



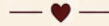
The Link ++

The newsletter for the Methodist Church in
Burnham-on-Sea and the surrounding area

May 2026

“My heart was
strangely warmed.”

JOHN WESLEY



A Message from our Minister

Dear Friends

In May we have two Bank Holidays and the holiday season starts for those who are involved in serving the number of people who flock to this part of Somerset for a break.

The Bible is full of times when time out was taken, a time of refreshment, but also a time for getting more in tune with God. Some of the most memorable encounters with God happened when people were away from it all and on their own. From Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and right up to Jesus himself, people have found a special meeting place in the relationship with God through solitude and silence.

This search for God in isolation and separateness has been the mark of different 'orders' of Christians throughout the centuries. Some look to Jesus' practice of finding a quiet place to pray as a way to base their lives. Monastic life has been described as 'not aimed at rejecting the world, but rather at cultivating an "interior solitude" to better listen to God, serve the Church through prayer, and intercede for humanity'. But you don't need to be in a monastery to serve the world in this way.

I am not sure that is what people who come to Somerset to get away from it all might want to do. But I hope and pray that in some of the things we offer, in the way our churches speak of love, and in all the places where God calls us to serve, visitors might indeed hear the 'still, small voice of calm' that God offers in our noisy and challenging world. And perhaps too, to think about their own place in God's world.

Steve

Brean

www.breanmethodistchurch.org.uk

No, I didn't get to the top of Brean Down before dawn on Easter morning; too old, too weary, too early in the morning, someone else's car on our drive, you name it, that's my excuse. But several people from our church did manage the climb and joined with various others from the Link churches. They sang their hearts out as the sun came up, I have no doubt. Hymns of resurrection joy. But songs of hope too perhaps.

Hope for the world, hope for those within it, hope for peace. In this deeply disturbed culture in which we now live, I seem to have felt hope as being a constant companion in worship on Easter Day and in the weeks immediately afterwards and as I listened to and watched a broadcast elsewhere, hope seemed the theme there also.

Well so let it be.

Stanley and Joyce led us beautifully in our Easter morning church service and we were blessed by a goodly number of visitors. And afterwards there was simnel cake to share at coffee time. Jim McKnight enriched us the week after and Rosemary K and Brian D in the weeks following.

It is good to see our visitors back. All of last year's flock seem to have made it through the winter, even the dog. Much to catch up with.

Our Anglican friends are also pleased to have their new vicar well settled in by now and they look forward to working with her. And we too look forward to our Ecumenical partnership being blessed by her presence.

Hope seems to be in nature's mind too with all the blossoms and other features materialising two or three weeks early this year.

And now May opens up before us, this year with two National holidays to enjoy. On the Sunday before the first one we shall be enriched by the christening of Master William, son of Vicky and Adam, grandson of Rose and Steve Baker. Welcome young man. You too are a symbol of hope at this auspicious time.

So, with hope in our hearts we at Brean wish you all a happy start to the summer months.

Harvey

Brent

www.eastbrentmethodistchurch.org.uk

Easter seems to have come and gone very quickly but wasn't it wonderful to see the crosses on top of Brent Knoll again this year? I add our thanks to those who did all the hard work and made this possible remembering that not only do they put them up but they also have to take them down. We will probably never know what they mean to people travelling by or even living locally but pray that the message of our living Lord will reach those in need.

It is looking like a good start to the month of May, weatherwise at least, but we continue to pray for Andrew and the rest of the family as tests are still ongoing to determine what treatment will be available to him. We do miss him.

On a brighter note it was a pleasure to welcome (on different Sundays) granddaughters of two of our members to our Sunday worship and, also, two people who have recently purchased a caravan in the area. The couple, if my memory serves me correctly, are from Gloucestershire, and said that they were hoping to spend a lot of weekends in Somerset but had to organise their visits around commitments in their own Church at home. We are looking forward to seeing them again.

We have a working cooker in our kitchen again, with thanks to Jill and Gordon.

We continue to be blessed by ministers and local preachers who lead our worship each Sunday.

With best wishes from all at East Brent.

Margaret

Burnham

<http://www.methodistchurchburnhamonsea.org.uk/>

During April, Steve and the Pastoral Visitors refreshed the allocation of members to Pastoral Visitors. All 57 members of the church are associated with a Pastoral Visitor. Officially, Visitors act on behalf of the church to maintain a connection through regular contact and to offer spiritual support. In practice, people become sharing friends.

On Sunday April 5th, some members were up very early. They were atop Brean Down at sunrise to mark the dawning of Easter Day with worship. They also joined the large congregation for the 10:30 service during which everyone contributed to adorning, what had been, a bare Lenten Cross with many fresh flowers. After the service, the cross was placed outside the building so that passers-by could reflect on the resurrection message of new life through the symbol of the beautiful empty cross. The day before, members had given their time and skills to running a session of Messy Church to communicate the Easter message to children and those accompanying them.

We like to meet to eat and to be entertained and informed. At the very end of February Brian Foakes gave an illustrated talk on his travels in Ethiopia and drew on his wider knowledge of Africa based on years spent there. The meal featured Ethiopian dishes with an alternative for the less adventurous. In contrast, the meal in April was very British: Bangers and Mash. Tim and Janet Widdess described and showed photographs of British cathedrals. This was based on a sabbatical activity of visiting every cathedral in Britain. The next event will be on 16th May when there will be the opportunity to hear and see more about the visit to India by Steve, Liz, Marian and Alison about which there was an item in the April edition of The Link. Yes, there will be Indian themed food!

We are now preparing for a major refurbishment of the hall that is planned to take place over the summer. The floor, laid directly on the sandy soil (which was a common construction method), is in a poor state in some places. It needs to be replaced with a solid floor. This provides an opportunity to make other improvements. The stage will be removed to make more usable space, the electrics will be improved, windows repaired, some aging doors replaced and general redecoration undertaken. There have been many fund-raising events within the church, but without grants, the work would not be possible at this time. Steve took the lead on securing grants. Liz is managing the project. We are extremely grateful to Steve and to Liz for the time and effort they are giving to this project in the last year – and even up to the last weeks – of Steve's ministry here.

David

West Huntspill

www.wsbos.org/westhuntspill.htm

Coffee and Chat will be on Friday the 29th May. Do come along and join us, we enjoy meeting up with our friends from the Link Churches. We have a sales table with many interesting items. And all donations are gratefully received this year for The Somerset and Dorset Air Ambulance.

Harold Hill, President of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore, Maryland, and a consultant in the US space program, relates the following development.

“Our astronauts and space scientists were checking the position of the sun, moon, and planets out in space where they would be in 100 years and 1,000 years from now. We have to know this so we won’t send a satellite up and have it bump into something later on its orbits. We have to lay out the orbits in terms of the life of the satellite, and where the planets will be, so the whole thing will not bog down.

They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries. The computer suddenly stopped and put up a red signal, which meant there was something wrong either with the information fed into it or with the results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out, and they found there is a day missing in space in elapsed time. They scratched their heads and tore their hair. There was no answer.

Finally a Christian man on the team said, “You know, one time I was in Sunday School and they talked about the sun standing still.” While they didn’t believe him, they didn’t have an answer either, so they said, “Show us”. He got a Bible and went back to the book of Joshua where they found a pretty ridiculous statement for anyone with “common sense.” There they found the Lord saying to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before thee.” Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and if darkness fell, they would overpower them. So, Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still. That’s right – “The sun stood still and the moon stayed – and hasted not to go down a whole day!” The astronauts and scientists said, “There is the missing day!” “They checked the computers going back to the time it was written and found it was close but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua’s day was 23 hours and 20 minutes -- not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it was: “about (approximately) a full day’. These little words in the Bible are important but they are still in trouble because if you cannot account for forty minutes, you’ll still be in trouble 1,000 years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits.

“As the Christian employee thought about it, he remembered somewhere in the Bible where it said the sun went BACKWARDS. The scientists told him he was out of his mind,

but they got out the Book and read these words in 2 Kings: “Hezekiah, on his death- bed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah who told him that he was going to die. Hezekiah asked for a sign as proof, Isaiah said “Shall the shadow go forward 10 degrees?” Hezekiah said “it is an easy thing for the shadow to go down 10 degrees; no but let the shadow go backwards 10 degrees....” Isaiah spoke to the Lord and the Lord brought the shadow ten degrees BACKWARD!”

“ten degrees is exactly Twenty-three hours and 20 minutes in Joshua, plus 40 minutes in Second Kings make this missing day in the universe.

References: Joshua 10:8, 12, 13 and 2 Kings 20: 9-11, New King James Version, Thomas Nelson 1982)

From “A Bucket of Surprises” compiled by J.John & Mark Stibbe

Janet Johnson

Janet’s granddaughter is launching a new book later this month. Here are the details. We wish her well in her venture



The Link Fellowship

Members shared poems and readings centring around spring and Easter for our April meeting. There were comments, after some were read, that climate change seemed to have made a noticeable difference to the timing of the appearance of some spring flowers. Usually we finish with a cup of tea & biscuits, but there was a lovely surprise in the form of an iced cake that Margaret Scott had made to celebrate Margaret Trapp's 95th birthday & my 80th which had occurred since our last meeting. To our delight we found that it was Janet's birthday only a few days previously, so it was good to include her with the celebration.

Our next meeting is at 2.30 pm on Tuesday May 12th when Brian Foakes will share his experiences in Ethiopia. If you missed this when Brian did a Saturday evening presentation at Burnham, you would be very welcome to join us for this afternoon. As usual this will be at East Brent Methodist Church Hall, and all are welcome.

Joyce Pipet

SPACE FLIGHT

Artemis II - In Flight

As NASA propels four human beings into the most incredible journey of their lives and of this century, we watch with awe as the powerful rocket leaves Earth in a towering propulsion of fire. What are their thoughts as they burn all their bridges to Earth, literally reaching for the stars.

Envy of the support crew at NASA, each one imagining themselves in that historical ascent, tearing through the galaxy, breaking free from Earth's gravity, mile by endless mile, until they can see Earth as a separate planet, complete and beautiful, too far away to hear its turmoil and warfare as humans destroy their unique environment and all who dwell in it.

They are so limited in that small space, but carrying out precise and critical procedures, documenting memories to bring back, photographing the far side of the moon, seen by their eyes only, with its pitted surface. What forms of life could be watching this alien craft from their hidden sanctuaries, fearful of the unknown as we all are.

What courage to leave families, miles behind them, surely their thoughts must sometimes cast a shadow of doubt about their safe return. Amazing to be able to see them living out their daily lives in that tiny capsule, making history for all mankind. Can they sleep, as they are transported far beyond the realms of possibility as we know it.

The Earth waits for their return. Can they survive the ball of fire which surrounds them, will the heatshield protect them? So vulnerable and so unable to change their hurtling descent to break into Earth's atmosphere again. We hold our breath, praying for their safety, trying to identify with them as they are totally out of radio contact with NASA for those interminable minutes of silence, and the relief when their commander's voice confirmed their safety. Amazingly they splash down in the Pacific at precisely the planned moment, at the right angle as the striped parachutes soar into the sky, stabilising their craft as the waiting boats and helicopters rush to welcome them back home to planet Earth.

Will they be well and whole? How long before they open the hatch, the ocean currents delay them but at last they emerge triumphant, victors of the universe, bodies glad to be stretching in the air, readjusting to the familiar gravity instead of floating weightlessly. Their bodies and minds have withstood the rigours of space, endured the most demanding of circumstances. They are back, embracing the heat shield which kept them safe and ready to share their wonder with a waiting world. They have seen our Earth like

a living jewel in the darkness of space, hugged by the soft atmospheric layer, golden sunrays dancing across the horizon, while our little moon watches from a distance.

No wonder each space traveller returns, filled with emotion, being reminded how fragile and breathtaking our world really is, and how vital it is to care for it now, instead of continually destroying it with our short-sighted greed.

Kathy Hurrel

A Garden of Faith



Plant three rows of peas:

Peace of mind,
Peace of heart,
Peace of soul.



Plant four rows of squash:

Squash gossip,
Squash indifference,
Squash grumbling,
Squash selfishness.



Plant four rows of lettuce:

Let us be faithful,
Let us be kind,
Let us be obedient,
Let us truly love
one another.



**No garden is
without turnips:**

Turn up for meetings,
Turn up for service,
Turn up to help
one another.

**Water freely with patience
and cultivate with love.**

There is much fruit in your garden,
because you reap what you sow.



**To conclude our garden,
we must have thyme:**

Time for God,
Time for study,
Time for prayer.



THE LINK

- a story of people

For many of us in those days, November provided the highlight of our activities. Not because of the weather, there was a lot of rain most years if I remember, nor because of Carnival processions through Burnham and other local towns, even though the band of our Boys Brigade were prominent performers. And other members took part in different ways. But November each year meant Sidholme.

Sidholme began as a church weekend for Burnham but by 1981 it encompassed all the Link churches. So many in fact that the bus that had been booked was full and several people had to use their own cars. The November 1981 Link reports that the bus left Burnham Methodist Church on Friday at 6pm and returned from Sidmouth on Sunday afternoon. The cost for full board was £17.25 for adults, less for children! In December, Arnold King of East Brent reported that 100 people attended in total and all the party described the weekend as 'a winner'.

The Chairman of our District (Rev Ian Lunn) and his wife, June (soon to be Vice-President of the Methodist Conference) were guests of honour that year. After an 8.30 evening meal on the first night, they conducted the Epilogue with 'beautiful and serene slides'. Ian also led proceedings on Saturday morning and Arnold appreciated how well Ian and June fitted into the family atmosphere of the 'very fruitful' occasion. Arnold lists other items that moved him about the weekend; the shock and delight on the faces of the young people as Father Christmas seemed to appear out of nowhere, Any Questions, a sung epilogue by the young people on Saturday, Harry Kempson's Family Favourites and various other 'bits and pieces' throughout the weekend. Worship Services were a feature of Sunday of course and much appreciated in a warm and uplifting atmosphere.

The minister, Terry Isherwood did much of the organising of course, but as these weekend celebrations developed over seven or eight years much of the arrangement was handed over to lay members; Tim Lansdown (treasurer), Les Jenkin, Harry Kempson, Cedric May, June Brown, were the ones I remember. There were many others. We all played our parts; people standing in meal queues for example would find a hand lain on their shoulder with a formal request such as 'perhaps you would like to lead Grace before our meal, please.' You couldn't say no. And 'a hand on the shoulder' became the recognised way of knowing that your input to a task was expected. It was a routine that extended way beyond the Sidholme weekend also. With us when back home it often emanated as

a telephone call. In those days there was no indication of who the caller was until you answered the call. It was just that if the phone rang at a certain time (breakfast usually) we just lifted the receiver with a big sigh and said 'Good morning Terry and what is it today!!' You could set your clock by it

Relationships between members of all the Link churches widened and tightened during these fellowships. Other occasions were arranged also. New Year was a favourite time for a party. I remember one that was held in Brent Knoll Village Hall. An evening service was held in one or other of the churches, every quarter and all churches were expected to cajole their members to attend. Burnham was particularly obstinate. Many didn't see the need and a bus was sometimes used, to bring people to one or other of the villages. 'A hand on the shoulder' from the minister, time again – 'you will remember that it is Link service on Sunday evening, won't you' generally brought the right response. And once there, everyone seemed to enjoy the occasion and to chat afterwards.

Every year a cricket match, Burnham versus the rest was held (at Brent Knoll) and provided much fun. We were all young enough to give such a game a proper airing and one year it was extended to a match between The Link and our Methodist Churches in Weston-super-Mare. We won of course

It was all very much to the point but it required effort. Gradually, togetherness between the churches grew and there was enough variety for us to take non-church going friends along to share the companionship. But it didn't last forever. Several had died by the end of the decade. Others had left the area and taken their families with them. iPhones and laptops, streamed programmes and all provided new ways of keeping in touch with church, and encouraging one another, and interest in church togetherness waned. Outdoor activities enticed our children away from Sunday school. The rest of us grew older; not only did our energies diminish but our youngsters left home and their enthusiasms were no longer part of our scene in the same way. Those who came new to our environment often showed different ways of 'being church'. The Burnham culture changed, the U3A came to town and offered many more features and opportunities, it soon attracted a membership of 500 and more and 50 or 60 different activities; and wider horizons brought new and different media. It has taken us many years to adjust to all these changes.

But maybe, just maybe, and forty years later, new shoots are beginning to give us new hope.

Harvey

Calendar

	Time	Location	Event
Regular Days			
Mondays (except Bank Holidays)	10.30 am	Brean	Coffee 'n' Chat
Wednesday (except 1st Wed of month)	10.00 am	Zoom	Weekly Bible Study
Wednesday	2.00 pm	Burnham	Knit 'n' Natter
Thursday	11.00 am	Zoom	Coffee 'n' Chat
Friday	Morning	Burnham	Mothers and Toddlers
Other Dates			
Saturday 9th May	7.00 pm	St Andrew's Church Hall, Burnham	'A Bit of a Do' Old Time Music Hall (tickets from Ros Anderson)
Tuesday 12th May	2.30 pm	East Brent	Link Fellowship
Saturday 16th May	6.00 pm	Burnham	An Indian Meal and chance to hear more about trip to India in 2026. Book with Liz Bennett
Friday 29th May	10.30 am	West Huntspill	Coffee 'n' Chat
Saturday 18th July	2.30 pm	Burnham	Leaving Service for Rev Steve and Liz Bennett
Saturday 5th September	2.30 pm	TBA	Welcome Service for Rev John McNeill

LINK MAGAZINE

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. It is much appreciated and I hope that you and others will continue to supply articles for future editions.

Thanks to the efforts of Nigel and Jo May, each edition is held on the Burnham-on-Sea website <http://burnhamonseamethodistchurch.org.uk/>

Contributions are welcome and encouraged. Will stewards please remember that the newsletter not only provides information for our congregations but also keeps us in touch with people who are not our members. Maybe, just maybe, something that you have contributed, will encourage a visitor or even a potential resident to sample the warm welcome our churches offer.

The Link is published on or around the 1st of each month except for January and August. Closing date for the receipt of your item is the 25th of the month before publication and to be included on the circulation list send your email address to our minister on:

steve.bennett@methodist.co.uk

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES FOR NEXT MONTH IS 24 MAY.

