



SPRING 2020

ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

'IT FELT LIKE COMING HOME'

NORMAN AND JAN HOOKS TELL CLIVE PRICE HOW THEY FOUND HEALING AND A WAY BACK TO METHODISM

Norman grew up amid fierce religious division in Northern Ireland. Jan had to work through issues from her childhood. They both found healing from their own 'troubles'.

And they've made their home with us.

Norman and Jan Hooks met at Cliff College in 1969. Jan had joined the college staff after finishing a course there. She saw young Norman praying in the chapel. They became friends. 'I shared my troubles,' Jan recalled, 'and he understood.' Norman found Jan understood his struggles, too.

Jan was brought up in Salford as a foster child. She had to cope with all the emotional challenges such a journey can bring. 'I was a desperately insecure person,' Jan recalled.

She attended a Methodist church and as a young adult, met lawyer Val Grieve. He was an influential church figure in the 70s, exploring evidence for Christ's resurrection in *Verdict On The Empty Tomb*. Val paid for Jan to attend Capernwray Bible College, before she went to Cliff College.



CYCLE OF LIFE: Jan and Norman have been on the road together since 1971

'I had so many issues and so wanted to be right,' Jan recalled. She found freedom while visiting her mother's house – by watching a TV advert. The famous commercial – 'The man from Del Monte says yes' – became instead a revelation for her: 'I felt God said, "I say yes to your life".'

'I felt God said, "I say yes to your life"'

Norman was brought up in Springfield Road, West Belfast, a junction of nationalist and unionist communities that saw much activity during the Troubles. Norman went to a Methodist church and felt a call to Methodist ministry. Yet he never questioned the divide between Catholic and Protestant.

'The assumption was – we were right and they were wrong,' he said. Those deep feelings emerged on a lay evangelism



Photo: Shutterstock

EASTER TIMES

The MMHS offices will be shut for the long Easter weekend. The dates for the holiday closure are as follows:

FRIDAY 10 APRIL
SATURDAY 11 APRIL
SUNDAY 12 APRIL
MONDAY 13 APRIL

For emergencies over this festival weekend, please phone Refurbishment Manager John Bailey on **07769 250426**. We hope you have a happy Easter!

A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



Here in MMHS's office, we've looked at how we can 'do our bit for the environment'. We passionately want to make a difference for good.

Here's one thing we are doing – and it will impact on our ministerial residents. We're changing the way we present and deliver *The MMHS Residents' Handbook*. Those of you who have a copy to hand will know it's almost 100% plastic. Well, that's now a thing of the past. The present and the future are looking greener!

We've created a new version of our Handbook which we will place on our website for all to access. If anyone would like to receive a physical copy, that's fine. Please contact the office and we will pop a paper copy in the post to you.

We won't be resting there...next stop, the packaging of *Roof 'n' Roots*.

Wishing you many Easter blessings in the middle of these hard times.

● **Mairi Johnstone** CEO

Plastic pollution is one of the challenges of our age. Thankfully, many people are waking up to the damage being done across the globe.

The UK is playing its part - which is great. There's a highly ambitious Environment Bill making its way through Parliament which, among a whole raft of environmental changes, will make us really transform the way we manage waste – plastics included.

WOULD YOU ADAM AND EVE IT?

HORTICULTURE IS HOT! ENJOY TENDING YOUR GARDEN - AND TAKE CARE OUT THERE. STICK TO ONE JOB AT A TIME. TAKE BREAKS WITH WARM OR COLD DRINKS, DEPENDING ON THE WEATHER. STOP WORK BEFORE YOU GET TOO TIRED. HERE ARE MORE TIPS TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF YOUR EDEN...

Hoe

Hoe

Sometimes our garden just needs tidying. If some weeds have to go, lift them with a trowel. Tackle larger areas with a sharp-edged tool like a hoe, which cuts off shallow-rooted weeds. For weeding at ground level, use a kneeler or strap-on knee pads. Some kneelers have handles to help you get up, and can also be upturned to sit on. Try out trowels for weight and grip. Covering weeds with newspaper will starve them of sunlight. Sprinkle soda crystals to destroy moss on your driveway.

Mow

Yes, we all feel the pressure to cut our grass. The average lawn will need 30 cuts a year, but the less you cut your lawn, the slower it will grow. Clover, daisies and other 'weeds' will keep your lawn greener in dry weather – leaving them in place will mean you don't have to spend time weeding. Mow pathways, and leave the rest of the grass longer. Letting your grass grow encourages bugs and insects. Set aside part of your garden to 'go wild' and help local wildlife and meadow flowers.

Growing plants from seed is one of the most satisfying gardening activities. You can do this indoors, outside on a table, or direct into your garden soil. Sowing and pricking out seedlings is fiddly and can be awkward with weak hands, if you have arthritis or a weak grip. Do a little at a time and take breaks. If recovering from an illness, stroke or heart disease, you can use an activity like seed sowing to try to build your strength and co-ordination. ●



Thrive is a national charity that promotes the power of gardening to help everyone regardless of age or disability. For more information, visit their website – www.carryongardening.org.uk

'IT FELT LIKE COMING HOME'

course at Cliff College, when it came to leading chapel prayers. He was asked to pray for 'our brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church'. Norman protested, 'I can't pray this'.

Change came when he met a Catholic priest on a long train journey in the early 70s. 'We shared and talked,' said Norman, 'and both of us felt a sense of oneness and harmony in our Christian faith. God was doing deep work in my life.'

Jan and Norman married in 1971. Their years became filled with raising a family and serving in the 'house church' movement – growing networks of mostly independent charismatic churches. Norman had various jobs from factory work to youth work and teaching - and was an itinerant speaker. Jan became a nurse.

The couple revisited Cliff College on their 25th wedding anniversary in 1996. That marked the start of a journey back to Methodism. Norman sensed a renewal of his early call to Methodist ministry.

'God was doing deep work in my life'

'It felt like coming home,' he said.

He became a local preacher. The process towards ordination began in 1999 at the Buckingham, Bicester and Brackley Circuit – affectionately known as 'the 3Bs'. Norman was ordained as a Methodist minister at the turn of the millennium.

Years later on a retirement course, they heard about the work of MMHS. The Society helped the couple find a home near their family on the east coast of England. 'They've been phenomenal,' Jan said of MMHS. 'From the moment we met CEO Mairi Johnstone, she's been incredibly supportive.'

Jan and Norman have five children. They help look after one of their seven grandchildren, who has severe disabilities. Norman works as part-time minister of a local Methodist church.



CATCHY HOOKS: Jan and Norman are full of praise for their MMHS home

They both serve 'Breathe' – a meeting point at the New Wine Christian conference for parents and carers of people with additional needs.

Amid such busy church and family life, how do they 'breathe'?

'We enjoy ten-pin bowling, we do cinema, and we bought a tandem,' said Jan. More journeys! ●

CORONAVIRUS ADVICE FOR YOUR WELLBEING

Generous servings of self-compassion – that sums up much of the advice shared amid Coronavirus concerns.

MMHS has been monitoring reports on TV, radio and the web. Generally, guidance boils down to three foundational points.

1 Look after yourself

Focus on things you can control – like having good hygiene – instead of those you cannot. Where possible, maintain daily routine and normal activities:

- eating healthy meals,
- getting enough sleep,
- doing things you enjoy.

Consider creating a daily routine that prioritises your wellbeing and positive mental health. Activities like walking,

listening to music and meditating can help you relax and have a positive impact on thoughts and feelings.

2 Hold onto hope

Promote the positive. Read 'good news' stories of people who've experienced Coronavirus and have recovered or supported a loved one through recovery.

Words matter. Limit yourself to reading information only from official sources like the World Health Organisation, UK Government and NHS websites and established charities.

Try to avoid excessive exposure to media coverage, which can intensify worry and distress. Set boundaries to how much news you read, watch or listen.

3 Reach out to others

Keeping in touch with your friends and family via phone or Skype may ease the



stress caused by Coronavirus concerns. Talking through your feelings may help you find ways of dealing with challenges.

Remember self-isolation is temporary. There are still many ways to regularly connect with others electronically. Perhaps you can write a blog or Bible study to encourage others who are struggling.

(Sources: Mental Health Europe, Scottish broadsheet *The Herald*, World Health Organisation) ●

WHEELIE GOOD TIP FOR YOU!

Taking out the bins is a rubbish job. Even more so if you're physically unable to move your wheelie bin to the roadside for collection.

Should that be the case for you, then you can ask your council for 'assisted bin collection'. Local waste crews will collect, empty and return your bins to the storage position at an agreed location on your property.

We've checked this out here at the MMHS offices. We have searched around and found most councils should offer this facility. If you haven't made use of such a service, try contacting your local council and enquire about it.

Although most councils offer 'assisted waste collections', each is different. Of all those we surveyed, some have disability restrictions, others home occupancy restrictions, age criteria and some have mobility criteria.

However, all councils need to assess genuine need and require residents to apply for the service. To find out more, do a search online for 'assisted bin collection' or 'assisted waste collections' and then your council's name – or simply call your local authority helpline. ●



HOME TRUTHS

REFLECTION BY RACHEL DAWSON

It's a lonely time as families become separated by the Coronavirus crisis. It's a worrying time, because we've never been this way before.

Our extended family have found a way down these unknown pathways. We've started a Facebook Family Page. I'd like to share this experience with you, in case you might like to try this out, too.

My cousin set up our Facebook Family Page. It's a totally new thing for us. But it's quite easy.

Of course, you need to be on Facebook first. If this is new to you, too, why not sign up? Facebook is simply a chatting forum. Once you have a Facebook account (it's free!), click the 'create group' option and say how private you want it to be.

Appoint someone as facilitator or administrator. There is a section on all this in Facebook's Help Centre. Just start there. And make it inclusive. We formed a closed group for family members. We were all invited to join.

'We formed a closed group for family members. We were all invited to join'

Each day, my cousin posts a theme for that day. Your family could take it in turns to set the theme. So far, our themes have included – balance, comfort, dance, explore and flower.

Once my cousin has posted the theme, the rest of us respond with something on that theme – in any medium we want. Everyone thinks about each theme in a different way. We've seen everything from dance videos to a ballerina made from a bottle opener – from nature photography to poems – even a tree of toilet rolls!

Some of my family share classy photos. Others just take a nice picture of where they've been for a walk. Still others photograph themselves cooking. When my cousin did that, it was the first time



Rachel Dawson is Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society. She also spearheads a charity called Runningkind and is Volunteer Running Co-ordinator with Watford New Hope Trust.

I'd ever seen her kitchen – and her children!

Posts and comments can be funny. But some might be serious. Other people's posts are quite emotional, and might remind us of family members who aren't with us anymore.

The group unites us from across the country. Family members take part from such places as Cumbria, Brighton, Buckinghamshire, London and Dorset.

As you take part, you begin to cover the whole range of thoughts and emotions. You are treated to a grand overview of the broad spectrum of age and experience across your extended family.

Some family members might be extremely ill and could be at the bleakest point of their lives. Perhaps they're already in total lockdown. Others might be young people with their whole lives in front of them.

'It encourages the sharing of stories. It's great fun!'

As you can imagine, the contributions trigger all sorts of conversations as people add their comments. It encourages the sharing of stories. It's great fun!

Our Facebook Family Page is reinvigorating relationships. It is a nice window on each other's lives we haven't had before. I hope you can give it a try and see if it helps you and your family on this challenging new journey. ●

