

CHRISTMAS TIMES

The MMHS office will close for the festive season from 4pm on Christmas Eve. We open again at 8.30am on 4 January. If you need urgent assistance with your home over the holiday period, please call the main number **020 3848 6020** and choose the emergency option. Happy Christmas!

UPDATED HANDBOOK

An updated version of the MMHS Residents' Handbook can be found at www.mmhs.org.uk/news/handbook. If you lack internet access, please let us know so we can make available a very limited number of print copies. The handbook offers you essential information for everything from pipes to ponds and gardens to gutters!



roof 'n' roots

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society • WINTER 2021

Norman conquest

MEET REVD JOYCE NORMAN – A PIONEER IN MISSION, MINISTRY AND...METALLURGY

Just as L S Lowry was a pioneer of northern art, fellow Salfordian Revd Joyce Norman is a pioneer of women in mission. Born in the land of 'matchstalk men and matchstalk cats and dogs', she went on to embrace the world.

Joyce's Salford story reflects the Lowry print that hangs in her MMHS home. 'You could play happily in the streets because there was very little transport,' she recalled. 'The milk was delivered by horse and cart. It was just a nice, friendly place.'

Born into the McQueeney family, she went on to earn a scholarship for grammar school: 'I had this great interest in science'. Leaving school in 1952, she became a research trainee specialising in metals at a large engineering firm, Metropolitan-Vickers in Manchester's Trafford Park.

'Somehow metallurgy hit me,' Joyce smiled. 'We were growing crystals in petri dishes which are now used in everything we have...what are we calling them now...semiconductors!' The technology they were developing helped create all our electronic appliances today.

Joyce spent her spare time at Salford's historic Dock Mission, leading small



THE MATCHSTALK GIRL: Joyce hails from Lowry land, where her art teacher was a friend of the famous artist. Inset: Joyce with late husband Alan.

groups and working with the Guides. She was inspired by the deaconesses, who had time for others: 'They were absolutely great women'.

She sensed her own divine calling to become a minister. 'I didn't see myself continuing in industry, but what was my place in the Church? I couldn't see it,'

said Joyce. Women were not allowed to become presbyters at the time.

'It was unthinkable for girls to have much ambition,' said Joyce. 'But in Christian Aid I found Janet Lacey – the inspiration behind it all – a woman who was doing a fantastic job. It fulfilled a real need in me.' Raised as a Methodist, Janet Lacey made history as the first director of Christian Aid.

Joyce spent ten years with the fledgling Christian Aid. Travelling across South-East Asia, she had remarkable experiences. She met a nun who'd trained as an

A message from Mairi



Was the COP26 summit a bit of a disappointment? UK President of the summit Alok Sharma was in tears, which probably tells us something. Last-minute changes to the use of coal – from ‘phase out to phase down’ – were explained away with strategically-placed comments, such as you can’t phase out without first phasing down! However, there were landmark pledges. One was given by 110 countries, including Brazil – to end and reverse deforestation by 2030.

I know you’ll be interested to know where MMHS sits when it comes to decarbonisation. We’ve started analysing the considerable challenges and eye-watering cost of compliance. Here are two examples of the questions we’re asking – which of our properties will we not be able to retrofit; how many of our properties do not yet have an Energy Performance Rating of ‘C’?

We’re committed to playing our part – being a prophetic voice, joyfully and hopefully. We’ll make sure decisions are balanced and fully-informed and ministerial resident-focused. We are about people as well as property.

There will be more to follow as we journey along.

Warmest Christmas wishes,
Mairi

Norman conquest

explosives engineer so she could blast rock for freshwater wells. These travels taught Joyce how to be ‘a world Christian’.

When the Church started ordaining women, Joyce did one last job for Christian Aid – establishing their work in Greater Manchester – before becoming a minister in 1979.

She went on to lead churches at epic moments in English history. Joyce was in Middlesbrough during the miners’ strike. She married Alan Norman there on New Year’s Day, 1983. Joyce moved on to Liverpool just after the Toxteth riots.

During her time in Liverpool, she had started to get strange sensations in her hands. Dr John Newton – her former college principal, now district chair – arranged for her to see a consultant. Joyce was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Despite the shock of having MS, she became the first woman superintendent of London South East District in 1990. Joyce believed God was saying, ‘I’ve not finished with you yet!’ She served there for four years.

Unfortunately, the MS grew worse. A specialist recommended retirement at age 59. MMHS provided her and Alan with a two-bedroom bungalow in Dorset. ‘We’ve been able to have the house how we want it,’ she said. ‘It’s good and I like it here.’

Sadly, Alan died from lung problems in 2017. Joyce kept busy with preaching and working for the MS Society at local and national level. But at 83, she’s stopped all that now: ‘I felt I’d given what I could’.

After our interview ended, Joyce’s carer called to make her evening meal. With pride she told the carer about MMHS, ‘I rent this house from them’.

MMHS documents going underground

HOW WE SENT OUR DOCUMENTS ON A JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

Hundreds of our documents are going underground – even deeper than before – in a bid to keep them safe and secure in the most cost-effective way.

Title deeds and records of more than 900 properties of the Methodist Ministers’ Housing Society were recently moved from the basement of Methodist Church House to a Cheshire salt mine.

They join other artefacts from historic records to treasured paintings, in this unusual storage environment. That’s because the salt mine boasts consistent temperature and humidity levels with active fire protection – plus it’s free from ultraviolet light, vermin or flooding.

Our Operations Director Richard Hawkins and Governance & Data Officer Alwyn Jones spearheaded the task of moving a room full of files. ‘We looked at a number of different options,’ said Richard. ‘This was an efficient and cost-effective way of rationalising our documents. It’s



MRS DEEDS: Our Maintenance and Repair Officer Patricia Berry bids a fond farewell to our ancient records

also one of the safest.’

MMHS join organisations across the globe who preserve precious portfolios in repurposed salt mines. Prints of Hollywood history – from Charlie Chaplin to *Star Wars* – now sit in American salt mines. A project called *The Memory of Mankind* plans to gather the accumulated knowledge of our time and store it in one of the world’s oldest salt mines, in Austria.

Charles New makes the news

Photo: Rachel Beekman Photography



CHARLES TREK: He boldly went where few retired ministers had gone before

HOW AN OCTOGENARIAN RAISED HOPE, HEADLINES & HARD CASH

MMHS resident and board member Revd Charles New has made the news. He completed an 80-mile walk along The Wirral Way – taking him not only across stunning scenery and down ancient pathways – but also onto today’s headlines across web, print and airwaves.

Journalists in radio stations and newspapers shared the story of Charles’ terrific trek that marked his 80th birthday and the 50th anniversary of his ordination. At the time, they highlighted how he raised £1,500 for our Wellbeing Fund – but that figure is now nearly £2,000.

Just before he set off on his September challenge, Charles was interviewed by Premier Christian Radio. His 80-4-80 initiative featured in his local paper, the *Wirral Globe*. Stories have since appeared in *Methodist News*, *Chester Standard* and *Birkenhead News*.

After Charles completed his quest, the *Methodist Recorder* slapped him firmly



WHAT YOU CAN DO

To mark his fantastic feat, we have decided to keep Charles’ personal fundraising page ‘live’ until the end of this year. If you want to give to 80-4-80, go to: <https://mmhs.enthouse.com/cf/80milesfor80years>.

on its front cover. Of course, we covered his walk on our website. In addition, we are launching a short film about Charles’ ministry on the MMHS website.

Initially, Charles hadn’t intended to do anything else but celebrate his surprise of surviving 80 years on this planet. But on hearing about his planned peninsula pilgrimage, a friend had said, ‘Who are you raising money for?’ So Charles decided on our Wellbeing Fund.

There has been a stream of generous gifts – from £10 to £100 – which keeps flowing. Donors left positive comments on Charles’ fundraising page. ‘Great way to mark the milestone,’ said one supporter. An anonymous giver joked, ‘There’s life in the old dog yet...’ and another called Charles ‘a legend indeed’.

In typically humble fashion, Charles downplayed his achievement, as if it was normal for an 80-year-old with artificial knees to tackle an 80-mile odyssey. Yet when we sent a photographer and a videographer – who both happened to be much younger – they found it a challenge to keep up with him!

Charities unite to promote legacies

MMHS has joined forces with the Methodist Church and other leading Methodist charities to produce a guide to legacy giving.

Our friends at All We Can – the Methodist Relief and Development Fund – came up with the idea of forming such an alliance.

‘We were exploring ways we could connect and engage with Methodists in a more cohesive way,’ said All We Can Chief Executive Graeme Hodge.

‘I suggested the area of legacy – conscious that most of us receive legacy gifts from Methodists which are often split between us and other parts of the Connexion or charities like MMHS.’

And so the idea was born to produce a joint booklet focused on leaving a legacy, which presents the key ways within Methodism that people can give through their will.

The full-colour 16-page booklet – called *Thine Be The Glory* – was being finalised as *Roof ‘n’ Roots* went to press. Enquirers can obtain copies free of charge.

Alongside the Methodist Church, charities featured are – MMHS, All We Can, Action For Children and MHA. Each charity presents their work over a two-page spread. ‘By joining forces, we could ensure there is wide distribution across the Methodist family,’ said Graeme.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
If you would like to use copies of *Thine Be The Glory* at your church, please let us know.



Top ten for winter care

Photo: Shutterstock



Whatever this season brings, we can carry out some basic home maintenance to help see us through. Here are our 'top tips' for winter care.

1 Familiarise yourself with your heating programmer. Set it to only heat the home when required.

2 Consider turning down thermostatic radiator valves in rooms you don't use. But don't turn them off completely.

3 If you're away for Christmas, keep heating on a low level. That can help keep pipes from freezing.

4 Keep external gullies free from winter leaves. MMHS can help with gutter clearing – don't climb up to the eaves yourself!

5 Ensure all exposed pipes in unheated areas – roof spaces, outhouses, etc – are insulated. If you have concerns, please let our property team know.

6 After a few months switched off, you may find your radiators are cold at the top and hot at the bottom. This normally means the radiator needs bleeding.

7 Make sure your boiler has been serviced. Boiler Plan should have done this within the last 12 months. Please let us know if this is not the case.

8 Check for gaps in windows and doors. Seal them to reduce draughts – and heating costs!

9 Locate your stopcock, in case of emergencies – it's usually under your kitchen sink and looks like a tap/lever.

10 Create a power cut kit – with torches, candles, matches, blankets, battery-operated radio and maybe some board games for entertainment! 🏠

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find more details in the Residents' Handbook at www.mmhs.org.uk/news/handbook

The big Christmas take-off

REFLECTION BY
REVD MALCOLM ROTHWELL

I love Christmas. Listening to the gospel passages brings goose pimples to my arms. They offer assurance and hope in an unsettled world – '...a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered'; '...there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night'.

However, for me, the birth stories raise a few questions. Why do the earliest NT writers, Mark and Paul, not mention them? Was there really a host of angels who suddenly appeared to the shepherds and just as quickly disappeared? Was Mary really the subject of a miraculous virgin birth? If Joseph was returning to his place of birth, it seems odd there was no



family to accommodate him and Mary. Were there really three magi? With no entourage? And what strange gifts for a toddler!

There must be rational answers. Maybe they're unimportant. Perhaps the importance of Christmas lies elsewhere.

Some say Christmas is just for children.

It's like arriving at an airport to go on holiday – but staying in the departure lounge

However, Christmas is enjoyed in a different way when you're older. You appreciate even more the meaning of unconditional, sacrificial love and the hope Jesus brings for a better world. If only people could learn to love as Jesus loved.

The problem is, many people turn up for the Christingle service and that's it for another year. It's like arriving at an airport to go on holiday – but staying in the departure lounge. However, Christmas is just the take-off point. The real excitement lies in the journey, lifting off from the celebration runway – and maybe discovering some answers to our deeper questions. 🏠

This article is adapted from the recently published book *OMG Emails From Thomas* by Revd Malcolm Rothwell, who is an MMHS resident (www.malcolm-rothwell.co.uk). In his book, Malcolm helps a science student explore issues of faith.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Stream or download the Methodist Church Christmas Service at <http://ow.ly/N3nH50GX7cm>



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