

Pastoral letter 19.10.22

Dear Friends

Like some of you, I have now lived during the life and times of 3 monarchs, 18 premierships and 29 chancellors of the exchequer! Some of you will be able to beat that tally. I suppose that I really started taking an interest in politics from the late 60s onwards. I have never subscribed to the view that religion and politics don't mix, simply because both of them are about how we choose to live our lives. Methodists and Methodist preachers have always had a healthy interest in politics with a small 'p' and many with party politics also. I well remember that the small Methodist church I grew up in produced not only a town councillor but the town mayor...as well as five Local Preachers and three ministers.

John Wesley himself was much concerned, as you know, with the poor and the marginalised during the 18th century. Many of the early trade unionists, including the Tolpuddle Martyrs, were members of the Methodist Church. Today, the Methodist Parliamentary Fellowship holds an annual Parliamentary Covenant service in the chapel at the Palace of Westminster. In recent years Methodists have pursued their social justice work alongside the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union and the Church of Scotland.

It comes as no surprise therefore that our most recent hymn book, *Singing the Faith*, contains a number of hymns relating to social justice, the resolution of conflict and the pursuit of peace. Perhaps you might like to have a look at the Justice and Peace section in *StF* beginning with hymn no. 693 written by Graham Kendrick... 'Beauty for brokenness'. The hymn has a chorus ending with the words 'come change our love from a spark to a flame'. This reminds us that John Wesley considered himself to be 'a brand plucked from the burning' because as a child he was rescued from his father's burning rectory. It also reminds us of Wesley's Aldersgate experience when he 'felt his heart strangely warmed'.

I would also refer you to hymn no. 705... 'It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand'. This hymn was written by the late Fred Pratt Green, who was a Methodist minister, and the second verse seems particularly apt at this critical time in our nation's history:

'It is God whose purpose summons us
to use the present hour;
who recalls us to our senses
when a nation's life turns sour;
in the discipline of freedom
we shall know God's saving power'.

May God bless you and keep you, and those whom you love.

Allan

Rev. J. Allan Taylor