

**Our warm and sincere greetings to you and all
your family as you celebrate this special season
of Christmas.**

**May you find the joy and happiness in the
message of Christ's coming that money cannot
buy.**

Best wishes from

**Steve and all the church family
at Lanesfield Methodist Church**

Well, it is almost Christmas, and December 2009 sees the celebration of 175 years of Methodism in Lanesfield.

We begin the celebrations on Saturday 12th December with a 175 years Celebration Dinner at Essington Fruit Farm.

Our 175 years Church Anniversary services will be held on Sunday 13th December. The 10.30 am service will be led by Rev. David Lavender and the 6.00 pm service by Rev. John Barrett. The music will be 'These you have loved', a selection from the past 18 years of the choir.

This Messenger is a special bumper edition, containing memories and reminiscences of events and happenings that friends within the Church wish to share with us. I am extremely grateful to those who have submitted articles. However, I was hoping for more articles so that a special supplement could have been produced.

Items for the next edition of The Messenger are required no later than 21st February. Please submit (preferably by email) to Ann or David Latham.

Ann Latham

If you would like to see a copy of the minutes of the Church Council meeting held on 13th October 2009, then please ask Adam Biddlestone. Note that these are still to be approved at the next Church Council meeting.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER

- 6th Toy service at 10.30 am. Please bring a toy for a child in need.**
- 13th 175th Church Anniversary at 10.30 am and 6.00 pm.**
- 16th Carols and Mince Pies at 7.30 pm. Welcome to this mid-week service of carols, readings and seasonal refreshments.**
- 20th The Sunday School and Challengers will lead the service at 10.30 am
The Gospel Group will present Nine Lessons and Carols at 6.00 pm.**
- 24th Christingle service at 4.00 pm.
Midnight Communion service at 11.30 pm.**
- 25th Christmas morning service at 11.00 am**

**COME ONE AND ALL
TO CELEBRATE**

ALL SAINTS DAY

Those of you who attended morning worship on Sunday 1st November will have heard Adam Biddlestone speaking about All Saints Sunday. All Saints Sunday is when we remember those who have died, and Adam asked us to particularly remember those who have served our Church during the last 175 years.

Adam began the service by inviting anyone at any time in the service to light a candle for a loved one. He lit the first one in memory of John Arnold who had passed away that morning. Our thoughts and prayers were, and still are, with Pat, Catherine, Michael and the family.

For those of you not fortunate to be at the service, I thought you would like to share the prayer of Thanksgiving written by Adam especially for All Saints Sunday.

Creator God, at this special time of remembering the Saints who have made their journeys of faith we remember people of the past whose lives and faith have inspired us:

For their lives
WE THANK YOU.
For their example
WE PRAISE YOU.
For their place in your eternal kingdom
WE TRUST YOU.

We give thanks and celebrate the lives of people connected with this Church who have recently died and whose faith and witness continues to inspire us:

For their lives
WE THANK YOU.
For their example
WE PRAISE YOU.
For their place in your eternal kingdom
WE TRUST YOU.

God of time and change in this season of celebrating endings and new beginnings we remember times when we have grieved for loved ones:

For happy memories of the past
WE THANK YOU.
For your comfort and strength
WE PRAISE YOU.
For happier times ahead
WE TRUST YOU.

We remember other times of loss and bereavement we have experienced or we know need to face in the days and weeks ahead:

For happy memories of the past
WE THANK YOU.

For your comfort and strength
WE PRIASE YOU.

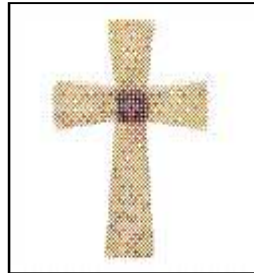
For happier times ahead
WE TRUST YOU.

We ask these prayers in the name of the God who knows and plans the time for all things.

AMEN.

FOR PRAYER

Please pray for those who are house-bound, including Mary Newell, Audrey Wigg, Vera Spittle, Dorothy Turley and Ken Mobberley.



Please pray for those who are not well and their carers, including Harold and Jeremy Newell, Mick and Margaret Lloyd, Mary Davies, Sylvia Griffiths, Sid Cole, Stephen Podmore, Ann Whitehouse, Anna Clutton, Alan Crowe, Alan and Allison Fisher, Rachael Meese, Les and Jean Woodberry, Barry Showell, Neil Harris, Betty Bowen, Ray Whitehouse, Gemma and Jodie Simner, Vera Stuchfield, Ken Nash and Eileen Wooten.

Please pray for those who have lost a loved one recently, including the family and friends of Joyce Nash, Robert Dixon, John Arnold and Joan Harris.

CHURCH CHOIR

Another year will shortly be ending and the choir have once again done very well singing at our various special services. We are down in numbers, but never the less still maintain a reasonably good standard.

On the Remembrance service on Sunday 8th November the choir sang 'Beauty for Brokenness', a Graham Kendrick piece which I arranged for four parts.

The Church Anniversary of 175 years on 13th December will be led at 10.30am by Rev. David Lavender, and at 6.00pm by Rev. John Barrett. The choir have been working very hard and are singing nine pieces 'These you have loved', some of our best items from the past 18 years.

I have tried to invite some past choir members to join us for this special occasion and am very pleased that Joan Cooper and Peggy Russell have been able to help. I also have to report that Paul Musgrove, Nicola Parker's partner has joined us, as and when his shifts allow, and we hope he will enjoy singing with us.

Shortly we will be holding our Choir AGM, when we will be discussing next year's dates etc. Anybody interested in joining us can come along and will be made very welcome. I have had an enquiry from one interested person and hope that when we commence our rehearsals in January he will be with us.

Barrie Shinton

Arthur Howard Briscoe

1921-2009

Howard Briscoe (AHB) was born 28/2/1921 the only child of Arthur and Elizabeth Briscoe, at Spring Rd Lanesfield, just below the old chapel.

He went to school at Lanesfield School in Wood Street, then Manor Boys' Secondary School.

Howard left school in 1935, and started work as a laboratory apprentice at John Thompson Ltd Wolverhampton; he was a part time student at Wednesbury and Wolverhampton Technical Colleges, reading metallurgy, to which he continued until 1942.

During the 40s Howard joined the home guard, was appointed metallurgist to John Thompson's and joined The Welding Institute. In 1945 he married Mary Owen and purchased his first house at "The Fighting Cocks". Their daughter, Catherine Ann, was born in 1949.

In the 50s Howard was appointed chief metallurgist at John Thompson's. His son, David Owen, was born in 1953 and in that year he purchased his first car and television set. During this period Howard lectured part time at the local technical colleges, as well as travelling all over the UK and Europe for Thompson's.

The swinging 60s, Howard took his family on their first continental holiday. He was appointed Head of Metallurgical Research and worked on Britain's first nuclear power station at Berkeley, Gloucestershire. He was also made a Fellow of the Welding Institute.

The 70s arrived and Howard was appointed Quality Control Manager. His daughter Ann married Peter Battershill and his grand daughter Simone was born in 1975. His son David married Ruth Berryman in 1977. Howard was appointed Head of Welding Development for the John Thompson Group, which included visits to Japan and Korea, and lecturing on welding and metallurgy. In 1978 his grandson Stephen was born.

At the beginning of the 80s, Howard continued work on the development of the welding process for nuclear applications, until his retirement in 1983. Howard and Mary moved to their present bungalow in 1986. Ironically it is behind a cricket ground - he enjoyed watching the cricket and became vice president of the club.

The 90s arrived, Howard and Mary enjoyed many holidays abroad, joined in the Church holidays arranged by John and Gill Wilkes and especially enjoyed visiting their beloved Padstow. In spring of 1992 Howard had a triple heart bypass, which gave him a new lease of life. In August 1999 his grand daughter Simone married James Sedgwick.

The new Millennium arrived, this was to be full of family events. In 2002 Megan, his first great granddaughter, was born. On 14th July 2005 Howard and Mary celebrated their Diamond Wedding and this was followed in 2006 by the marriage of their grandson to Natalie Wainwright.

In 2008 Howard had two great grandsons born, Alfie Battershill and Jack Sedgwick. Unfortunately Howard passed away before the birth of his third great grandchild.

Howard was a lifetime member and stalwart of Lanesfield Methodist Church, Wolverhampton. As a boy he attended the Sunday School and Youth Club. Later he became Sunday School Superintendent and Youth Club Leader, Choirmaster and Organist.

Howard was the Trust Secretary responsible for overseeing the building of and moving to our present Church in 1961.

On 17th June 1963 “The Boys’ Brigade 10th Wolverhampton Company” was formed at Lanesfield Methodist. AHB was invited to become Company President, a role he took with great enthusiasm, joining in all of the activities, camps etc. He went on to become a lieutenant and Vice President of the Wolverhampton Battalion. As the Company Vice President for many years he always attended the company meetings and special events, always enquiring on the progress of the company and the church.

Howard played an active role in “The Lanesfield Players” drama group at Lanesfield.

Howard was always involved in Gala Day, the Christmas Fayre, the Sunday School Anniversaries, Men’s Fellowship weekends and the Men’s Supper Club at St John’s.

Howard was always a very active member of the old Trustees Meeting, now the Church Council. He always spoke his mind and stuck by his word. Howard was also very involved in the Bilston Circuit Meetings.

I have many memories of Howard, from playing the organ in the Civic Hall Wolverhampton for the Boys’ Brigade Centenary Display, lighting the Beacon fire on New Year’s Eve 1983, to cutting the chapel lawns and talking to our members, both old and young, about their lives and what they were doing in the church and brigades.

This year is 175 years of “Methodism at Lanesfield”. AHB helped with the preparation of the Sunday School Anniversary, which depicted the history of Lanesfield Methodist, which was presented by all of our young people, and which moved Howard very much.

In his forthright “Black Country” manner, he had left plans for his funeral and

memorial services, the church was packed with people and present and past members of the B.B. formed a guard of honour.

The text which AHB chose for the memorial service was from James Chapter 2 verses 14 to 26 "Faith without action is dead". Until he passed away A. Howard Briscoe had a tremendous faith, which was backed up by his actions in serving his Lord in "Advancing Christ's Kingdom" in any way he could.

To Mary, Ann, David and their families, we thank you for supporting Howard, so that he could set the example to us all of "Service Not Self".

Farewell old friend, we will miss you!

Anthony J Davis

A child was asked to write a book report on the entire Bible.

I wonder how often we take for granted that children *understand* what we are teaching???

Through the eyes of a child:

The Children's Bible in a Nutshell

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness,
and some gas.

The Bible says, 'The Lord thy God is one', but I think He must be a lot older than
that.

Anyway, God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did.
Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve. Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't
embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the
Garden of Eden.....

Not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars.

Adam and Eve had a son, Cain,
who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be
like a million or something.

One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids
was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on
it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a
rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark
in exchange for some pot roast.

Jacob had a son named Joseph
who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses,
whose real name was Charlton Heston.

Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God
sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people.

These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable.

God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti.

Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments.

These include: don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbour's stuff.

Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more:

Humour thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies.
Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town.

After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot.

He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My
teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah,
who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore .

There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry
about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of The New. He
was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn too, because my
mom is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be
nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.')

During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the
Democrats.

Jesus also had twelve opossums.

The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible
vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some
Germans on the Mount.

But the Democrats and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot
didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead.

Anyways, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again. He went up to Heaven
but will be back at the end of the Aluminium. His return is foretold in the book of
Revolution.

Submitted by Julia Rivett

NAIL IN THE FENCE

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say, 'I'm sorry', the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."

Friends are very rare jewels indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share words of praise and they always want to open their hearts to us.

Submitted by Lisa Dugmore

ALONG THE GRAPEVINE

Everyone's always welcome at the Grapevine Drop-in Centre, Thursday mornings 10am-12pm, free admission, followed by optional Pause for Thought in the church.

After a busy few months featuring talks and outings and a lovely Open Morning with Gabriela the Ukulele Lady and the Gentle Line Dancing group, we are looking forward now to our Christmas activities, especially the fundraising concert starring internationally acclaimed "Queen of the Keyboards" JEAN MARTYN set for Saturday 5th December 7.30pm in the church. If you haven't seen or heard Jean Martyn before, you will be in for a great treat! She comes from Brewood, plays all kinds of music on all kinds of keyboards, organ, and piano, and is internationally known for her fantastic musicianship and bubbly personality. Check out her website : www.jeanmartyn.co.uk If you have seen her before, you are bound to be thrilled to know that this is a rare opportunity of seeing and hearing her again at a local venue.

PLEASE NOTE : After her brilliant performance recently at the Birmingham Symphony Hall, we have just heard that Jean has been invited to play at St James' Palace, London for the "Not Forgotten Heroes Association" on December 3rd in the presence of the Chelsea Pensioners, members of the royal family, and she will be accompanying the one and only Dame Vera Lynn and other singers throughout the show. After this incredibly prestigious event, she will be having afternoon tea with all the show guests, including the royal party : a fitting accolade for a truly talented musician and a genuinely warm and friendly lady!

Tickets are now available from the Grapevine volunteers, priced £6 including refreshments, or you can contact Winifred Whitehouse on 01384 250574 or Jan Brookfield on 01902 672793.

Other Christmas activities include :

3rd December: Crafts Morning;

10th December: Outing to The Terrace Restaurant;

17th December: Carols & Mincepies with singers from MUSCOM.

The Grapevine will be closed on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, but re-opens on 7th January 2010, and the following week on 14th January we have Joe Davies to come and talk about his life and the famous Lady Wulfruna Organ followed by an informal soup and cob lunch.

Grapevine is warm and friendly, and open to anyone, regardless of age, race, creed or culture, and we have plenty of room for more, in fact we do actually NEED more members! And if you fancy volunteering a couple of hours a week, why not give it a whirl : it can be personally so rewarding to help bring a bit of sunshine into people's lives in your community!

For more information call Winifred on 01384 250574 or the Minister on 01902 681281.

“GENTLE LINE DANCING”

A fundraising activity
for the Grapevine Centre

Absolute beginner level, nothing too strenuous, dancing to
easy-listening music, all welcome.

Every Tuesday starting at 11.30am and ending around 12.30pm, with the last half
hour for a drink & chat.

Tea, coffee and soft drinks are on sale,
all profits to the Grapevine. Admission £2.50.

Non-dancing spectators are also welcome;
come along and enjoy the music
and watch the dancers as they have fun learning the steps! Admission £1.

The line dance group can now also be seen dancing on **www.youtube.com**

or on Myspace :

www.myspace.com/janstraycat

Congratulations to the class members who gave a brilliant demonstration of dancing
at the Grapevine Open Morning on Thursday 8th October.

More demos to come, watch this space!

**NB : CLASS WILL BE CLOSED ON
22nd AND 29th DECEMBER**

New members are always welcome :
contact Jan Brookfield on 01902 672793

EMAIL ADDRESSES

You may remember that we have been setting up email contacts for all organisations, so that it is easier to contact groups within the church.

We now have contact details for most organisations. You can email the nominated person for the organisation using the email addresses below. Please note that capitals should not be used.

Sunday School

sundayschool@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Challengers

challengers@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Band

band@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Girls' Brigade

gb@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Craft Group

craft@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

LINCS

lincs@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Boys' Brigade

bb@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Gospel Group

gospelgroup@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Choir

choir@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Friends of the Youth

foy@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

Grapevine

grapevine@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

The following email addresses can also be used:

The minister, Rev. Steve Singleton

minister@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

The church secretary, Mr. Adam Biddlestone

secretary@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

The church administrator, Mr. Steve Parker

office@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

The church lay worker, Mrs. Glynis Davis

layworker@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

The church senior stewards, Dr. Ann Latham and Mr. David Latham
seniorsteward@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

If you wish your organisation to have a church email address, then please nominate one person (with email access) to act as the communication link, and email the details to:

annlatham@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

or

davidlatham@lanesfieldmethodist.co.uk

If you would like your own personal church email address, then once again let us know, and we will set it up.

Ann and David Latham

MEMORIES
OF
LANESFIELD
METHODIST
CHURCH

Methodism in Lanesfield 1825 – 2009

Step Back in Time

Lanesfield and district in the early 1800s

In the early 1800s, poverty was rife, morals were bad and religious observance deplorable. The people had few morals and their homes were sordid. Coal mining and iron making were the main industries and this brought both social and political problems. The local pubs were the haunts for drinking, gambling, bull baiting and cock fighting and no policeman would dare step over the doorway on his own.

However, in the area of Ettingshall, known at that time as Hell Lane there were signs that **GOD** was making an appearance, in that a chapel was built around 1806. Although John Wesley never came to the area, the echoes of his doings in other parts of the Black Country were being heard and acted upon.

Lanesfield around 1825

In this strange environment there lived one Mrs. Mary Miles. She lived in an old cottage in Virgin's Row, a small road off Spring Road near the bottom end of Wood Street. The road is no longer there nor is Mrs. Miles' cottage. This cottage became the first meeting place for Methodists in Lanesfield.

They progressed in numbers and in faith so that in 1834 the first Methodist Chapel was built to be superseded by a new and more commodious building, the second Methodist Chapel in Spring Road. This was in 1849. The new Chapel was built by men and women who were by no means wealthy. Nevertheless, they gave their money and labour generously and completed the scheme in 15 years.

When the 1849 Chapel was ready for services, the 1834 building was used as a Sunday School until 1887 when it became unsafe and had to be demolished. However, with local labour the old bricks and other materials were reused to erect another building. What determination our forebears had and what faith!

This 'second hand' building served as a Sunday School until a new building was erected in 1909 alongside the 1849 chapel. Several photographs show both the stone laying ceremony and the schoolroom and also the completed buildings that we loved and left in Spring Road in 1961 when we moved to Laburnum Road,

Incidentally, the 1849 Chapel was built with a square tower that had a clock on each face but due to the variations of time from each face the mechanism was dismantled and replaced by a conventional tower. I do not know the dates as it was before my time.

Lanesfield Methodist Church 1953 – 1961

You can see the black book 'Let us have a forward look'. I suggest you read at least the Foreword i.e. 'SPRING ROAD TO LABURNUM ROAD' and the final paragraph of the text.

Lanesfield Methodist Church 1961 – 1999

Before discussing the buildings and the appointments therein, I must tell you how the majority of us who had worshipped in Spring Road felt regarding the move to Laburnum Road. Many of us had been attending that place of worship since we were babes in arms. It had been our spiritual home and the place where we met our Lord, our friends and to some, our loved ones.

How would we fit into a brand new, modern building with 20th century amenities? We would have nice modern toilets – not a place at the back (unusable in winter). A modern kitchen both to prepare food and wash up afterwards – not just a bowl on the table with cold water. We would have central heating and electric fires. What a difference from that rather old patched up coke stove.

However, in the end we continued to find and to worship the same Lord Jesus in the 1961 Church as we had in the old 1849 Chapel. (When we moved to Laburnum Road the term Chapel became Church).

The initial scheme comprised the dual purpose building for the worship of God with its interior and furnishings designed for the purpose which would accommodate the wide variety of activities, shows, concerts, etc. which our church embraces. The Church initially had individual seats with two large curtains to 'close off' the sanctuary area when required. The choral part of worship would be lead by the J J Binns organ removed from Spring Road.

A Minister's vestry was not included, just a very small office. There were one or two other rooms for Sunday School, Youth work, Ladies Fellowship and general Church meetings.

The cost of the land was about £850 and the building of 1961 included furnishings cost in the order of another £21,000. As in the case of the 1849 Chapel, men, women and children worked and gave their time, talents and money over a period of some six years. In the initial 14 days of the appeal something like £1,200 was either given or promised.

Grants, gifts and donations etc. both great and small all contributed to the financial effort but the overall response from the faithful to go ahead in the name of Christ for the furtherance of Methodism in Lanesfield was there.

After a few years the rear schoolroom was built. This cost another £7,000. This gave greater facilities for concerts etc. having a stage area and a green room entrance. Later on, a storeroom adjacent to the front schoolroom was built.

Our last additional scheme, familiar to the present day workers and members, is the super-duper kitchen, additional rooms mainly for Sunday School purposes, more

toilets and particularly toilets for the disabled, the long awaited Minister's Vestry and the Norwich Digital Electronic Organ replacing the faithful old J J Binns.

The cost of this scheme is £98,000 of which we still require £10,000 in the next 3 years to meet the commitments for a grant from the circuit.

One Minister in particular, I wish to refer to is Stephen Fisher. He was loved, admired and respected by those who knew him.

Reverend Stephen Fisher

The Reverend Stephen and Mrs Fisher were the first people to occupy the Manse in Hurst Hill next to Hurst Hill Methodist Church. They arrived in 1932 and left in 1935 to join the Wolverhampton Darlington Street Circuit where they remained until 1938.

From that time, Stephen was invited to Lanesfield to conduct the Sunday School Anniversaries and continued for an unbroken 32 years, which included the war years and during the period Stephen was a Minister in Hartlepool and at the Hackney Mission.

Stephen Fisher was an excellent preacher and his sermons were laced with wit and humour. He had the power to move a congregation to weep then laugh in a matter of seconds.

Until 1961, the Sunday School Anniversaries were held in Spring Road at the former church.

On his retirement in 1970, he was presented with a painting of the old church. This is a sister picture to the one which hangs in the porch. (Stephen's has the trees in full leaf; ours is done in the autumn). The artist was Roland Twynam. Stephen died in Hereford on 20 February 1981.

Organs and Organists

Singing at Lanesfield, both Chapel and Church has always been an important part of our worship. Over the years we have had many good vocalists in our congregation and choirs with good instruments to accompany these voices.

The date of the installation of the first organ in the 1849 Chapel is not available as records do not exist. However the second instrument, a two manual pipe organ, hand blown with full pedal board was installed and a photograph shows this organ along with the interior of the 1849 Chapel. The photograph was taken in 1928.

This organ was replaced in 1941 by the J J Binns tracker action pipe organ. This organ was opened on 13 July 1941 by one of the Trustees, Mr. Walter Smith, and this is the organ which was dismantled at Spring Road and re-erected at Laburnum Road in December 1961, when the present Church was opened. Many older members of our Church have treasured memories of the J J Binns and felt a sadness when it was

dismantled and replaced by the Norwich Walsingham 902 Digital Electronic in late Spring 1997. The area previously occupied by the Binns organ is now the long awaited Church Vestry. The console, front pipes and panelling of the Binns Organ making a very pleasant feature in the sanctuary area of the Church.

Ministers of the Circuit and those appointed to Lanesfield Methodist Church

My first recollection was of Rev. Benjamin Crosby in about 1924 followed by Harold Picken in 1928.

Others were:-

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Fred Goodwell | 1931-34 |
| Stephen Fishers | 1932-35 |
| Arthur Reeves | 1937-41 |
| Raymond Turner | 1941-46 |
| Albert Bradshaw | 1946-49 |
| Arthur Connop | 1949-54 |
| Stanley Farmer | 1955-61 |
| Geoffrey Rushton | 1961-66 |
| Frank Crowder | 1961-64 |
| William 'Bill' Middlemiss | 1966-71 |
| John Barrett | 1971-75 |
| John Forster | 1975-80 |
| David Lavender | 1977-81 |
| Richard Chapple | 1981-88 |
| Paddy Hunter | 1988-93 |
| Roy Wilkins | 1991-96 |
| Stephen Hill | 1993-98 |
| Trevor Dodd | 1998-99 |
| Philip Harrison | |
| Frank Drenner (from USA) | |
| Alan Fisher | |
| Steve Singleton | |

A.H. Briscoe

Memories of Lanesfield Methodist

My first visit to Lanesfield Methodist was in 1945 at Spring Road. I don't remember this, as it was my christening service, conducted by Rev Turner.

As a boy I was taken to the Sunday School by my father Hubert Davis, one of the teachers. The Superintendents were Mr Norman Smith, Mr Arthur W Briscoe and Mr John T Davis; Howard Briscoe was a teacher and John and Florrie Legg the Sunday School secretaries.



As you entered the building you went into an entrance porch, turned right through a door into the main room. At the far end was a rostrum, with a piano on it and a lectern to talk from. The room was heated by a coke-fired cast iron stove, the flue of which extended at a low angle right through the building to give extra heat, around the stove was a guard made from steel bars, which we used to stand around after Sunday School and talk. On the left hand side of the building were 3 classrooms. To the right of the rostrum was a door leading to the recreation room, this had a sink and a gas stove for boiling water etc. The toilets were round the back of the building, with no heating!

To the left of the Sunday School, stood the 2nd Methodist Chapel on the site, from Spring Road you went up a short path through two large trees, and as you entered the porch you could turn right or left through doors to enter the chapel. The chapel had two aisles with seating on both sides and in the centre.

The pulpit was raised in the centre at the front, with the inscription "My House Is The House Of Prayer" formed in an arch above it. To the left of the pulpit stood the J J Binns organ, which is now our present day vestry. This was played by Mr John T Davis jnr and later by Mr A Howard Briscoe. To the right side of the pulpit was the stained glass window in memory of Jean Wilkes, which now is situated in the present building. To the right of this was the minister's vestry. The heating of the chapel was by gravity fed hot water in 6" cast iron pipes; this was heated by a coke fired cast iron boiler, situated in a boiler room on the left-hand side of the chapel.

Mrs Green was the caretaker, who lived in the cottage to the left of the chapel, it was her job to clean the buildings and to light and stoke the boiler and the stove!

I have vivid memories of days at Spring Road, the Sunday School Anniversary when the pulpit was extended higher and lower to form a platform. This was filled with girls in white dresses each wearing a flower and in the centre with his dark skin and white hair stood Rev Stephen Fisher.

The Harvest Festival was another occasion I remember well, I omitted in my description of the chapel that down both sides of the building ran tie bars, these were about 3" diameter and all harvest produce was hung from these. The platform was erected again and this was covered in flowers and produce. All this was done on the Saturday; I can still recall the beautiful aroma of all the fruit, vegetables and flowers as you entered the chapel.

The Sunday School Trip, to either Clent Hills, Kinver or Licky Hills, was one of the highlights of our year. But to go you had to obtain a ticket, this was given out on a Monday evening and you had to take your Sunday School card to see if you had enough attendances to go!

Another event which all of the young people attended with excitement was the "prize distribution", had they a 1st or 2nd class prize?

In 1952 the chapel held a 3 day Bazaar in the schoolroom, which was converted with stalls built and a tremendous fellowship occasion was had.

As a young man I was a member of the Youth Club, led at that time by John Davies and John Wilkes, it was John Davies who gave me my first role of leadership at Lanesfield, inviting me to serve on the Bilston Council of Youth Clubs Youth Council.

I remember attending the Sunday services and sitting in the family pew with my parents. At the old chapel families paid rent for their pew, which today we would feel strange doing. During this time I was influenced by a great number of men and women who served their Lord and Master in the service of others.

December 16th 1961 our present church in Laburnum Rd opened, it was a great occasion; I had the honour of being one of the people taking the collection.

We now had nice toilets and a modern kitchen and it was heated a lot better by infra red tubular wall mounted electric heaters.

The Young Wives Group was formed and the Women's Fellowship continued to meet on a Thursday afternoon. The Sunday School met at 10.30 and 2.00pm. I remember being on the rota to cross the children from the other side of the Birmingham New Road, over the road and back at each session. This was organised by Mr Norman Smith.

I have fond memories of my days in the youth club and the visits to London for the MAYC weekends. We all wore green and yellow scarves and met many groups doing the same around London. On one occasion we had to lift a car out of the way to get our coach through a street in London. I don't think we would get away with it today!

It was found that building needed extending and so fund raising started again. At that time the Youth Fellowship met on a Sunday after the evening service, and we were asked to do a sketch for a Christian Citizen meeting on drink. John Davies, Rita Challenger and I agreed to perform it, this gave John Davies an idea and so he wrote his adaptation of Cinderella, complete with John Wilkes dressed in a tutu with football boots, and so the Lanesfield Players were formed.

The first performance of Cinderella was performed for the second half of a concert presented by the Junior Choir led by Mr Tony Hounsom.

To perform our shows a temporary stage was erected at the rear of the Chapel, complete with curtains and lighting. The flood lights were manufactured from biscuit tins with 150 watt lamps in them and we entered the stage via the doors from the boiler room.

After the Saturday performance the stage was dismantled, and all the chairs turned round ready for Sunday Worship. I would mention that at this time the Church seating was wooden chairs, the pews came later!

Sunday 15th June 1963 was as usual our Sunday School Anniversary, conducted as custom by Rev Stephen Fisher. That day I was approached by one of the stewards, Mr Ernie Noakes, to attend the following evening, as the Church's representative, the first meeting of "The Boys' Brigade". This I duly did and became an officer along with H.J.Newell, Tony Clift and Delbert Meredith. This made a big impact on my life.

In August the following year along with Harold Newell and Jean Noakes (now Mrs Clemson) the Life Boys, now the Junior Section, was started.

The Girls' Brigade was originally formed when we occupied the premises in Spring Road under the Captaincy of Dylis Berryman and the help of Jean Noakes, but after approximately three years, because of lack of helpers and other commitments, it unfortunately had to disband. The 1st Lanesfield Company was later re-formed on 16th September 1968. Mrs Joyce Winwood was the Captain, the officers being Mrs Sheila Tucker and Mrs Mildred Lowe.

We also raised money with our Gala. This was an annual event which involved stalls, a carnival procession with floats and our band. The children occupied a float and later took part in a fancy dress competition. The Gala for a number of years was held on Hilton Road Sports Ground, the brigade marquee was erected and other tents to hold the stalls etc.

The Church Hall was opened in Dec 1968; this had a stage as it is today except it only extended to the brick pillars.

The store room was built later to store equipment etc.

Again the Sunday School outgrew the building and so we purchased a "Portacabin". This was situated at the rear of the toilets, today the kitchen and new rooms stand there.

The Sunday School Anniversary continued in its traditional form for many years, then it was taken to a new level by Ann Latham, with her productions of “Joseph and his Technicolor Dream Coat”, “Captain Noah”, etc. which were great occasions.

The Gospel Group and Choir have played an active part in the church for a number of years, one of the highlights being our “Flower Festival” which has brought a lot of pleasure each year.

The BB/GB has taken the name of Lanesfield to many parts of the country, and provides fellowship to young people.

We have two groups who work behind the scenes, namely LINC'S who organise social events, such as the Gala, Christmas Fayre etc and “The Friends of the Youth” who support all of our youth groups with financial and other help. As a church we are deeply indebted to them.

The Luncheon Club has run for many years providing a three course meal every Wednesday, for the elderly people of our community.

We now have the Grapevine Centre which acts as a drop in centre on a Thursday, giving a place to meet during the week. This concludes at 12.00 noon with “Pause for Thought”.

The last extension in 1997 saw an enlarged kitchen, two new rooms and a toilet for the disabled; the organ was replaced with the Norwich and the old organ housing from Spring Road, converted into the vestry. Mr Ray Homer, who served as Senior Steward for many years, opened this.

Lanesfield Methodist has been my spiritual home all of my life and I have had great satisfaction in serving the community at Lanesfield. Yes, there have been great occasions during the years, there have also been low times, but we have laughed together, cried together, but above all worshiped together.

Today we face new challenges, declining numbers in our Church services, Sunday School and Challengers, but I am convinced that as a church we will rise to the challenge and carry on climbing the mountain that Mrs Mary Miles and her colleagues started climbing 175 years ago!

Anthony J Davis

MEMORIES OF LANESFIELD METHODIST CHURCH

So we're celebrating 175 years of Lanesfield Methodist Church. I can't go back that far, but I can say that my association spans 70 years, my introduction to Chapel being at the tender age of 3 weeks old when I was christened.

Now, what memories can I conjure of my time with Lanesfield?

The Sunday School Anniversaries immediately spring to mind. You had to be aged seven before you were allowed to "go on the platform". The Sunday School Anniversary took place on the third Sunday in June followed by Concluding Services two weeks later – this was to accommodate the Sunday School Anniversary Services at Hurst Hill. Lanesfield's anniversaries were well known in the area. Rehearsals began in March and we had to learn all the words of at least seven hymns/songs. Mr. John Davis was organist and in charge of these anniversaries and believe me, he certainly stood no nonsense. I hear him now playing the organ and 'growling' "somebody's singing out of tune" or "No, no, no, you don't sing it like that". To a seven year old he certainly seemed an ogre, but we all came back year on year to be part of the anniversary and anyway Lanesfield Sunday School Anniversaries were always tops. The church used to be heaving with people and those were the days when the ladies wore their beautiful hats!

Tradition was that we had to wear white dresses or a white top and had a special flower which had to be worn on the left shoulder, stalks up! The flowers were more often than not a violet colour in memory of a member of the church who had passed on. I particularly remember 1952 when the flowers were a deep purple in memory of a lovely 19 year old young lady by the name of Jean Wilkes. I can still find myself humming or singing hymns or songs like 'My Task', 'You that sing of gardens', 'I hear thee speak of a better land', 'It's out of little things bigger things grow' or 'If I can help somebody as I pass along'. I can't let this subject pass without mention of Rev. Stephen Fisher who always took our Anniversaries. He was a wonderful orator and the stories he told the children kept them spellbound. I remember one year he so dearly wanted us to go to his church in East London. Unfortunately the M1 didn't exist then so it would have been a long, long journey and in those days money was pretty tight – the result, we couldn't go and he and us were very disappointed.

Sunday School, a route travelled by me from a three year old in the Primary Department to Sunday School Superintendent and all in between. Sunday School conjures up leaders like Norman Smith, Mr. John T. Davis, Mr. Arthur

W. Briscoe, Howard Briscoe, John Legg and his sister Florrie. When Betty and I walked into Sunday School Norman Smith always greeted us with “Hello Twins” – a small thing, but one which made us always feel welcome and at home. Norman used to tell us some lovely stories – I’ve always remembered the one of Sir Percy Vere – as you grow up, Norman said, always remember Sir Percy. I’ve always persevered with the things I’ve felt I could not do or attain – today I’m captain of the Boys’ Brigade Company

As you walked into the schoolroom on the wall, halfway down, there was a big clock and I can see Norman Smith now standing on a chair which was balanced on a long bench which we use to sit on, stretching up to wind up the clock. Health and Safety would have had a field day!

Youth Club – so many memories. In those days you could join the Youth Club at the age of 14 (because my brother and cousin were always involved I was allowed to join at 13!). The boys used to meet on a Wednesday evening and the girls on a Friday evening and once a month, or thereabouts, we used to have a Social Evening on a Saturday evening when we all met up.

We had some great times, perhaps the young people of today may feel that our activities were perhaps a little childish, but we enjoyed the fun. I remember we had a fancy dress parade one Bonfire Night. We walked round the streets in our costumes and then had a party by the bonfire on the field at the back of the chapel. I remember Trevor Genge as a convict, complete with ball and chain. Terry Hampton as The Memory Man – trouble was he’d forgotten his trousers (he must have felt rather chilly on a cold November evening!) There were the Bisto Kids and Betty and I were Babes in the Wood. What a super evening we had. Mr. & Mrs. Edwards (who ran the Co-op in Ward Grove) brought a bag of large potatoes and they were roasted in the bonfire and when cooked they were cut and served up with a helping of butter – why a memory and so special, these were the days of rationing and Mr. & Mrs. Edwards must have saved their coupons for quite sometime to give us this treat. People were like that then.

I remember the Football Team and their manager Lol Smith with his magic sponge. There was also Derek Bolton, who stuttered badly so if he had something important to say he sang it! There was no mickey-taking of any kind. Of course there were misunderstandings from time to time and I’m sure that those among us, like John and Gill Wilkes, Sheila Tucker and Vida Dugmore, will agreed that bad feelings never lasted.

With the Youth Club we also enjoyed trips to London to the MAYC Weekend, when thousands of young Methodists met together in the Royal Albert Hall to watch a show put on by young people from all over Britain and to sing their praises and worship the Lord. I even saw the Queen on one of those weekends – 1954 it was, when she arrived back home from her trip to Australia. We all

gathered outside Buckingham Palace chanting “we want the Queen” – she eventually appeared on the balcony with Prince Philip (after Gracie Field’s show had finished on telly)! And I’ve never heard a roar like it until I was at the Molineux when the Wolves won promotion to the Premier League!

More up to date – the Boys’ Brigade 10th Wolverhampton Company. The heady days, when we had 40ish attending the company section meeting and a lot of young lads in the Life Boys. I remember the getting together to celebrate the company’s birthdays and the attainments our lads past and present have achieved and memories will be unearthed in 2013 when the time capsule will be removed. I remember the sad times when one of our young men died from leukaemia and then two more of our young men tragically killed in a road accident and our officer Ray Lowe who passed away very suddenly. We’ve had lots of laughs and shed lot of tears. I’m glad I was asked to become a part of it.

The downside, being the sister of a Church Trustee. I was coerced into a job I really didn’t want to do. The trustees had decided that a weekly notice sheet would be a good thing and my brother volunteered me for the job! It wasn’t easy like using a computer today – the first notice sheets were typed with an old Imperial manual typewriter onto a Gestetner stencil sheet. This was a special film type sheet and the typewriter was set so that it cut into the film. If an error was made it had to be sealed with a foul-smelling liquid. When typed it was put onto a drum that was covered in ink and manually rolled with a handle. This took up two evenings of my week. I hated the job and eventually gave it up after some 3 years. Then came the idea of a Newsletter, the forerunner of the Messenger.

There are so many memories, like the Sunday School Outing to Kinver, Clent, or Lickey Hills – we thought we were travelling miles and miles. Later on we ventured to Drayton Manor Park and Trentham Gardens.

There are the people past and present who did their utmost to make sure we all enjoyed our activities whilst growing up and those who were determined to see that we inherited a better building and then the times when we started collecting to get money to build a new Church – hard work and many years at it – but I think it was all worthwhile,

God has been good to me in so many ways, I hope that He accepts my feeble efforts.

Jean Clemson

MEMORIES

I visited the old Chapel in Spring Road only once. Two of my school friends, Diana Briscoe and Susan Morris, were singing on the Sunday School Anniversary. I decided then that I would like to go to Sunday School and “dress up” in white, but I had to wait a few months to start Sunday School in Laburnum Road when it opened in December 1961, as I was not allowed to cross the Birmingham New Road.

I joined Sunday School and was greatly inspired - as were many others - by Norman Smith. At the age of fourteen I was asked to train as a Sunday School teacher. I can vividly remember sitting on the floor in the Beginners class with Betty Smith singing “Peter’s little brown boat”.

About the same time Tony Hounsom started a junior choir, which Diana and myself joined. We sang regularly in Church and I can remember being the Poet in a production of “The Stranger”. We took the Royal School of Church Music examination, and for the singing part I sang “We plough the fields and scatter” - I don’t know why I chose that hymn as it was not Harvest time, and there were some high notes! Anyway, we passed the examination, and proudly wore our chorister medallions. At the age of sixteen we were “old enough” to join the Lanesfield Players. Their first performance had been Cinderella - the second half of our performance of The Stranger. The next performance for Di and myself was as members of The Players!

In the early days of the Players, the back of the Church was transformed into a stage and the chairs (no pews in those days!) were turned around for the audience to face the back. We rehearsed every Sunday evening, and Dave came to meet me after practice. One Sunday evening, someone (I can’t remember who) invited him in, and the rest, as they say, is history! Dave joined the next performance of the Players, came to Church

Back to Sunday School Anniversaries. I wore my white dress, white socks and white sandals with pride. In 1971 I was asked to “conduct” the juniors on the Anniversary - Rita Davies played the piano. In those days Howard Briscoe trained and conducted the older children. I continued to train the under eights (you could not join Howard’s Anniversary until you were eight) for about ten years. The younger children only had a couple of songs to sing in the morning and evening services, but the afternoon service was devoted to them. I cannot understand why the older children only performed at two services, but the younger children at three - but that was tradition! After about ten years as the “supporting act” I agreed to have all the children together. For a few years Howard played the organ and piano for us.

I conducted the Sunday School Anniversary for 33 years, for many of those

years the girls dressed in their white dresses with a coloured flower, boys in white shirts with a tie to match the colour of the girls' flowers. Later years saw productions of many musicals - Joseph, Greater than Gold, A Grain of Mustard Seed, Jairus' Daughter

David and I married at Lanesfield Methodist Church in October 1973 - four weeks after Glynis and Anthony. One of our hymns - "Come let us sing of a wonderful love" - has become very special. When my Mom married Tom at Lanesfield in 199 we sang this hymn. In August last year Sarah and Ian married at Lanesfield - it was one of their hymns, and we also sung it at Andrew and Jo's blessing at Lanesfield last November. Why did we choose this hymn for our wedding - I'm sure it was something to do with being Wolves supporters and the verse "Jesus is seeking the wanderers"!

It was not until I began writing this that I noticed a theme - music! Peter's Little Brown Boat. Sunday School Anniversaries. Junior Choir. Lanesfield Players. Wedding hymns. I should now add to this - Gospel Group, and I have previously been a member of Barrie's choir.

I have lots of happy memories of LMC (and a few not so happy ones!). In addition to the musical activities outlined above, I have worked a great deal with the youngsters of our church - as a Sunday School teacher for many, many years, and more recently in the Girls' Brigade. A few years ago a Sleepover seemed like a good idea! Above all, by being a member of LMC I have made lots of wonderful friends.

Ann Latham

SUNDAY SCHOOL IN A PORTACABIN

Yes that's right, before the extension to our Church Building I was privileged to be a Sunday School teacher and due to the many children attending Sunday School, my class used the portacabin. I cherish the wonderful memories of that time learning about Jesus and His teachings.

I recall one Sunday the children stepped barefoot into trays of paint and then onto paper thus making footprints which decorated the cabin. These stretched around all walls with the words WE'RE FOLLOWING IN THE STEPS OF JESUS and ONE MORE STEP ALONG THE ROAD I GO written above. We then proceeded to wash each others' feet just as Jesus did for His disciples. However after lots of bubbles in several bowls and much splashing I recall there appeared to be more paint on the towels used for drying of the feet than was first in the paint trays.

We always closed our class by singing
Goodbye everyone
Now our happy hour is done
Jesus keep us safe we pray
Till we meet next Sabbath day
Goodbye everyone
We must hasten homeward
AMEN



This photograph was taken after one such class I guess approximately 20 years ago. If you know the exact year or can name any of the children please let your OLD Sunday School teacher know.

May God bless and keep you all .

Love from Auntie Sue xxx

175 years of Methodism at Lanesfield

1834 - 2009

Much has been, and will continue to be, discussed about our 175th Anniversary here at Lanesfield Methodist Church. It is interesting to look back over those 175 years to consider what our area was like, and what the circumstances were, when the church was founded in 1834.

William IV was on the throne at that time, but he died three years later and Queen Victoria started her long reign. It is reported that, when she was travelling through our area by train, she ordered the blinds to be pulled down so that she would not have to look upon the squalor.

A few years ago, when I was researching our local history, I came across the following extract from a railway guide, written in the 1840s, which paints a vivid picture in words of how a visitor saw the area at the time.

'It has the usual signs of being a mining and iron manufacturing district, containing a great number of small tenements for the workmen, who, notwithstanding their comparatively good wages, are mostly regardless of comfort, either in their house or persons.'

The whole district round about here is a mass of apparent disorganisation, confusion and ruin. By day we see nothing but the remains of the disembowelling of the earth; heaps of stone, clay, coal, cinders and ashes, as if a volcano had burst out and covered the country with its lava; furnaces, chimneys, forges and iron works, beds of burning coal, coal pits and their engines and apparatus, and wagons conveying loads of stone and coal in every direction, attended by men, women and boys, dressed as if they were accustomed to live in the earth.

The whole is constantly enveloped in a gloom of one perpetual cloud of smoke, which bedims and darkens the country for miles around.

The work-people are very rough and uncultivated in this district, but they are wonderfully civilised and moral compared with what they used to be. Formally they were extremely riotous, and resorted to those brutal amusements, bear and bull baiting. Since the introduction of Methodism by John and Charles Wesley, there has been a marked improvement in the morals of the people; and the visitation of cholera in 1832, has also greatly contributed to the morality of the whole district.'

Whilst these are the views of an outsider, they take no account of the comradeship and family bonds that would have existed, and still do, in our community.

I have no idea who our founders were and the difficulties they encountered in

building the church in the environment at the time in Spring Road (perhaps others will have these details) but they must have been courageous and dedicated Christian people whose work has enhanced our community, and been carried on by many others, to bring many people to know Jesus Christ and to accept him as their Saviour.

Raymond Whitehouse