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Newsletter from the WRU Churches

176th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Carole Parkinson, Hampden View Church

My experience of Conference. (Please note that full minutes of Conference and recording of the talks can be found on the WRU website).



10am on **Monday 9th June** found me waiting outside my flat complex. I was waiting for my friend Maureen to pick me up to go to Swanwick, to attend our 176th Conference. We set off looking forward to seeing old friends and maybe making new.

The business of Conference went well, but it was the times of devotions and the three speakers that I found challenging and inspiring.

ON MONDAY AFTERNOON our President George Phillips welcomed everyone. He opened Conference with the first of three devotion times. He spoke on Psalm 46. He said it was a Psalm for today. Although he read the whole Psalm, George said we were going to look at it in three sections under the headings Refuge, Refreshing and Respond. That afternoon we would be looking at

Psalm 46:1-3 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea."*

George compared it to the world today, but we could take courage from this Psalm. Our God is ever present.

President Designate – Graham Johnson nominated **David Tuckett** for the position of President Designate starting from Conference 2026 for a two-year term.

MONDAY EVENING'S speaker was Helen Vipass from "Hope for Children Latvia". She challenged us to think what it would be like in England if Germany had won the war. We would be speaking German, street signs and money would be different. We would have to



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be careful what we said and did. That is how it was in Latvia under Soviet occupation. These fears are becoming very real again, and the country is starting to prepare for the worst, which is worrying. She told us of the work that had been done on the building they used to look after and feed the children.

She also spoke of inspirational young men and women who help with the work. Helen thanked the Union for the

£15,500 we have already raised this year towards the refurbishment work that is so badly needed.

TUESDAY MORNING'S devotion was taken by **George continuing on -**

*Psalm 46:4-7 "Refreshing" v4
"There is a river whose streams make glad the City of God, the Holy place where the Most High dwells." God is always with us, He will never leave us. He is our strength."*

During the morning **Ian Buchanan** gave a presentation on the work of L.W.P.T. One of the things he said was that, as Dave Tuckett's time as a trustee was coming to an end, they would need a new W.R.U. trustee.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON was given over to our Conference speaker, **Tristan Stevenson-Coulshaw**. Tristan works for "Flame International" His background as a Commissioned Officer in the British Army and his

overseas mission experience has helped equip him to train others in strategic spiritual warfare.

He lives in Hertfordshire with his wife Sarah and their four children. One of the things he said was that he and his family were ready to travel light - how anyone with four children can travel light amuses me.

Tristan asked us was how do we **"Begin with the end in mind"**. In other words, how are we preparing for when Jesus returns. When the heavens open and Jesus descends, this time as Lord of lords and King of kings.

Now I must confess I did make notes on the first couple of minutes but then I just sat and listened as he was so inspiring. But I do know that there were recording made that are now on the WRU website.

TUESDAY EVENING – Ordination of Graham Johnson:

This was a very special and joyful time. In his testimony Graham spoke of the steps he had taken since his calling. Some big, some little, some hard, some challenging. Now he was taking the biggest step of all. Graham, step out in faith as you have always done, God will be with you every step of the way.

WEDNESDAY MORNING'S DEVOTIONS were taken by Muriel Stonehewer. Her Bible reading was Psalm 23. Muriel spoke of how the sheep knew the Shepherd's



voice and how he would lie at the entrance of the sheepfold to protect the sheep. Jesus our great shepherd gave his life that we who believe in Him may have eternal life.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON
to me is always special,
Conference Communion.

George began the service
with the thirds of his look
into **Psalm 46:8-11** -
“Respond”

Psalm 46:8-11 “Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;”

We then came before the Lord’s Table to share in the Lord’s Communion.

Conference ended.



ARTICLES FOR “Contact”

We welcome inspirational stories, devotional and encouraging articles, news and events from the churches all enabling us to be inspired and to keep in touch with each other.

Some rules to remember:

- Articles must arrive on or just before the deadline
- If possible, a picture or a photograph should accompany the article
- Make sure that pictures/articles you send have no copyrights, or you have permission to use them
- Word count per article should not exceed 750.

Deadlines:

- 15th Dec – for **Jan-Feb** issue
- 15th Feb – for **Mar-Apr** issue
- 15th Apr – for **May-Jun** issue
- 15th Jun – for **Jul-Aug** issue
- 15th Aug – for **Sep-Oct** issue
- 15th Oct – for **Nov-Dec** issue

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WRU CONFESSION OF FAITH (Final)

9. **'That the Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, and that only Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ as such, maintaining that the proper subjects for Baptism are believers and children to be brought up within the fellowship of Christ's Church.'**

This is the last of the Confession of Faith beliefs of the Wesleyan Reform Union. I remember as quite a young person that the church I grew up in would often refer to 'Sacrament Sunday.' I didn't really know what the word meant, and I didn't think that other churches used it!

Space does not allow a thorough look at what we believe here, but it is sufficient to break down the statement a little.

A sacrament is well-described as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' Put even more simply, the sacraments bring us closer to God, they are a way that we can experience His grace, His love shown to us in the giving of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Amazing grace ... that saved a wretch like me' as John Newton described it. Our statement also makes clear that only things instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ are to be seen as sacraments. The ones we recognise are Baptism (Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – Matthew 28 v 19) and the Lord's Supper (For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' – 1 Corinthians 11 v 23 – 25).

Now to Baptism. The statement we hold to says that Baptism is for believers and children to be brought up within the fellowship of Christ's

Church. It must be recognised that different churches within the Wesleyan Reform Union practice this in different ways. There are some churches who will only baptise adults on confession of faith, and I think it fair to say that number has grown. There are some who will baptise children, but I feel that the phrase 'to be brought up in the fellowship of Christ's Church' is vital for those that offer this and they must work out for themselves what that means in practice. Quite a few years ago now this part of our statement was discussed at length and it was felt at that time, that as it stood, it should be acceptable to all of our churches whichever stance they take. Let's continue to respect one another.

Finally, the Lord's Supper. You might know it as 'Breaking of Bread,' 'Communion' or perhaps as I used to, 'Sacrament.' Is there anything we do in our churches which brings us closer to God, or to one another than sharing bread and wine (or juice as many churches do)? It is always good to come with the words of Paul on our minds and allow them to shape what we are to do. We must come in a worthy manner, not treating lightly what we are doing, lest we sin against the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. To make sure, we should examine ourselves before eating and drinking.

I hope that over the last months as we have looked at the Confession of Faith and revisited what we believe, it has brought to you how important it is that we have this clearly in written form. It is so important to know what we believe, and what holds us together.

Rev P Hearson (Rushden Mission Church)



SAVE THE DATE!

Our Day of Ministry 2025 will be on **Saturday 4th October** at **The Little Chapel in Bedworth**. Ian Buchanan, CEO of The Leaders of The Worship and Preachers Trust, will be leading us in workshop sessions on how to speak and preach more effectively. More details will be sent to churches soon – please book early as places are limited!

CERTIFICATES PRESENTED TO LOCAL PREACHERS

We have been continuing to celebrate our faithful local preachers by presenting certificates to them in our churches. There are many more people who we would love to honour in this way, so please do contact Jackie Clarke, Dave Tuckett or any of the E 2 S committee if you have someone in mind and we will arrange this.



Muriel Stonehewer presented with her certificate for 30 years as a local preacher at our Sheffield Circuit meeting at Richmond in January



Our President, George Phillips, presented with his certificate for 50 years as a local preacher at a service at Ruskington in May



Carole Parkinson at Hampden View Church being presented with her certificate for 30 years as a local preacher when she led our Mother's Day service

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ALDERMAN'S GREEN CHURCH

Be encouraged and persevere... "Do not lose your courage, then, because it brings with it a great reward. You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what he promises"

Hebrews 10:35-36

Have you, or your church/group, ever wanted to fulfil an idea or project but you were discouraged by a lack of funds or, perhaps, you thought the effort would be too much or unfruitful? If so, have you considered applying for a Tesco grant?

At Alderman's Green we have been connecting more and more with the community and two of our members, Joyce West and Carol Pinnegar, made application to the 'Blue Token' scheme, run by Tesco's at a branch near you, so that our church could buy outdoor seating and utilise the garden area at the rear of our church – a space for members to enjoy and invite outsiders in to share fellowship, make friends, maybe someone new to the area and looking for a church to join or, simply just someone needing a chat over a cup of tea and a snack. The photos feature some of our regular cafe attendees enjoying the new furniture.

The application was challenging on occasions and time-consuming but Joyce and Carol persevered, even when they felt their patience was being tested throughout the process! But their effort was rewarded last year with an award of £500, and now we have seating.

Our Friday morning café is growing, which is a real example of perseverance, and we have forged links with the community representatives from Tesco, who frequently call in. We are also seeing new faces and local people who drop in... everyone is welcome.

So, have a go, decide what you might like to do, pray about it and be encouraged. I wondered what verse I should use to encourage you to step forward and be bold, and decided on Romans 8:28 *"we know that in all things God works for good with those who love him who are called according to his purpose"* – and then, to my surprise, when I looked at my daily readings at the time I wrote this article, the very same verse was used in 'Word for Today'. Do not delay!

Avril McIntyre



PICTURE PARABLE

