

## Methodist Conference Southport 2015

I suppose I am a Methodist because my parents were Methodists and their parents before them. I have, however, never felt that Methodism has the monopoly on sharing the Christian faith and have often enjoyed worshipping with other denominations. Yet the Methodist Church has been my support on my Christian journey and it was in the Methodist Church that I accepted the challenge to commit my life to Christ – a decision which has meant everything to me. So, I am first of all a Christian, by the grace of God and secondly a Methodist. This week has been one of those times when I have been so glad to be a Methodist, having spent the week, along with John & Chris Purcell as a volunteer steward at the Methodist Conference.

First of all, everything is organised so well. So much hard work (and finance) has to be poured into such an event. As volunteers, our timetables were meticulously prepared so we knew exactly where and when we were on duty, what time to take coffee and lunch etc. This was organised by Carole Booth, the wife of our previous Chair of District, Rev. Jim Booth. This is a role she has undertaken for many years – and it shows! Secondly, the venue buzzed with hundreds of delegates, some old hands to conference and many coming along for the first time. It was great to be a part of such a big event. Some faces were familiar & it was especially good to meet up again with Rev. Margaret Barnes (who sends her greetings to friends at Marshside Road)

The weekend was especially memorable. On Friday afternoon, a short memorial service was held at which those ministers who had died during the past year were remembered and their names were read. There were many and three of them known to us. Rev. Tim Hall, our Superintendent who died in January, Rev. James Gartside, a past minister here at Marshside Road, and Rev. Maurice Johnson, born and brought up in Marshside, and it was from Marshside Road Church that he entered the ministry. It was a very moving service. On Saturday afternoon, the new President, Rev. Steve Wilde and Vice President, Dr Jill Barber, were inducted during a special ceremony.

This was a 'ticket only' event but we were privileged to be able to watch it on cctv. It would be almost impossible to put into words the sincerity and commitment of both the president and vice president, so I would urge you to read their inaugural addresses which are printed in full in the Methodist Recorder.

On Sunday morning, the Ordinands were received into full Connexion at a most thrilling and inspiring service in the Southport Theatre. The singing of 'O happy day' and 'And can it be' (along with other inspiring hymns) raised the roof. At the end of the service, we volunteers were asked to form a guard of honour as the Ordinands left the service. The joy of the occasion was so special. The Ordinands then went to various churches and cathedrals for their ordination and our own Rev. Patrick Evans was ordained at Leyland Road.

Fringe events included the beach labyrinth and Firefest was once more held in the Marquee on Mornington Road to celebrate 130 years of the Southport Holiness Convention.

I think we were all pretty tired by the time conference ended but nevertheless felt a touch of sadness. Though conference is about the governance and organisation of the Methodist Church and many serious and pressing issues have to be discussed, the atmosphere of joy amongst so many people who were there because of their commitment to the Lord and his church was so memorable. We would certainly recommend that next time conference is in Southport, those who have not volunteered to help before may feel able to do so and I am sure you will find it as uplifting and fulfilling as we did.

### **Dorothy Simpkin**

P.S. If anyone would like to borrow a copy of the Methodist Recorder in which the President & Vice President's inaugural addresses are printed, please see me.

Editor : You can also watch videos from the conference on the Methodist Church Website. Go to [www.methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-2015](http://www.methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-2015), click on the Programme link, the date of the video you would like to watch and then the video.