me: “Your name will be known throughout the world.”

This was long before the internet. I had no idea how such a thing could happen.

Yet somehow, through weather photographs and television broadcasts, it had.

From Exeter to National Television

The following year the BBC invited me to speak at a promotional event in Exeter. I shared weather photographs, my experiences as a BBC Weather Watcher and gave tips on how to take clear weather photographs. Afterwards I encouraged everyone to go outside and photograph the weather for themselves. They were astonished at how differently each person saw the same scene.

Eight years later, the delightful BBC presenter Wendy Hurrell visited us in Twickenham for a two-hour video shoot celebrating the tenth anniversary of Weather Watchers. The recordings were broadcast several times on national BBC television and are still available online.

Where My Love of Weather Began

My obsession with weather began much earlier when I was growing up in Fiji.

One night my father woke my sister and me at midnight to watch a thunderstorm. Most parents would have said, “Go back to sleep.” Mine said, “Come and watch the sky.”

The rolling thunder, the vivid lightning, and the deafening sound of torrential rain captivated me. From that moment on I was destined to become an avid weather watcher.

Fiji regularly experienced tropical cyclones. I remember watching leaves embed themselves into our bedroom wall after we opened the front and back doors to create a through-draught and help protect the roof from being blown off. As children we thought palm trees toppling over and garage roofs landing in the neighbour’s garden was tremendous fun.

Our parents were less enthusiastic!

On another occasion, shortly after an earthquake, I watched the sea rapidly retreat from the shoreline before returning as a huge wave — what we now call a tsunami. I stood mesmerised. Thankfully, the reef broke much of its force, so the town escaped severe damage, although dead fish were left scattered everywhere.

Guided by God

As a teenager I decided that the decisions I made in life, whether large or small, would be directed by God. I did not want to waste my life.

Psalm 32:8 became my guiding verse:

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

One experience of that guidance stands out above others.

In the early autumn of 2015, while we were living in Exeter, Gordon and I were having coffee with friends. Tom told us that he had been praying for us that morning and felt strongly that we would be moving to Twickenham — to the very flat our son was leaving — and attend the church where our son was married. The move would also bring us much closer to our family.

My heart leapt. I loved visiting Twickenham. Our son’s flat overlooked the Thames, and Gordon, being a Londoner, had always longed to return “home.” But was this God’s direction?

We prayed about it carefully.

Three weeks later, while returning from our granddaughter’s birthday celebration in Aylesbury, we decided to drop into the evening service at St Stephen’s Church (on our way to Exeter!) and ask God for clear confirmation.

We slipped quietly into the back of the church. Before the service began, the music leader explained that during rehearsal that afternoon he and others had felt strongly that God wanted them to share a message with the congregation.

“Welcome. This is your home.”

He then added that there was a couple present who had never really felt at home where they were living.

And said, “Welcome. This is your home.”

Joy and laughter bubbled up inside me.

Then Jez Barnes began his sermon by saying that, for the first time ever, he had felt prompted that afternoon to change his prepared message. He was to speak about stepping out in faith, walking into the mist, and replacing any fear with joy.

We sat there astonished!

After the service, a gentleman recognised us from our son’s wedding and asked why we were visiting. We replied casually that we were simply passing through. He asked if he could pray for us. After praying a wonderful blessing, he said, “I believe God is bringing you to Twickenham.”

That was our confirmation.

Six weeks later, we moved to Twickenham.

A Hidden Talent

People assume that once they reach their seventies, life begins to wind down. My experience has been quite the opposite.

Not only did my BBC Weather Watcher adventure begin at seventy, but the year before I discovered a talent I never knew I had.

For Mother's Day my son gave me an easel, a canvas, and a set of acrylic paints. I was bewildered. Why would he give me these? He reminded me how often I had looked at paintings and said, "I'm sure I could do that."

Two weeks later a friend invited me to visit her new art studio and suggested I join her for a session. With a mixture of trepidation and excitement, I set up my easel, took a deep breath, and began to paint.

To my amazement, the painting turned out well.

That day marked the beginning of a wonderful new pastime. I lost myself in painting and within months created my own website — wadey.com

Never Too Old

Looking back, I can see a thread running through all these experiences: a love of weather awakened in Fiji, opportunities I could never have planned, guidance that led us to a new home, and a hidden artistic gift.

So never think you are too old to try something new. You have no idea what hidden talents may still be waiting to appear.

After all, old age is simply a new beginning, because we have never been there before.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." — Psalm 32:8

The cover photo was taken from Ruth's balcony in pouring rain
God's promise to us

My Swiss Rail Adventure

Back in the year 2000 I went, with my husband Brian, on our first rail holiday. I have always enjoyed travelling by train and have vivid memories of childhood journeys to Devon and Cornwall by steam train.

We chose to go to Switzerland on the “Glacier Express” tour in late May 2000. Three of the most scenic train journeys were included in this - the Glacier Express, Bernina Express and the Centovalli. “Express “ is not indicative of speed. The first of these travels 97 miles in over 4 hours with one or two photo stops en route. It was a memorable trip.

Towards the end of last year, I watched a documentary of the Glacier Express and decided that I would love to go on this train again. None of my friends wished to go so I booked on my own. The holiday began on June 14th on Eurostar from St. Pancras. The 24 members of the group were very friendly and helpful to me. I was obviously the oldest member of the party, though well able to keep up with everyone and everything.

We went via Paris (40 degrees in the shade) to spend one night in Strasbourg. If you have not been there, it is a beautiful city. Sadly we only had the evening and following morning there. The cathedral, lit up at night, was impressive and I went inside the next morning. It contains an intricate astronomical clock and some beautiful stained glass windows, including some modern ones in a side chapel.



At midday we departed for Chur, which is the oldest town in Switzerland, and spent three nights there. Our first day was free and a small group of us went on a train which initially runs through the streets to Arosa - a quiet mountain resort built around a lake. A free bus took us higher up from where we could walk back down to Arosa through woodland hoping to see black squirrels and a bird called a nutcracker. We were successful in seeing both.



The following day was our excursion on the Bernina Express to Poschiavo in the Italian speaking region. As I had suspected there was far less snow and ice than 26 years ago, however the scenery was just as dramatic with high viaducts and incredible winding descents into valleys.



Next morning we set off on the second scenic journey, from Chur to Tasch on the Glacier Express for our second three night stay. Our luggage was transported by road. Tasch is close to Zermatt which is traffic free and we felt that we were staying in a large car park as this is where visitors have to leave their cars.

On day 6 the group went into Zermatt by train and began with coffee and sampling a local specialty bread which sustained would be climbers of the Matterhorn - not that any of us were inspired to attempt a climb. We then had free time before a guided walk around the town. Originally Zermatt was a poor farming village until climbing became popular. There are many old wooden buildings left from this time. Behind the church is a cemetery where climbers were buried. So many young men lost their lives attempting to conquer the Matterhorn. There is a memorial to a Swiss guide, Ulrich Inderbinen, who was still leading climbs until the age of 90 and had reached the summit 370 times. He died aged 104.



On our last day we were free to choose what to do. I opted for a train, the Gornergrat, which ascends to over 10,000 feet and offers a wonderful view of the Matterhorn. Unfortunately there was a little cloud on the summit. In 2000 the temperature in late May was minus 1 degree. There was snow on the ground and ibex and marmots close by. Moving on to this year, there was far less snow and certainly no animals about. A sad indication of global warming. This year everyone was in summer clothes, sitting enjoying their coffee in the sunshine.

We left next day and travelled back, along lake Geneva via Lausanne to Paris (still 40 degrees) and on to St Pancras. An amazing holiday and I certainly don't regret my decision to travel by myself. As Ruth Wadey said "It's never too old to begin".

Janice Thompson

Just a house

Just a house...

There's mud here on the carpet from the shoes of people welcomed in. There's dust on the old sideboard that once held the best china used each year at Christmas. The kitchen fridge that buzzes loudly will soon be silent.

It's just a house, except it isn't

It's childhood.

Laughter over Lego, tears after arguments, recording cassette tapes, dancing in the garden, and bedtime stories.

It's friendship.

Garden parties, bonfire nights all piled in, the dog wagging his tail in people's faces and watching the skies to see if the rain will visit the summer barbecue again.

It's family.

Noisy, chaotic, early words and steps, football in the garden and baking in the kitchen, meals round the table and plates balanced precariously on our laps in the front room.

It's moments.

Birthday candles blown out in one puff or two, decorating the Christmas tree accompanied by fighting, the Christmas tunes, homework at the table with encyclopedias on the shelf and instruments practised sometimes out of tune.

And it's books.

So many books!

The house has heard many goodbyes, as mundane and everyday as 'see you later' or as hard as 'I'll miss you forever.'

A place from which first and final journeys were made.

The river in the garden that has been grown over the years by tears, keeps moving, just like the passing of time.

So with goodbye comes thank you, a grateful remembrance and a letting go of all that is held by this place that is just a house, except it isn't.

By Katharine Jee on her mum Janet Wright moving to Hampton



Oxford bound

Janice Thompson organised a trip to Oxford for the Ladies' Guild and the Townswomen's Guild but it was open to any members of the Hampton Mission Partnership. It was very well organised and Janice also provided maps of Oxford with the points of interest marked.

Below are details from some of us that went, with their experiences.

Willem and Barry

This was a nostalgic trip for me, as I visited Oxford frequently when my daughter Ruth studied at Oxford University approximately 30 years ago.

When we arrived in Oxford I teamed up with Barry and George and our first port of call was the Ashmolean Museum where we had coffee in the cafe before exploring the museum. This museum is the University of Oxford's museum of art and technology and the collections range from Egyptian mummies to contemporary art, and is fascinating.

We then took the 'City Sightseeing Oxford Hop on Hop Off' bus tour, which gave us a historical overview of the main sights via the audio commentary.

We had our lunch by the Martyrs' Memorial (we had all brought our own lunch from home) and after that we split up.

Barry and George visited Blackfriars Priory, which is situated behind the Martyrs' Memorial which they found very interesting. In the afternoon Barry and George went to browse shops and have a cup of tea. Barry had not been to Oxford before and he was intrigued with the city. As we had limited time there he is planning another visit, probably with his friend George when he intends to visit some of the colleges and other places of interest.

I went to visit Merton College, where Ruth had a place, and I also went to Holywell Street where Ruth had digs for part of the time she was in Oxford. Then made my way back to the coach for the journey back to Hampton, but at around a quarter to 4 the heavens opened so had to dodge the rain although I had brought an umbrella with me.

A very enjoyable day out and very well organised. Noted that when we arrived back in Hampton it was still bone dry – no rain here!

Lucy

I am grateful for Janice who planned the trip to Oxford, I for one had a wonderful day. It was my first time on a day coach and my first time in the city of Oxford. Janice was kind enough and very organised in that she printed some maps to help us navigate the town. I paired up with the lovely Eunice and our first stop was the St. Michael Church at the North Gate, one of the city's oldest buildings. We spent some time there and said a prayer. Although we had initially planned to get coffee first the excitement got the better of us and we found ourselves at the Carfax Tower. My buddy was ready to go up 99 steps for the view of the city from the top, so I was too (NOT) and so up we went. I was glad we did! (And I promised myself to get fitter before the next trip!)

From there we went into the Covered Market where there are lots of independent shops including food places and gift shops, where we said we would love to go back and shop. After a few minutes' walk down the street we were at the University Church of St. Mary. The building was as beautiful outside as it was inside – luckily we didn't climb up the 137 steps. Before we knew it, it was lunch time and I had the most delicious on the go plant-based lunch ever in this cafe called Chick Pea.

At 2 pm we were up for the guided walking tour of the university where we met Janice and her friend. Our guide Matthew was full of banter, mixing history with tall tales as we went round the sites which included the Bodleian Library, Bridge of Sighs and an education in intoxication, the filming sites for Harry Potter and Inspector Morse and the Tower of Five orders, just to name but a few. At the end of the tour we did feel we had seen and learned enough for the day, and we were right as ten minutes later God opened the heavens. Thankfully we were now in a cafe enjoying a much needed cuppa. It was still chucking it down when we had to dash back to the coach, but who is complaining when it's the one thing we had been praying for throughout the heatwaves. Only thanks to God for the rain, for the experience, great company and amazing HMP family, can't wait for the next trip!

Books

As a Christian, a librarian and a lover of books I was thrilled to see in the March issue of Premier Christianity: the UK's leading Christian magazine, a list of 100 books that changed the church! You can read online about how the books were chosen and the complete list. [100 books that changed the Church | Magazine Features | Premier Christianity](#)

I found it interesting to see how many of them I had read and discover many that are new to me.

Here is the Top Ten:-

1. The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom
2. The Cross and the Switchblade by David Wilkerson
3. God's Smuggler by Brother Andrew
4. Mere Christianity by C S Lewis
5. The Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Meyer
6. The Shack by William P Young
7. The Chronicles of Narnia by C S Lewis
8. The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan
9. The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer
10. God on Mute by Pete Greig

If you were to compile a list of 10 'Christian' books that mean a lot to you, what would they be? Please let me know and hopefully in the next magazine we can enjoy seeing what you come up with. Here's my list:-

1. Theo of Golden by Allen Levi
2. The Greatest Story ever told by Bear Grylls
3. The God Conundrum by David K Harper
4. 10,000 reasons by Matt Redman
5. The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom
6. Choosing to SEE by Mary Beth Chapman
7. Hope is coming by Louise Blyth
8. The Last Laugh by Steve Legg
9. Diamonds in the Dust by Joni Eareckson Tada
10. Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

Theo of Golden by Allen Levi

This is simply one of the best books I have ever read! 86 year old Theo (never reveals his surname) arrives one Spring in the small southern U S town of Golden. In the Chalice coffee shop he is intrigued by the 92 pencil portraits of local folk around the walls, all done by the same local artist. He decides to purchase them one by one and gift them to the people in the pictures. When he meets each one, stories are told, friendships are born, and lives are affirmed and transformed in response to his inexplicable kindness. Theo is amazed at the effects the portraits have on people but says it is no credit to him, it is a gift of God.

A friend read the book and found it 'Utterly breathtakingly beautiful.' I couldn't agree more!

Liz Windaybank

My Friends by Fredrik Backman

My reading group recently chose the above book and the overriding theme of loyal friendships over twenty five years has stayed with me. Although at times quite harsh and not always easy to read, it has a message of how deep friendships can act as a refuge from abusive or fractured homes, helping with the trauma of grief and survival and how the power of art can connect across the years.

The book is a dual time line story about an angry eighteen year old girl who has just left foster care. She is an aspiring artist who meets a terminally ill painter whom she greatly admires - consequently he recognises something within her and leaves her a priceless work of art. She then embarks on a cross-country train journey to uncover the true story behind the picture, which depicts four childhood friends on a remote pier, who have built a safe space to cope with painful home situations- showing that 'friends can save us when biological families fail us'.

The conclusion is that hope and loyalty allow us to move forward in the most challenging times.

Sarah Sones

