



# FROM THE CHAIR

*The Revd Dr David A. Hull*

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Dear Friends,

‘Thus the flame spreads to those of riper years; till at length they all know him, and praise him, from the least unto the greatest.’ With these words, Wesley concluded his journal entry for Tuesday, 8 June 1784, the earlier part of which is quoted at the beginning of the article which opens this edition of MET Connexion.

As Chris Ritter explains in that article, Wesley was describing ‘an uncommon work of God among the children’, as many of them responded to the preaching of the gospel. It was a scene which concluded with Wesley on his knees, amongst the children who knelt beneath the pulpit, leading them in prayer.

Wesley was neither the first nor the last to observe that the gospel flame is sometimes kindled amongst children before it spreads from them to older generations. In recent weeks, at the time of writing, I have come across two churches in different places, both of which began life initially in work amongst children. As the children responded to the gospel message, so their parents and wider families came to investigate and then themselves became followers of Jesus, to such an extent that, in both places, a new church was established.

It was just over a fortnight before Wesley’s 80th birthday when he knelt with those children in Stockton-on-Tees. It was a moment which might have confirmed an approach that had marked

his ministry from the earliest days following his strangely heart-warming experience of faith on 24 May 1738. Less than a year later, he purchased land in Kingswood, Bristol where he built not only a chapel, but also a school. He later stated that he had devoted more time, attention and energy to the work based on that site, than anything else he had done – such was his commitment to ministry amongst children and young people, particularly through education. For generations to come, many Methodist missionaries would follow his pattern, quickly establishing a school, and sometimes a healthcare facility, alongside the worshipping communities they formed through preaching the gospel.

It is this approach to mission and ministry, rooted in Wesley’s urgent call in his own day to prioritise work amongst the rising generation, that has inspired MET’s Rising Generation work. Even as this edition of MET Connexion goes to press, Nathan Veall – the rising generation representative on our Executive Committee – is at work, developing an exciting project that seeks to reach and equip a new generation of students, university leaders and younger adults new to the workforce, in the work of the gospel. Please do keep Nathan and the work he leads in your prayers.

I’m delighted that Freedom Church Bristol, of which I am Lead Pastor, meets on that piece of land originally purchased by Wesley in 1739, now known as the

Kingswood Estate. It has had a history of transformation. When Wesley’s school moved away, the site was purchased by Mary Carpenter, a Victorian reformer who, concerned about the fate of juvenile offenders incarcerated amongst adult criminals, established one of the first reformatories in the country on the site. It was the Home Office which constructed the buildings which still stand on the site today and, when they became vacant, were passed into the ownership of a local body of trustees for the purpose of Youth and Community work. The site now houses many local organisations engaged in community transformation and it is here, amongst these many groups, that Freedom Church meets. As one visitor said, the church is bringing the gospel back into the heart of the work of community transformation focussed on children and young people, just as Wesley intended.

On this site, as in many other places, a flame has been kindled amongst the younger generations before it has spread to those of older generations. Let’s pray for all those involved in ministry, mission and evangelism, not least amongst children and young people – the rising generation – that we might see a rekindling of the flame in our own day.

Rejoicing in our partnership in the gospel,

*David*