

# Methodist Recorder

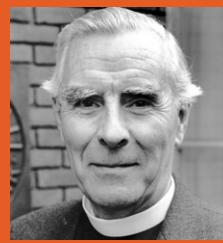
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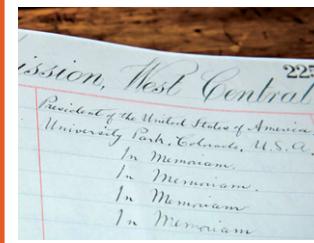
## NIGERIA HEALTH CARE PROJECT

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# Delight at grant for Tolpuddle

## Prospect of rescuing martyrs' chapel

by JOHN SINGLETON

THE former chapel in Tolpuddle, Dorset, with its historic links to Methodism and the trade union movement, is in line to receive a massive grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to fund a long-awaited renovation project.

The Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust (TOCT), which owns the 200-year-old Grade II\* building, has been awarded initial development funding of £63,700 to progress its plans towards a full grant of £329,300 at the delivery stage. This round-one funding allows TOCT to produce detailed plans for the renovation and repair of the former chapel, as well as creating interpretation and community engagement activities to tell the history of the building and its connection to the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

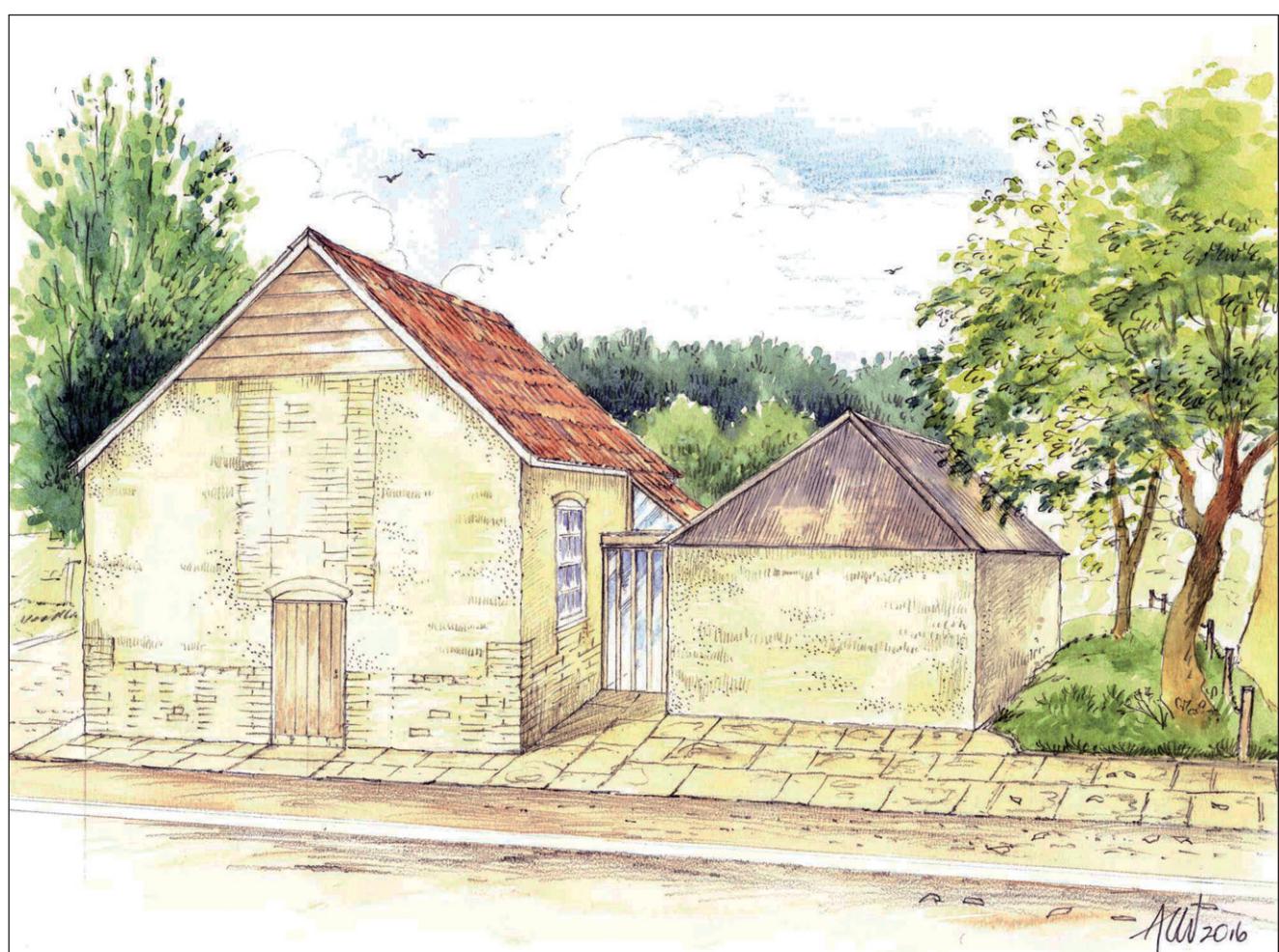
The property's heritage significance is intrinsically linked to its development and use by the martyrs and its role as a central focus of early 19th century Methodism in rural Dorset. Research suggests that the orig-

inal cob structure was built by two of the martyrs and their families. It is presently on Historic England's "At Risk Register".

Built in 1818, it is believed that two of the Tolpuddle Martyrs - Thomas Standfield and George Loveless - were involved in its construction. The chapel was used by at least four of the six martyrs and it is thought that George Loveless was a lay preacher in the chapel. For much of the past 150 years it has been used for agricultural purposes.

### Important

The important story of how the six established the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers, creating a union to negotiate for better wages, and were sentenced to transportation to Australia will be an important part of the project. The harshness of their sentence caused a national outcry and the first mass demonstration of trade unionists in London.



An artist's rendition of the chapel, once renovations are completed.

A former Vice-President of the Conference and Dorset resident, Dudley Coates, told the **Methodist Recorder**: "This is an important development and offers the prospect that the building in which the four or five Wesleyan Methodists among the six Tolpuddle Martyrs worshipped will be rescued. The trust plans to restore the old chapel and make it available for events. A small extension will help visitors to understand the building's significance in the story of the Tolpuddle Six as well as providing practical facilities."

"The old chapel is in the centre of the village, but has been in agricultural use for about 150 years. It was in a very poor condition before the trust acquired it and obtained funding for emer-

gency repairs. It will be wonderful for villagers, for Methodists and for visitors to Tolpuddle to see it fully restored and put back into use."

### Pilgrimage

Supernumerary minister and chair of the Friends of Tolpuddle Methodist Chapel the Rev John Walker said that they were delighted to hear about the significant grant made to the scheme to renovate and re-open to the public the old chapel that was used for worship by most of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. "We are sure it will become a place of pilgrimage and reflection for many from across the world," he said. "We have long waited and prepared for this moment which has been re-

alised by this breakthrough and the work of the trust."

Mr Walker described the trust as a great example of local partnership, fully ecumenical and involving experienced people of faith and non-faith. "The sensitive design-plans maintain the simplicity of the chapel, but add modern facilities for a variety of uses. After decades standing in need of attention, this great opportunity for local service and international symbolism has been seized. The last annual Tolpuddle Festival had a bumper attendance and showed a growing friendship between Methodism and those who gather each year to celebrate the freedom claimed by the martyrs."

Superintendent minister of the Bridport and Dorchester circuit the Rev Step-

hanie Jenner said she was delighted to have been involved in the securing of and plans for the original Tolpuddle chapel as a trustee of the Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust. "The local Bridport and Dorchester circuit were able to loan the trust the cost of purchasing the chapel and the land which enabled it to be saved from falling into irreversible disrepair," she said. "This first major grant should be able to enable the building once again to be an inspirational space in the heart of this small, but very important village and allow both chapels, the church and the museum to continue to work together to tell the story of what ordinary people can achieve through

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## Bulletin Board

THE German Lutheran church at 55 Alie Street, London E1, headquarters of the Historic Chapels Trust, is the venue on Wednesday, November 9, at 6.30 pm for a talk about Protestant Christians in Germany with Jewish ancestry who found themselves subject to persecution before and during the Second World War. Based on letters researched in the Mile End History Library, the speaker is Anette Jäger, who is married to the superintendent minister of the Tower Hamlets circuit, the Rev Cameron Kirkwood. The evening will include refreshments and a guided tour of the church.

METHODIST local preacher Prof David Clough, who is Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of Chester and president of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, is to be a keynote speaker at "Creature conference – is Christianity good news for animals?" to be held at the Oasis Auditorium, Waterloo, London on Saturday, March 18, 2017. During the conference speakers from a range of different denominations will encourage delegates to consider theological understandings of animals, engage with contemporary animal welfare issues and take practical action within their communities. The conference will feature a round-table discussion with all the speakers and also workshops. The day will also include the opportunity to explore and reflect through a series of interactive stations including a virtual reality experience, prayer stands, crafts and an art exhibition. It is being organised by Sarx, a UK-based animal welfare charity. For more information see the website ([sarx.org.uk/events/creature-conference](http://sarx.org.uk/events/creature-conference)).

## Big Church Switch wins top energy award

THE Big Church Switch, a Tearfund and Christian Aid initiative, has won the energy category in the PEA (People, Environment, Achievement) Awards. The award was made at an event in Brighton.

The Big Church Switch campaign was launched in February 2016 to inspire churches to switch to green energy by offering advice, support and easy access to green energy companies.

Christian Aid campaign strategy lead Tim Gee, said: "Informed by our witness against global injustice, churches are demonstrating the big shift that Governments and investors must urgently make: from outdated fossil fuels to clean renewable electricity. I hope the project will inspire people from every walk of life to find a way to play a part in switching off fossil fuels, too."



Host of PEA awards Oliver Heath (left) presents the PEA award for energy to Tim Gee of Christian Aid (centre) and Matt Currey of Tearfund (right) for the winning Big Church Switch campaign.

## Methodist Recorder Change of postal details

In view of repairs and renewal work being carried out at the **Methodist Recorder's** Golden Lane, London, offices, until further notice the address for all postal correspondence is:

**Methodist Recorder, 3-5 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7DQ**

# Delight at grant for Tolpuddle

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faith, community and social action. We hope to have significant progress made by two years' time when the 200th anniversary of the original chapel opening falls."

Chair of TOCT Andrew McCarthy said the trustees welcomed the support of HLF in awarding the grant. "Since our purchase of this 'At Risk' building in 2015, the trust has received the backing of the Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic England, as well as a Start-Up Grant from HLF. Nu-

merous organisations and individuals have also contributed to our charity ... This highly significant development funding from HLF will help the trust move forward to develop our existing proposals to renovate and extend the former chapel and secure match funding. We hope our project will reconnect people with the harsh living and working conditions, faith, humility and simple building techniques of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, as well as ensuring this wonderful legacy is saved for future generations."



The chapel as it looks now after emergency repairs.

Heritage Grant applications are assessed in two rounds: a first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund

the development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and, as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

## Cumbrian chaplain a 'Special Angel'

THE lead chaplain of the Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy team, the Rev Chris Blackshaw, has received the "Special Angel" award at an event organised by CERT Community emergency response team UK to recognise people who helped above and beyond the call of duty during the floods almost a year ago.

The Kirkoswald and Alston Moor circuit minister was runner-up in the caring and support category but received the "Angel" award "for being there when there was no one else". Among the awards, presented by former world super-featherweight boxing champion Charlie Shepherd, were those for the most improved volunteer, outstanding achievement, caring and support,



Sponsored diet solicitor Nigel Davies presents a cheque to the Rev Chris Blackshaw.

and an unsung hero.

Chris Blackshaw and the Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy, as part of the Cumbria Farming Flood Action Group, has been further honoured with the top "Farmers' Guardian" Farming Hero of the Year award. This award pays tribute to the work of the group in the face of the

devastating Storm Desmond, while demonstrating the kind of support network underpinning the cherished and celebrated support network surrounding the Cumbrian agricultural industry.

The Action Group includes the Addington Fund, Cumbria Agricultural Chaplaincy, Farming Community Network,

The Farmer Network, Federation of Cumbria Commoners, Forage Aid, Foundation for Common Land, National Farmers' Union, Mitchells Auction company and Westmorland Agricultural Society.

Cumbria rural solicitor Nigel Davies, of the Rural Law Practice at the 136 Rural Auction Centre, Crooklands, who undertook a sponsored diet to support the chaplaincy, raised about £800 as he shed the pounds in weight.

Chris Blackshaw said: "We are deeply honoured to have received this award and to have the support of so many farmers, especially people like Nigel, as we are a charity and need to raise money to ensure our work of supporting the agricultural community continues".

## C of E statistics for 2015

CHURCH of England statistics for 2015 show that just under 1 million people attended its services each week. The survey, carried out over four weeks in October 2015, found 960,000 people attending church each week, with 820,000 adults and 140,000 children. Schools services added a further 160,000 attenders.

The report says that the total worshiping community of churches across the Church of England was 1,142,000 people, of whom 20 per cent were aged under 18, 50 per cent were aged 18-69 and 30 per cent were aged 70 or over.

The figures also show that 2.5 million attended a Church of England church at Christmas in 2015 and 1.3 million people attended a service at Easter. Additionally, 2.3 million people attended special Advent services for the congregation and local community, while 2.7 million attended special Advent services for civic

organisations and schools.

In 2015, the Church carried out just under 1,000 weddings, 2,000 baptisms and almost 3,000 funerals every week of the year. Attendances at these services are not recorded, but estimates of 50 at each of those 6,000 services would add up to 300,000 attendances each week or more than 15 million each year.

Some 11 per cent of births during 2015 were marked by a Church of England infant baptism or thanksgiving service while 30 per cent of deaths were marked by a Church of England funeral.

### Trend

As a whole the figures represent a continuing trend that has shown an 11 per cent decrease in attendance over the past decade with an average decline of just over one per cent a year.

A one-off question for 2015 asked churches about the facilities they provide. The responses suggest that nearly half now have kitchen facilities and more than 60 per cent have toilets. The 16,000 churches of the Church of England serve communities in a range of different ways, including full-or part-time shops in 212 of them and post offices in 152.

Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council William Nye said: "The Church of England is setting out on a journey of Renewal and Reform, aiming to reverse our numerical decline in attendance so that we become a growing church in every region and for every generation. These figures represent a realistic assessment of where we start from in terms of weekly attendance. We are confident in a hopeful future where our love of God and service of neighbour will form the basis for future growth."