

# News from The Methodist Church

February 2017

## *Youth President Designate announced*

In the last issue of Connexional News, I shared thoughts from JPIT about the Presidential Elections in the USA.

In this issue, I am delighted to report that Michael Pryke, from Stamford Methodist Church, has been announced as the Methodist Youth President Designate.

He was elected at November's 3Generate event for young Methodists.

Michael is keen for young people to participate in the life of the church, taking up roles that suit their gifts and to develop new styles of worship.

"I'm deeply honoured to have been chosen to take up this role and I'd like to thank all the people who helped and supported me with the election," said Michael. "Young people need to be a voice of change. We are not just what is next, we are now and our voice counts."

Michael will begin his role next summer, taking over from Tim Annan in September 2017.

Please keep Michael in your prayers as he prepares for his year of office which begins in September. Remember his mum and dad, Ruth and Paul, too as they prepare for a very different year from September!

Michael will be commissioned during the Circuit Service on 3rd September at which we will be celebrating the birth of the new Stamford Circuit.

The preacher will be the Secretary of the Conference, Rev Gareth Powell, and we will also be welcoming the new Chair of District among us – an appointment which is yet to be ratified.

## ***Eco-Weekend Celebrations Streetly Methodist Church, Sutton Coldfield***

Streetly Methodist Church in Sutton Coldfield held an Eco-Weekend to celebrate being given a Bronze Eco Church award and the commissioning of their new wood pellet boiler.

Following a boiler malfunction, members from the church met together to discuss their options. At the time, the church wasn't particularly aware of their environmental impact, but in researching for the new boiler discovered the benefits of the more eco-friendly option.

In preparing for the boiler, the members re-discovered some land in the church grounds which they subsequently turned into an eco-garden, with a little help from the kids!

The weekend involved a jam-packed programme of eco-themed talks, competitions and services involving the local community, uniformed groups and guest speakers.

Dr Ruth Valerio, Churches and Theology Director for A Rocha UK, spoke at the event and officiated at the Bronze Eco Church award. She said: "It's wonderful to see what a regular church can do. You don't have to have a huge congregation with lots of resources to do something special and worthwhile. It's a privilege to see so many churches taking care for God's world to the heart of their faith."



## ***Rethink Sanctions***

#RethinkSanctions

The Methodist Church, working with the Church of Scotland, the Church in Wales and mental health charity Mind have uncovered new data that shows that more than 100 people per day who are assessed as unfit for work because of their mental health problems are having their benefits sanctioned.

Contrary to popular belief, benefit sanctions (having your benefit payments stopped for a period of up to three years) are not imposed in cases of benefit fraud - these are dealt with by criminal courts.

Most often they are given to people who are unemployed but sanctions are also given to people who are claiming benefit because they are too sick or disabled to work. For these people, the most common reason for being sanctioned is that a person has been late or not turned up for a Work Programme or jobcentre appointment.

The Church is concerned that benefit sanctions are harming precisely those who need the most help and support and we're working on an upcoming report about the regime.

Catherine Hale is a Work Programme service user claiming ESA due to a long-term health condition. She has a first class degree from the London School of Economics and has pursued her interest in public policy and its impact on disabled people in a voluntary capacity for Voluntary Action Lewisham, the South East London ME Support Group, and as a member of the Spartacus Network of disability activists. Catherine produced this report for Mind.

You can watch a video of Catherine telling her story of being sanctioned and how it affected her mental health. Visit the Methodist Church of Great Britain's website and search for 'rethink sanctions'.

A report is available for those who want to know more. Email Andy Fyall for further information.

Your prayers and support is much needed and appreciated by those affected.

## ***Pray for your Member of Parliament***

There has been a lot of talk over the last few weeks about the changing administration in America. Closer to home, we have members of Parliament who work tirelessly on behalf of their constituents. By and large, they are good people who have entered politics to make a difference.

Why not take a moment to pray for your MP:

Loving God,

We pray for Alan Duncan (Rutland), Nick Boles (Grantham & Stamford including Bourne), John Hayes (South Holland).

We pray for all of the work they do within our constituency, in supporting us as their constituents and helping those within our community who find themselves in most need.

We also pray for those who support them in their parliamentary and constituency offices, and ask that you uphold them in this important work. We think particularly of the family of (MP's name), and pray that their family life is not detrimentally impacted by their work, and that they may all find times for rest and togetherness.

We think also of the enormous challenges (MP's name) faces at this time, and pray that you will watch over them as they discern which issues to prioritize and highlight within Parliament.

Lastly, we pray for the upcoming political year, that it may be an opportunity for many of the social injustices and inequalities we care about to be addressed and challenged by our politicians.

Creator God, your love transcends political labels and party political divides. At this time of political uncertainty, help us all to show compassion and care to those who hold opinions which differ from our own.

In God's name.

Amen.

*Connexional News is compiled by Rev Andy Fyall*