

# *Farewell To*



# PATRICROFT METHODIST CHURCH

1972 - 2020

A VALEDICTORY MESSAGE FROM  
REV CLARE STAINSBY

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;  
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;  
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.  
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see. © Natalie Sleeth

In every ending is a new beginning.

All my life, I have read in bed, before going to sleep. And long ago I came to the conclusion that if I finished the last page of a book, I wouldn't be able to fall asleep unless I'd at least started another. Otherwise my mind would continue to wonder about the characters and situations of a book now completed. A new book would allow me to anticipate and wonder about what was to come, but with not much information from only reading a page or two I'd slip into sleep. I'm not sure how true all of this is, but it's a habit that's lasted me 60 years!

In every ending is a new beginning. The end of school term always brought the beginning of the summer holidays. The ending of one year leads straight into the start of another. The ending of the day, brings forth the night, and a new day follows. Sunsets are followed by dawns, winters are followed by springs, and each ending brings to start of a new cycle of life.

In every ending is a new beginning. We are approaching the end of Patricroft Methodist Church. Though, in widely used Methodist terms, this is not so much as ending as "mission completed". The purposes for which the building was erected are done. It's time to close the door. It's an ending to all that we have experienced over the years in terms of this building. But it is by no means the end of the family that has been the church, here in this place. We continue, our faith continues, friendships will continue long after the door is closed. These weeks and months of pandemic have taught us much about the significance of friendships and fellowship and family that is far more important than buildings. And with the sense of mission completed, comes the phrase, "well done, good and faithful servants". You have completed your task, and I truly believe that God is ready to touch each one of us with His blessing and peace, as we peer into an unknown future.

In every ending is a new beginning. As the leaves fall from the trees, as seeds fall to the earth, the ending of summer approaches rapidly. As winter comes and all seems bleak and dead, leaves and seeds lie still upon and beneath the frozen earth. Where is life now? But come the first warmth of spring a miracle begins, as new life ventures forth from the heart of the buried seed, bringing new hope and promise. Jesus died upon a cross, and was buried in a tomb. It seemed like the end of everything for his disciples. But days later, he rose and walked this earth again. Then he left again, in a cloud and was hidden from their sight, leaving them lost and wondering. But that leaving allowed a new work, a new mission to begin. From the death of Jesus rose the promise of hope and salvation and freedom. From his ascension came the work of his Spirit, and the church began. Churches and buildings have come and gone many many times in the 2000 years of our Christian faith. But the Church of Christ lives on, age after age after age, surviving every imaginable disaster and persecution and horror. Why? Because our living Saviour is very much alive, as is the reality and closeness of his living Spirit.

In every ending is a new beginning. God may have seen the completion of the mission of Patricroft Methodist Church, but God has not finished with us yet. As this book reaches the conclusion of its final chapter, there is a new book ready to be opened. Are you ready to delve into a new book, to turn the page on a new beginning, perhaps to write the next page? Are you ready to trust the God who has been utterly faithful to you all of your life, to lead you in the next step? “

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15: 13 And “May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, remain with you always. Amen.

*In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;  
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity,  
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

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## PHILIP THORNLEY

I suppose that I cannot let this opportunity pass without making a contribution to the overall set of memories. Sometimes I feel that I don't have memories of much else, but all told I hope they paint a picture of a contented and happy life.

Sundays in the late forties and fifties were marked by conformity. Shops were closed and churches were open. Sunday schools began their day at 10 am, shared their message with the rows of obedient children, sent them home for lunch and started again at 2pm. At 3pm we could go home, although our family routine dictated that we visit my dad's family in Winton. No tv's, no telephones, no cars. If you had a watch you felt rich. Qualifying for the next stage of any system gave life a strong sense of progression. Each year one moved up a class until being able to take part in morning service, and later still evening service at 6.30pm.

The church leaders were reflections of their social selves. They had status. Many ran their own businesses. To be a trustee was an honour not bestowed on all. My brother and I were introduced into this society by Bob Dunn, father of Peter, Chris and Joyce, who had returned from active service in Palestine in the war, and who fell back into church life like so many more returners.

The Boys Brigade, the Life Boys, Brownies and Guides provided for the children, while the Young Mothers, the Wesley Guild, the Ladies' Sewing Guild and the Men's Fellowship catered for the adults. The November Sale Of Work was the highlight of the year with its official opening ceremony, its afternoon tea preceded by Grace, and its eagerly anticipated evening concert. The Rev Morritt Mayall showed Popeye cartoons with his personal 16mm projector. All the children and many adults crammed into the balcony room for this cultural treat. Health and Safety was a meaningless idea born of the European Union many years later. Indeed to little me, there seemed to be thousands of folk milling about, all known to my mother but not to me. My Dad stayed home because he was Church Of England. Religious groups clung on to their purity from contamination.

The Sunday School Anniversary was a White Show where rows and rows of girls dressed all in white compressed themselves onto a makeshift stage, and sang their pieces for three long services. The preacher for the day was selected for his ability to engage the congregation and send them home rejoicing. I had a double problem with Sunday School Anniversary. It only involved the girls, and secondly, girls were an unknown force to me. There were no girls in my family, except for my cousin Elizabeth. So, I wasn't comfortable around girls. They were to be beautiful, feminine and admired from a distance – on a pedestal. The eloquence and the power of preaching were a great attraction. Literally hundreds would travel miles for the event. One such anniversary Sunday on a hot night in May



attracted more than 700 folk. Every seat in the Trinity Wesleyan Chapel was taken and extra seats were put out in the aisles. The obvious dangers were never considered. The sound of 700 folk all singing their hearts out was spine-chilling. The days of Sky tv and summer barbecues had not yet dawned.

Little by little, we increased our participation in the church, especially the singing. It was not uncommon for youngsters to have a secure foundation in piano-playing and reading music. Indeed, in every hymn could be heard a good soprano line supported by alto, tenor and bass voices throughout the congregation. I grew up believing that everyone in the world could read music. Ian Walker, my friend and contemporary, could not only sing a mean bass part, but also could play organ and piano to an amazingly high standard. How I envied him. Many others, too numerous to mention, could also add their cool harmonies. Trinity was awash with talent, and so were the other churches which later blended their strengths with Trinity to form Patricroft Methodist Church.

It was in such an environment that a youngster could appreciate the rich structure of music, language and thought. Arthur Speakman, the organist who always played the organ in his bedroom slippers, recognised the abilities of the youngsters and encouraged us into the church choir with MHB harmony books to cut our teeth on. The poetry of many of the old hymns still lingers, "pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise." At the Men's Regnal meeting, we teased out the issues which affected our lives; I learned to confront official doctrine and revolutionary heresies with equanimity. All analysis was carried out in the omniscient presence of Jesus. Religion and politics did, could and should mix. Sport wasn't far behind.

The one black mark against me, especially in the eyes of my mother, was that I was persuaded by my dayschool teacher, Alan Warrington, to join the choir of Eccles Parish Church where he was organist. Alan was my guru. He promoted me to be his boy soprano soloist. To dad and me, this was an opportunity and an experience to be enjoyed and appreciated; to mum this was apostasy. For mum, anyone who didn't follow her way was decidedly wrong. Alan Cantwell and I were both in that cohort of boys, but both returned to the Methodist fold after our voices broke.

The Boys Brigade, Life Boys, Brownies and Guides were very strong influences on our childhood. I joined the Life Boys, but opted not to join the Boys Brigade because its meetings clashed with the rehearsals of the Eccles Boys' Choir which had an influence over me like no other. I found singing to be the most wonderful and consuming pastime. However, after my treble voice deserted me, I was obliged to fill my years in the wilderness with other pursuits. Joan and Roy Morrell opened up a youth club in the old primary basement, where I and my contemporaries learned to follow the latest 60's releases, play table tennis and tread the boards at an annual revue to which all were invited. At such a revue, I

was designated to send up the incumbent minister in one of the sketches. Rev J Haswell smoked a pipe, and so I learned also. We were totally unaware of the dangers. Everyone and his dog had the smoking habit and those few that did not were oblivious to passive smoking risks.

Patricroft has meant so much to me. It's where I met my darling wife of 47 years. It's where the two of us have spent so many fulfilled years together, where we married and brought up our three children. It is where my parents and I said our last farewells. Patricroft Methodist Church represents the higher values of human society – love, friendship, trust, honour, honesty, forgiveness, tolerance, acceptance and understanding, to cite but a few amongst many.

The idyllic conformity of life was dealt shattering blows by the economic progress of western capitalism. The motor car was within the reach of everyone, and they travelled. Television developed from an evening uniform service to a 24 hour kaleidoscope of colour and choice. Some churches adjusted services to fit in with the schedules of important soccer matches. For many, church became secondary to other interests. The idea of obligation gradually withered away, as did reverence, holiness, honour, and several other laudable notions.

Patricroft Methodist Church has become a victim of social change. It has ironically become an anachronism in a world where so many are trying to cope with mental health issues. If Christians can achieve any good in this environment, it is to keep alive the power of love and forgiveness, and bring mankind into closer union with the Creator God through whom we understand this universe of ours. The Methodist Church is facing its Armageddon. The eighteenth century administrative structure which served the burgeoning democratic grass-roots societies is not proving robust enough to match the speed of social, structural and technological change that surrounds us. The independent Methodist societies in their introverted circuits and districts are not equipped to respond to change. The Covid-19 epidemic could be the saviour of the Methodist Church, should there emerge leaders to take advantage of the era of change which will surely follow. So many small churches will find it impossible to reopen after the restrictions. The Christian message will have to be spread by other channels. Electronic communications are gradually filtering into church thinking. Much more will follow. The Creator God has set up a world governed by physical laws, many of which have still to be discovered and harnessed. We know so little of our universe. We progress inexorably onwards to knowing more. As St Paul reminded us, in our quest we must never abandon faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love. At the end of the nineteenth century when Bishop Wright stormed out of his church synod on the possibility of flight, with the words, "only angels can fly", how much must he have regretted his words when his sons Orville and Wilbur became the first to power an aircraft through the air?

## DAVID EMERY

I have many memories of the activities taking place in these buildings, but I thought I would mention just a few!

Organist – I completed 50 years as organist in 2015, having started originally at Ebenezer, just after we had joined with Trinity. So I've been organist throughout the life of our present building. After receiving a 50 year certificate, it was realised that 2 other members of our congregation had been playing organs around the Circuit for much longer than I had - Ada Finch and Edna Dodwell. Relevant certificates were obtained for them.

Originally, we had morning and evening Services. Then we went to morning and afternoon, and then mornings only.

A couple of amusing events occur to me - falling asleep on a hot Sunday afternoon in June. Just the once, although I have felt drowsy up on the organ loft on some other hot days. I was woken up on hearing my name being called out! The other event was after driving to London and back on a Saturday, then going up on the organ the following morning and reaching for the seat belt!

'Come and Sing' event. No rehearsing, just come and sing. There was a time when there were a lot of these events going on, so we decided to have a 'Come and Sing Messiah'. Ada arranged the soloists and played the organ, and I had the privilege of conducting it. A few minutes before the start time we had only one alto singer in the choir. Fortunately, we had enough by the time we started! It was a good night.

Carol Services were always a great event. We had 'full houses', choir, organ, and an orchestra made up of a lot of the young people, with some adult help. It's been a privilege to contribute to great hymn singing, and special choir singing (Men's, Ladies' and Youth Regnal Sundays). There was an interesting occurrence at one Ladies' Sunday. We had an invited preacher as usual. There was a leak in the vestry radiator, then the organ would not start. Panic! Both were put right just in time for start of Service. At the appropriate time the preacher announced the ladies' choir item – 'My Lord, what a morning'!! One year, we had a Celebration Service in the Organ Trust next door – the old Sunday School building. I played the Wurlitzer organ, and included the bells effect in one appropriate hymn. I had to rise and fall in typical cinema organ style at the beginning and end of the Service! We were celebrating 100 years of the opening of the building.

Church Treasurer - I took over the role of Treasurer in 1974, and I've been treasurer ever since, but not quite for the life of this Church building. So much for the 6 year rule! It's been interesting looking after the finance of the Church. There have been ups and downs in bank balances, but we've made it to this point!

Other enjoyable times have been taking part in various shows and pantomimes, either on stage or 'in the pit' providing musical accompaniment.

I think a common factor in all these years has been all the great friendships and fellowship. I'm very pleased to have been part of this building's life.

## BERYL EMERY

Badminton is the only sport at which I am reasonably competent, so the badminton club has been very important to me as an enjoyable way of keeping fit.

I cannot remember exactly when it started, but it must have been in the early seventies as we used to take Martin, (born in December '72) snug in his carry cot, and deposit him in one of the side vestries whilst we played. We only became a large group in the mid-eighties when the membership was enhanced by many of the young people in the church. I apologise in advance if I have missed anyone out or made mistakes but it was a long time ago!

The membership ( I think! ) comprised Fred and Ena Harrison, Stuart and Andrew, Keith Hodgkinson and Debra, Alan Hampson and Rachel, Geoff and Jackie Hamilton, Ian Richardson and Shirley, Alan Owen, Andrew Slack and Ian Randall, the latter pair being famous for their "high fives" whenever they were partners. To continue there was also David and myself, Martin and Katie, Peter Koukoulis (?) and family and some folk from Immanuel, notably Tim Brocklehurst, Nicola Ripley and Andrew Lees.

Singles were rarely played as doubles was the only way of giving everyone the chance of playing at least two games. We had a clever system for deciding who was playing next, devised I think by Ian Richardson. He made little blocks of wood with individual names on them. These were put into groups of four, placed in rows and gradually moved forward until one group reached the front---game on!

Ena, Jackie and I used to do our knitting whilst waiting to play, which could be quite some time if the players on court were evenly matched. Jackie and I always made sure our blocks were on the front row in time for us to play our last game and be home to watch Dallas at nine o' clock.

Most of us had a nickname chosen for us, I think, by Andrew Harrison. I have forgotten most of them which is such a pity as they were very funny. However I do know that David was "Lurch", Rachel, "Tut", Katie, "I don't care" and I was "The yellow peril" because I wore a yellow tracksuit.

At Christmas we often had a party in the hall, before or after playing??? Everyone would bring a contribution of food or drink and I think we must have played before the feasting as we certainly wouldn't have been able to do so afterwards.

Gradually our numbers have reduced as people have grown up, left the area, played bowls instead, become too unfit to play or just lost interest. We have attracted some new members, namely

Helen Ashworth, Jeanne Hooley and Audrey Owen. Sadly we had begun to call ourselves the "geriatric badminton club" until Stuart Checkley from the Scout

Shop joined us and brought his foster sons, Josh and Michael. They certainly brought the average age down and improved our games, making us oldies run more and try harder. Latterly, Debra Worrall (nee Hodgkinson) has been bringing her children, James and Hannah. They have picked the game up very quickly and could well become quite formidable players in the future.

I will miss the club enormously, not only because it gave me a reason to leave the fireside and do some enjoyable exercise, but the conversation and fellowship was wonderful too. We have formed a WhatsApp group so can keep in touch and who knows, there may be a court out there just waiting for us all.



We are grateful to Geoff and Marie Maston for these photos of traditional Sunday School Anniversaries at Trinity Wesleyan Church. The above photo shows the girls of 1955. By 1962, a group of boys had been allowed to sneak in at the back (see below) thanks to the influence of the Australian minister, Rev Arthur Blanksby (front row). He was also a Manchester United supporter.



## JUDITH BAINES née BARNETT

It's impossible to narrow it down to just one stand-out memory as for many years, until I moved away for work purposes, 'all things church' were just a way of life. I started at Sunday School ( Trinity Methodist still at that time) before I can even remember! It was great fun, and there always seemed to be something to look forward to: Sales of Work, Bring and Buys, coach trips to the seaside, anniversaries and the Whit walks when we little girls all dressed up in our best white frocks and shoes, stiff with 'whitener' ( Meltonian?). To my pre-teen self Church was an extended family and provided a real sense of security and belonging.

As I went through my teenage years it became even more fun! I wish everyone could have experienced the Patricroft Methodist's Youth Regnal of the 70s.....we had so many good times including our Marathon hymn-sing to raise funds for roof repairs. Sleeping in the vestries was very exciting, albeit almost impossible on the hard seats. We were young and didn't let such things bother us! Then there were the annual concerts, which were a real joint effort and full of hackneyed old jokes but we all laughed even so. There were walks and holidays and camping trips as well as our weekly meetings when we listened to many interesting and varied guest speakers.

The highlight of the Church year for me was carol singing on Christmas Eve to raise money for Methodist Childrens' Homes. We'd 'kick off', early evening, around Newlands Avenue in Peel Green and end up at John and Ada Dickinson's in Eccles, very often well after midnight. They knew they were our last port of call and would always wait up until we arrived, plying us with hot drinks and mince pies, before sending us off home, happy and replete. We knew which carols would be requested by which families as they were the same year in and year out !! Mum always requested 'Silent Night' and Dad would ask for ' Ding Dong Merrily on High'.

The Youth Regnal held a reunion a few years ago. Many of us hadn't met for 40+ years but the strong bonds were still there. We are now a ' far flung lot' but it was as if the decades in between hadn't happened : testament to the friendships which had been forged so long before. Many of life's big events took place there. I was married at Patricroft Methodist, had my first child christened there and my parents' funeral services were held there so although I moved away and attended far less frequently it was still the place I returned to to grieve and to celebrate.

Several years ago I had a weekend in Manchester and met up with Joyce Crane ( nee Dunn) and Lesley Kahney ( nee Stegges). We went to church on the Sunday morning and as you can imagine received the warmest welcome ( as always!) One lady made us chuckle when she said ' how lovely to see you girls here, all together again'. Bearing in mind we ' girls' were then all in our 50s this was stretching it to say the least but it was heart warming to be made so welcome and again reinforced that wonderful, sustaining sense of belonging.

## PETER DUNN

From my earliest memories going back over sixty years. I remember walking (no cars then) from Peel Green to Trinity (now Patricroft Methodist Church).

Used to see the same people every week (no names then). Walking to Ebenezer Methodist, Christ Church and Patricroft 'Cong' as well as to Trin as it was often referred too later. Some names I learnt were Lillian and Bernard Hodson, Ann Orr. The organist from Patricroft Cong lived in Schofield Road (A white haired man who I later learned he was an Albino} Freer Chant who played the organ at Christ Church ( I think?) As we reached our halfway point there was a wave of people walking in the opposite direction (more of them) I later discover it was the folk returning from mass. I assume they had been to Holy Cross.

Over the last 60 odd years I have worshipped in three buildings Trinity, Ebenezer ( who amalgamated) and Patricroft as we all know it.

During lockdown I often think what day of the week it is! Except for Sunday. Sunday is when I (we) worship. At first it was strange not jumping in the car and driving over the M60 to Peel Green.

Thanks to technology we can still worship. In our own homes. No need for 'Church Buildings' I like most of us have been able to follow the Circuit video services, at home in my dressing gown (shock horror) and after the first week it felt normal.

A Facebook friend of mine Andrew Emison is a Methodist Minister in Frodsham and has been streaming worship ever since lockdown started. So, I have been following worship in Salford and Frodsham at different times on Sundays.

Many of you will remember Andrew speaking at Men's Sunday two or three years ago. He was a young boy when his father Rev. David Emison was our Minister over thirty years ago. He said the first seeds of his faith were sown at Patricroft all those years ago.

The QUESTION we must ask. Will our final service planned for 25th October still go ahead or will it have to be rearranged?



## DON BOOTH

The Garden Club ran for a few years including The Lords Shop which the name was taken from a sermon by a loved supernumerary preaching at Patricroft, the Rev Ian Mutton. One morning he mentioned he had been to a Cricket match at Lords and during a rain interval he visited the Lords shop. So the name was adapted for the Garden Club.

An annual event was the bedding plant sale. We were very fortunate to have the plants supplied to us by Syd and Gwen Hall from Cadishead Moss. This raised a considerable amount of money for the Church as did the Plant stall at the Christmas Fair when a few of our members purchased Amaryllis bulbs and waited with interest to see what colour they would come out, because it was always different from what we said was on the box.

The highlight was the Millennium Garden Festival in August 2000 this was over a weekend and was opened by Doris Mercer. Alan Owen was Festival manager and constructed a display of the Garden of Gethsemane with the open tomb in the Communion area also the Hanging Gardens of Babylon from the Organ loft and many other areas.

Other displays in the Church were created by the Centre Group, Men's Fellowship, Guides and Brownies, Ladies' Fellowship, Badminton Club, Network, Bible Discussion Group, Drawings and Paintings by George Mercer (Doris Mercer's Great Grandad Textile Designer 1865), Christian Aid / Fair Trade, Garden Art, Children's mini garden competition, Photographic Competition (Flora & Fauna and People in the Garden), Plant Competitions (Container of Plants and a Hanging Basket)

Displays in the Schoolroom consisted of Tindall St Allotment Group, Derek Brooks – Cut Flowers, Ray Tebbby – Sweet Peas, Bill Williamson – Orchid Plants, Bob Chapman – Fuchsias, Alan Taylor – Geraniums, Roger Pope & Don Booth – Show Vegetables, Richard Hope – Giant Vegetables, Peter Dunn & Alan Owen – Computer Plant Finder & Garden design, Norman Cherry - Handmade Pottery, Jean Cherry – Paper Making, Doris Hilton – Gnome Display, Don Booth – Charlie Dimmock and outside of the Schoolroom we had Jack Jones with his Street Organ.

Catering - any Methodist event had to include Food. Light Refreshments were organised by Jennifer Winnington.

Over 300 visitors attended over the weekend and we made over £1000  
Sunday Morning service was led by the Bible Discussion Group with  
the Theme Gardens of the Bible and included a sketch with George and  
Barbara Briggs as Adam and Eve

During Millennium year Christian Aid had a connection with a Gardening Group in Burkina Faso the Garden Club took up the challenge and was teamed up with the Delwende Community in Kolguiniesse, Burkina Faso. They grew to feed the family, not for pleasure. Their main crop was of course rice. We used to communicate in French thanks to Phil when I wrote a letter Phil did the translation for me. Surgredee came over to visit us from Burkina Faso. We took him to see the allotments and had refreshments in the schoolroom. He was especially keen on the home made fruit cake. During the time we had fundraising, the main item being an auction.

## ELIZABETH THORNLEY

Although christened in St Mary's Parish Church, my Methodist journey began when my Auntie Ruby (David E's mum and my godmother) took me to Ebenezer in what I'm sure was an effort to help and support my mother after my father had had a stroke leaving him without speech. At probably 3+ I sat very scared in Sunday School and in spite of Auntie Dot (Mercer) being the kindest person in the world, I wet my knickers and was even more frightened to tell anyone. Not a good start you might think but it was the beginning of a long and happy relationship with Methodism. Sunday School, morning and afternoon, meant Bible stories, songs with actions, prayers, class activities and sharing time with adults and children who became friends. Sunday School Anniversaries meant white frocks and lots of singing. Christmas meant all the Gospel stories coming to life in nativity plays; the zenith of my acting career being when I played Mary and rode on a real donkey. Christmas carols and more more singing. There always seemed to be an opportunity for a show, with more singing but especially "Sitting on the back seat kissing and a'hugging with Fred", (Phillip Lloyd) which was also an introduction to popular songs (and boys)!

Chronologically this was about the time that Ebenezer and Trinity were to amalgamate and after a short time of starting our church service at Ebenezer, the Sunday school wandered down the road to share with the Trinity until Ebenezer finally closed and, only looking forward, we were one big happy Methodist bunch together. Being a larger group, this enabled us to take part in the Inter Sunday School Festivals/Competitions/Eisteddfods when the world of choral speaking, poetry reading, Bible reading and much more which elude my memory, opened up new experiences. There must have been singing as well but I just remember entering into a little power struggle with Angela Gregory from Monton for a couple of years! She always came 1st! We also had Inter church swimming galas which I can only remember as being fun with little or no kudos for me in spite of Bob Dunn taking a gang of us to Eccles baths before church every Sunday morning.

Sales of Work not Christmas Fairs were the highlight of the year when all came together to man stalls, have the Ethel Cooke and Phyllis Dunn traditional ham salad tea followed by a pantomime or show involving anyone who didn't mind making fun of themselves eg Alan Cantwell in drag as Dame Whateverhername was. Rehearsals for this event meant bus journeys for me from Eccles, no parent taxi service like the kids today, but I made it my challenge to race from bus stop to bus stop to save on time and bus fare because what I saved each time meant more sweets or chips from Rainger's chippy.

Many of the men of the church were members of Men's Regnal an organisation which encouraged and embodied the person as a body, mind and spirit whole. Following their example, the young people decided to form their own Youth Regnal group, meeting every week to discuss, play games, listen to invited speakers, play music and plan visits to other Regnal groups in the district where more last-

ing friendships were created eg Margaret and Phil Tate, David Thomson. Familiar names no longer attending at Patricroft include Geoff and Jill Cooke, Pete Rigby, Jane Cooper (my best friend for many years), David Horsfall, Gordon Ball, Eddie Owen, Sheila Bowker, Lyn Rawlinson, Karen McCulloch, David Clegg, Judith Barnett, and please forgive me if I've missed you out! Remainers include Peter Dunn, Alan Owen and me. God Bless You all wherever you are.

Plays, shows, pantomimes, concerts with lots more singing continued to litter my teen years until my Sunday school teacher became my boyfriend on my 16th birthday at a special Christmas Dinner celebration in the Primary Schoolroom yes you've always been a big spender Philip and that folks, as they say, is history. My college years meant 3 years of hitch hiking back from Edgehill, Ormskirk at weekends to share more of the church fellowship I had grown used to and of course to see Philip who sadly took me back on Sunday evening, getting to know the East Lancs, Rainhill By-pass and the smell of cabbages in the surrounding fields like the back of his hand.

Within 2 weeks of qualifying as a Junior/Secondary teacher, I refused a placement offered at Hopwood Primary School to the consternation of the panel interviewing, who quickly understood when I revealed that my then husband was Deputy Head there. Three very different 40 year old plus children later, all baptised at Patricroft and attendees at Sunday School until more exciting endeavours enticed them away in their early teens as happens with so many but we believe the early Christian influences may have outweighed some of the more dubious ones they've met in their lives.

Centre Group also played a part in my life as the young mothers of the church met weekly and also met in each others houses once a week to chat and share coffee and cake. Not only did that hone all our baking skills but compelled me to keep a diary after all arrived at my house one morning and all I could offer was an apology for forgetting, only having boring biscuits and I bet I hadn't dusted. The kettle needless to say still went on. I've never had a good memory but forgetting to take Hannah home with me after a jumble sale at church was almost unforgiveable though we've all laughed about it since, even Hannah who quite honestly didn't know I had gone.

There was also another incident during the Summer School we ran, when we all took turns to be in charge for the day.

Christine Prescott and I were responsible for numbers on a coach outing to Walton Garden, but when we arrived back at Alexandra Road after a great day we discovered an extra child! Perhaps we should have realised earlier from his Liverpudlian accent that he didn't quite belong. We'd counted several times and convinced ourselves we couldn't have too many instead of someone missing. Freda very kindly whipped him back to Walton before he was missed. Well my Patricroft family, being friendly and kind and giving me a sense of purpose was not much use without the necessary sense of responsibility!

Now Philip and I have raised our own family and are in hot pursuit of others who have already celebrated their Golden wedding Anniversaries. We have enjoyed

long friendships and fellowship with the folk at Patricroft. My life and loves have never been far away from the church and it has certainly provided me with the atmosphere and activities I was perhaps lacking at home. It is only in these later years that I have been able to understand why we were never able to have family holidays, trips out, birthday parties, friends round to our house and even the support of a parent in the audience in the myriad times I've been on our stage. My poor mother had to nurse a speech-disabled, and demanding husband before he died in 1963 and then she had to make a living with 3 children in Ellesmere Park of all places on a widow's pension. If only I could have been more understanding then. Her 8 (like us) grandchildren were her joy and she would have been so proud of all their achievements had she been able to stay a bit longer with us. Church, as we often say, is not the building but the people in it and I can say from the heart that is true in my case.

Thank you Methodism, thank you Methodists and God Bless Auntie Ruby!

## FRANK SHEPHERD

My first memory of Patricroft was when I was about five or six years old. I went to a Christmas party for the Owner Occupiers Association. I could not have told you where the party was held until I visited Paricroft Methods with Anita and we walked in the hall after the service and recognised the Hall after all those years.

I had very good memories of the party but could nor remember where it had been held. So it was about fifty years between that party and going to worship there with Anita.

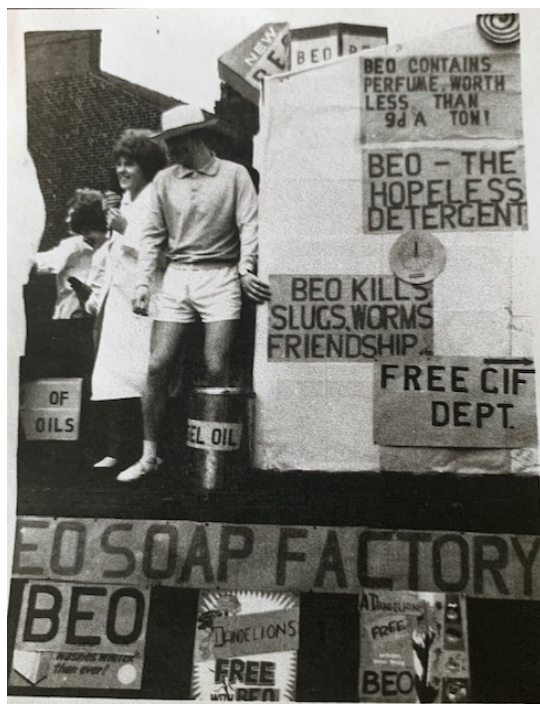
I remember going to do some work at Ebenezer Methodist Church in the 1960's . I was there fitting the communion rail. Eri c Chapman was my boss. while I was cutting out the holes in the floor for the rail EWric started to play the organ I nearly jumped out of my skin.

I think Eric attended Patricroft after Ebenezer closed during the sixties.

I hope this will be of use to help with bringing back memories for some of the Church Members.



These photos were submitted by Roy Morrell, who was the Youth Club leader at Trinity in the 60's. The photos recall July 14th 1962 when the youth Club took part in the Eccles motorcade and summer pageant. The float theme was a useless washing product BEO, which ridiculed the enormous number of soap powder adverts on ITV at the time. Our float won second prize of one pound. (Who's the young guy with the lovely legs?) Roy and his wife Joan now live in Enfield.



## HILARY PRICE

My parents and grandparents all attended St John's Wesleyan Methodist Church situated at the corner of the Langworthy Road/Liverpool Street crossroads diagonally opposite to Chimney Pot Park near to the current Emanuel Methodist Church. My parents were married at St John's in 1931 (my father playing the organ before the service!). My maternal grandparents had moved to live on the brand new Westwood Park Council Estate in Winton and my parents were persuaded to rent a house there rather than buying a house (in hind sight, this wasn't the best advice !). The nearest Wesleyan Methodist Church was Trinity so their Memberships were transferred there. I was born in 1936 and was baptised at Trinity and later, in my teens, after Membership Classes was accepted into the membership of the Methodist Church.

My notes and jottings.

The first Minister I remember was Rev William Whittle who had served as a Missionary in the Gold Coast, West Africa. He arranged a pen-friendship for me with a girl called Esi Kudjo but I can't remember this lasting for very long – not sure why.

When old enough I attended Sunday School. The Primary Department Superintendents (in what is now the NW Organ Centre ) were Miss Lilian Sherlock and Mrs Wood. I was scared of Mrs Wood as she seemed fierce and strict and was always glad when Miss Sherlock was on duty. All the 'hymns' and songs that I remember came from the Cary Bonner books eg 'Look out, look out Jack Frost is about, he's after your fingers and toes and all through the night, the gay little sprite is working where nobody knows' - I can remember all the words now! and 'Hear the Pennies dropping, listen while they fall, every one for Jesus, He shall have them all' as we paraded round to put our collection through the slot in the special money box.

Later I became a Sunday School Teacher and then Primary pianist.

I attended Brownies and Guides when Freda Griffiths was Guide Captain and went on camp holidays which I mostly enjoyed. Of course, some of this was in wartime and I used to go home by myself on the 66 bus (terminus, Peel Green). One evening as I left Trinity, Mr Attack gave me a caramel toffee which I unwrapped in the dark on the bus. What I didn't see was that it had foil inside the cellophane so I chewed foil and caramel making my teeth ache!

Annual Sunday School Anniversaries were important occasions, involving much preparation and for which a special visiting minister was invited (I remember Rev Maldwyn Edwards among others). Mr Bottomley and other menfolk used to erect the huge tiered platform just beneath the pulpit which was then covered in white material. The Choir, usually just of girls, was trained by Connie Gaskell and in later years by Celia Orrin. Wearing white dresses, we gave choral items at all three services- the youngest girls being seated on the top rows with older, more experienced singers on the lower rows. Because there wasn't much time to walk home and back again between the afternoon and evening services I was always

invited by Mrs Hague, daughter Joan and Miss Howarth to their home for tea – a real treat.

At the age of 10yrs (?) I moved into the 'big' Sunday School in the main hall. The boys sat on one side with their teachers and the girls on the other and the older young people sat further back, still segregated. We used to break up into smaller classes in the small vestries for part of the afternoon before joining together for the closing items. I remember Mr and Mrs Gascoine who taught the two top classes of boys and girls and told us numerous stories about the good works of Lax of Poplar. They also took us on outings eg to Lyme Park.

JMA collectors used books rather than the more sensible boxes used now, and often had problems keeping their books in order (my parents made sure that I had recorded monies I had received correctly). Mr Derbyshire was JMA Secretary and we used to take our books and money to him in the lower vestry under the hall gallery for checking.

We always looked forward to the annual Sunday School outing to Southport. We went in coaches, had most of the day free before all meeting together for tea in a very large Café. I don't remember it ever raining!

I always remember Rev Morritt Mayall and family. During his ministry we had a very strong Youth Club excellently led by Harold Simpson. The Club used to meet on Friday evenings, mostly for games like table tennis and just enjoying sitting and chatting. I remember twice attending Circuit trips to Methodist Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC) weekends in London – these were organised by Ron Price who was Circuit Youth Secretary at the time! The first year we slept underground in Clapham Deep Shelters which had been used during air raids in the recent World War 11, very exciting but not very comfortable and I can't remember anything about 'facilities' or food! The following year we slept in chalets at Gilwell Park Scout Camp, much more civilised! On both occasions we filled the Royal Albert Hall with young Methodist people and their leaders – a sea of green and yellow scarves- for the closing events of displays, entertainment and devotions. These were very impressive occasions. In recent years MAYC has become 3-GENERATE. There is a Youth President and they have weekend conferences each year at places like Butlins.

Morning and evening services at Trinity were well attended. On Sunday evenings young people use to make for the back rows of the gallery. I sat in the choir above the pulpit and can remember, one occasion, when the preacher made all the young people move to the front rows because they were beginning to shuffle and whisper! In summer a favourite after service walk was up to Davyhulme Circle to hear the band play in the park. In winter we used to meet in the Primary room to sing Cliff College choruses.

In those days Arthur Speakman was our organist. He played beautifully but v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y for hymns and would not be hurried. At Harvest Festivals /Flower Services I always hoped that we would sing the words 'He paints the wayside



flower and lights the evening star', because Arthur certainly made the star twinkle beautifully.

During another service the organ pump failed. A group of the lads volunteered to go up into the Choir vestry behind the organ to pump manually. This they did, the organ came to life again and the service continued. However, a while later, the organ failed again and with that, frantic, and very rapid pumping was clearly audible. Grins all round the congregation! The lads had obviously noticed that, on the wall, someone in the past had marked out a pencil scale next to a weighted piece of string, with the weight right next to the word 'FULL'. No one had had time to tell them that that didn't work anymore!

The Boys Brigade, also a very strong and smart group, ( Harold Simpson, Cyril Witts, Alan Fawkes, Peter Simpson to name a few) used to parade up and down in the large hall with their musical instruments and I can remember peeping through the swing doors to watch them playing while marching.

The annual Sales of Work were always very big events taking place on a Wednesday afternoon and the following Saturday in the autumn. Stalls were erected in the main hall, selling cakes, handicrafts, toys, sweets for Church Funds. Trestle tables were laid out in the Primary room for teas of sandwiches, scones and jelly/trifles. In the evenings there was entertainment – I remember May, Alice and Betty Hindley who I regarded as very old ladies (like I am now!) pretending to be school girls wearing gym slips and doing physical exercises. We nearly split our sides laughing but they were good sports and didn't mind. On Saturday evenings there was a rolling programme of film shows in the top left hand vestry showing hilarious Charlie Chaplin films. These were always packed out to standing room only and much enjoyed – you can tell how far back I go!

In my teens, Trinity Players Theatre Group was formed by Geoff Maxfield and his wife (names? I'm not sure that this is correct)) and we put on quite big productions such as Louisa M Alcott's 'Little Women' – I played the mother! – Pride and Prejudice (was I mother again?) I can remember Margaret Parker, Jean Collin, Jack McCann (yes, he later became MP for Rochdale and a Queen's Equerry), Tom Morris from Immanuel). This was when the raked stage was put in the hall. These productions were taken around the Circuit. Mr Bottomley made some/most of the scenery – I can remember us taking one production to Regent Road Methodist in Salford (demolished long ago). Some of the props had to be taken, one of which was a large tree. Mr Bottomley said that, to make things easier, he would stand behind the tree throughout one scene holding it up, However, just before the curtains were due to open for this scene Mr B had to make a call of nature and asked one of the men in the cast to hold the tree and, yes, the curtain opened before Mr B returned. A quick change over had to take place in view of the audience much to everyone's amusement. All good fun!

I then went away to University in Bangor and on my return the Mayall family had moved on, the Youth Club was no more – people had moved away/got married etc.

Sometime after we were very blessed to enjoy the ministry of Australian, Rev J Arthur Blanksby, wife Dorothy and girls Margaret, Rosemary and Vivian. The old Patricroft Manse in Eldon Place was so large that their friends, The Wilkinsons, lived in the manse with them.

Arthur already had a Melbourne University BA and BD and wanted further qualifications (PhD ?) from Manchester Uni. Manchester insisted that he must do their BA first before going on to PhD. Unfortunately, one of his most influential tutors fell ill/died and Arthur found that Durham would have allowed him to proceed without doing their BA first so they moved up to Chester-le- Street, County Durham. I had become friendly with Margaret Blanksby and so was invited to visit them. I can remember going to watch Arthur play in a cricket match at Castle Eden Cricket Club.

He was a real character and I can always remember, in a sermon, him saying "rain falls on the just and unjust fellas but mainly on the unjust because they've got the just's umbrellas".

I remember the group, Connie Gaskell, Brenda Lavery, Doreen Gray and Margaret Crawford who we young girls christened 'The Glory Girls' because we young'uns thought them 'VERY HOLY' as they frequently went for weekend 'retreats' at Capenwray Hall.

When I came home from University, Joan Hague, fifteen years older than me, was the nearest in age to me at that time.

At Uni I was a member of the University Badminton Team and so on my return I joined the Eccles Wesley Club and then a Prayer Group and other activities. My parents were looking to buy a house and bought one in Grange Drive to be near Eccles Grammar School where I was teaching. It seemed ridiculous to walk past Monton Methodist to Patricroft so we transferred our Membership to Monton. I'm not sure that we were forgiven for this! The rest is history.

I attended the opening of the new church building ( was it 1968 / 1969 because Christine Herricks, bridesmaid for me in 1967, and John Sleigh, had to be married at the old Ebenezer Methodist instead of Trinity, as demolition /rebuilding were in progress.

It was a lovely service but I remember that I must have been the only person present who had never heard or sung the tune 'Sweet Nightingale' to Wesley's Conversion Hymn. I acquired the music and love to play it now.

You don't always know who you will meet at important occasions like the opening of the new Patricroft Methodist Church. A friend of ours, who shall be nameless, was always one who would speak to strangers and try to make people feel welcome. She turned to the gentleman next to her and said "And what do you do for a living ? " His reply, " Madam, I'm your MP". It was Lewis Carter Jones as many of you will remember.

## JOHN BROCKLEHURST

I have many recollections of Patricroft, especially in the later years since the new building was opened. My first contacts with Patricroft was actually with some of the members pre new building. When I first started on my journey as a local preacher my first appointment on Note was with Mr Appleyard at Barton Methodist on 18th August 1968. I remember well that as I stood in the pulpit I could stretch out my arms and nearly reach each side of the balcony. It was the people that were there that later transferred to Patricroft I think about and also the people at Winton who also transferred to Patricroft when they closed. The Cantwells, Jennifer Winnington amongst others as we joined in choruses with the children during service. Doris Higham was also there and then when that closed I remember the Cantwells and Jennifer becoming Sunday School Teachers at Patricroft which they are still involved with. My first actual service at Patricroft was on the 24th August 1969 before the new building in 1972. Obviously I must have preached in the old building but I must admit I cannot think what it looked like or its interior. I have preached many times at Patricroft and I must admit I have always felt welcomed whenever I was there but we must remember the fellowship of the members there. So many that it would be unfair if I tried to name them all in case I overlooked someone. In the end when the building is gone the church remains in People. I have always had a good relationship with Patricroft and its ministers, especially Alan Dye who was my mentor and tutor for my Local Preachers studies. It was always a joy to join in the many activities, being a member of Regnal, going to Christmas fairs and having a really enjoyable time in your company. I wish you God's blessing as you continue your Christian journey within the circuit and I look forward to seeing you whenever I preach around the circuit whenever that will be. Thank you for all the service, dedication and witness you and the church have given throughout your history. Happy Memories.

John Brocklehurst

REV ROGER STUBBINGS

Dear Patricroft friends,

As you look towards closure of your building in the next few months, I just wanted to send my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for you all as you move, in due course, to your new church homes. I know it is never an easy time, but I know that at such times we must strive to continue to worship “the Lord of the house” and not “ the house of the Lord”. I remember many years ago driving through a city and seeing a notice outside a church building that had obviously closed; the notice read: “This church is not closed, only the building is.” It showed the determination of the congregation to continue to be “church” wherever they had moved on to.

I look back fondly to the seven years from 2001 to 2008 when I was superintendent minister of, firstly, the Cadishead and Eccles Circuit and then the Salford Circuit. I always looked forward to leading your worship at Patricroft and have enjoyed annual visits to your Church Fellowship in the years since.

I do hope that the current situation will ease to enable you to gather for your Final Service in thanksgiving for all that is past and dedicating yourselves for all that is to come.

Every Good Wish To You All

Roger Stubbings