

Ah, well. Someone had to do it. Write the Circuit pastoral letter, I mean, in the shadow of the General Election. It's not that Christianity and politics don't mix. Far from it. I remember the late and great Donald Soper, Methodist minister and true Christian Socialist. However, Christians don't all agree about who should now be feeding the cat at number 10 Downing Street. I have a colleague (and friend) who has given up trying to persuade me to give up *The Daily Telegraph* in favour of *The Guardian* – or at least *The Independent*. (I'll leave you to guess who.) So: what can one say from a Christian perspective without taking sides?

I was reading a book by Alec Ryrie last week, entitled 'Protestants', and had reached a chapter about South Africa during the Apartheid years. It was essentially about the relationships between three groups: English-speaking white people, Afrikaans (ie Dutch)-speaking white people, and non-white people. It was about the policy of Separation, and the role of the churches. Without attempting to summarise a 35-page chapter, nor deal with the complexities of that situation, I did detect three distinct positions held by Christians, all trying to be Christian.

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), or elements of it, believed that it was unfair to bring non-white people into white-led churches, and that they would better flourish in churches of their own. (They did, in fact.) Nobody thought to ask the opinion of the non-white people, of course. Sadly, that view chimed in with the belief of certain Dutch-speaking white folk that, like the Israelites crossing the Sinai desert, they were God's chosen ones. As such, they had to maintain their separateness. That is what led to Apartheid. They saw it as God's will. Thus parts of the DRC found themselves swimming in the same racist stream – though they meant well.

Then there were the traditional 'mainstream' churches, Methodists among them. With their 'mixed' churches and indigenous pastors, they were models of diversity (well, up to a point, as it turned out when the Windrush generation turned up at our own church doors in 1948). The churches saw the evil of separation (apartheid) and the way that non-white people were being exploited and abused, and set out – tentatively at first – to put a stop to it. It is what Christians do, right? We stand up against evil and oppression, poverty and deprivation – as did the Confessing Church which opposed Hitler in Germany. The statues of the Ten Twentieth Century Martyrs over the West Door of Westminster Abbey bear witness to the human cost of serving Christ in this way. South Africa had its Christian martyrs, too.

The third group of churches was made up of the independent, mainly Pentecostal, churches. What did they do about Apartheid? Nothing, it seems. They produced few voices to rail against the evil things done to non-white people by white people. They did not 'stand up and fight' with others as one of them later admitted. Some came to regret this, but others defended that stance. The Zion Christian Church claimed, that it had defied apartheid in its own way 'by teaching its members to respect themselves, one another and the law'. They were 'not to hurt others, but to refuse to be hurt by others'. Their churches were where people could bring 'their daily misfortunes, illness, encounter with evil and witchcraft, bad luck, poverty, barrenness – in short, all their concrete social problems' (quoting Simon Maimela, a South African theologian) in a way that the established churches often failed to do with their focus on political liberation.

Ryrie points out that it is these churches which have prospered, 'not because they collaborated with the apartheid regime, but because through them many of its victims discovered power and dignity that defied anything that regime could throw at them. 'Who,' asks Ryrie, 'can say that they were wrong?' Makes one think, doesn't it!

Peter

Resources/Good News

Celebrating 50 Years of Women's Ordination in the Methodist Church

2024 marks the 50th Anniversary of Women being ordained as Presbyters in The Methodist Church. We are celebrating some of their stories.

Kathryn Stephens is a Superintendent minister of the Stoke-on-Trent Mission Circuit. She recalls her time during training to become a minister, being one of the first to become pregnant during this time and how her life and work have culminated in her call to ordained ministry.

['Half way through candidating, I discovered I was pregnant' | Kathryn's Story \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Could You Help?

Knaphill Methodist Church hosts a regular Clothes Bank but need some help with sorting clothing in preparation for the next event.

If you're available this Saturday, 13th July from 9.30am to 1.30pm and could offer some help, please contact

Helen Brice on 07443 582937

Refreshments will be provided



Information meeting

at Byfleet Methodist Church, 2pm on Sunday 14 July

(prior to the Circuit Service at 3pm)

for those interested in joining the

Circuit Pilgrimage to Iona in 2025



Pilgrimage Dates:

Thursday 28 August - Tuesday 2 September 2025

led by Rev Adam Payne

staying at the Argyll Hotel

<https://www.argyllhoteliona.co.uk/>

Please contact Helen Belsham for further details

helenebelsham@icloud.com



Circuit Service

To bid a fond farewell to
Rev Sydney Samuel Lake
and
Mrs Anna Carrington



All welcome

Refreshments will be served after the service

Sunday 14th July 2024 3.00pm

**Byfleet Methodist Church
Rectory Lane, Byfleet, KT14 7LL**



Stay for FREE tea,
coffee & a chat

Clothes4U

Pre loved clothes with TLC

from

Knaphill Methodist Church

Broadway, Knaphill, Surrey GU21 2DR



Saturday 20 July 2024 2 - 4pm

To claim your FREE clothes, collect a voucher from 30+ places in Surrey.

Email us to find out where they are: clothes@knaphillmethodist.co.uk



All are welcome to join us for tea, coffee, cake & a chat in a friendly environment



Whether you're looking for clothes for yourself, friends, or family



We have lovely, pre-loved clothes for everyone to take away & enjoy wearing



We look forward to meeting you & your family



If you would like to donate clothes, please contact us on the email below



If you would like to volunteer, we would warmly welcome your help

www.knaphill-methodist-church.com/clothes4U

clothes@knaphill-methodist-church.com

WE NEED YOUR CLOTHES!

PLEASE DONATE UNWANTED CLOTHES

to

Clothes4U Clothes Bank
Knaphill Methodist Church

We give clothing to anyone who needs it.



CLOTHES

NEEDED URGENTLY!!

**PLEASE DONATE CLOTHES FOR
MEN WOMEN BOYS GIRLS & BABIES**

HOW TO DONATE

bring your clothes to Knaphill Methodist Church (use glass door down side passage)

1:30-3:30pm on these dates:

Saturdays 20 July, 17 August

Can't make those dates?

email us to arrange another time
clothes@knaphillmethodist.co.uk

COFFEE AND CAKE

AT ST. MARY'S

QUARRY ST. GUILDFORD GU1 3UP

MAY – AUGUST
2024

10.30 – 12.00



Everyone welcome

Thursday 23 May

Thursday 27 June

Thursday 25 July

Thursday 22 August

- each month features a different charity
