

I have often had the question 'what is a Methodist?' but I was slightly taken aback when the question was 'Why are you a Methodist?'

Well, I'm a Methodist because that's the church my mum & dad went to and made me go....even when I didn't want to!

I'm a Methodist because as a teenager this was the church with the best youth group and it was fun.

I'm a Methodist because I like a good sing, the people are friendly and caring and there's always tea and cake.....

I'm a Methodist because the values of community, justice and meeting social needs are important to me.

All this is true but really I am still a Methodist because it was amongst the Methodist people I discovered Jesus.

However it was long time before anyone introduced us. I belonged, sang, ate cake and took part in events for many years before anyone told me that this was personal; that the story of Jesus was really a story of the deep deep love that God had for me and his creation. And when I realised how much I was loved, I was shocked and disturbed; it changed my life.

I honestly think without that introduction, without Jesus, I would have drifted away from the Methodist church. I would have had many fond memories of the church; no doubt I would have still wanted to get married there and possibly have my children baptised there; I would probably carry the values of justice and integrity but that would have been it. I would have been like the countless others who say they have 'a Methodist background' but no real faith.

So I thank God that someone had the courage, a long time ago, to talk to me about what they knew of Jesus.

I have realised this summer that I have completed 20 years in ministry and in those 20 years I have been involved in many initiatives: courses on faith; community outreach projects; fresh expressions of church; alternative acts of worship all designed to engage people with Christianity. They are all good and valid forms of outreach but I do wonder sometimes if we would be better simply explaining what it is about Jesus that makes us follow him; if we introduced people genuinely to the Jesus we know.

As we begin the new Methodist year with all the flurry of activity that it involves may we not forget why we do what we do and maybe, just maybe, we might have the courage to tell someone WHO we do it all for.....not for the church but for God who loves us so much through Jesus.

Happy Methodist New Year!

Helen