

Dear Friends,

We are planning to visit Leipzig in the summer (by the time you are reading this we should be back at home) not least because we have a new grandson there. Near Leipzig is the small university town of Halle (you can buy chocolate made there at *Lidl*, under the name J. D. Gross—have a go at the dark chocolate mousse bars). Halle was one of the centres of the Pietist movement which, along with the Moravian Pietists at Herrnhut (about 150 miles from Halle), was such a great influence on John Wesley and the early Methodists.

The characteristics of Pietism, so important in early Methodism, are still important today. The Pietists were orthodox in their Christian doctrine but they did not regard 'head knowledge' as enough. They believed in personal experience—what John Wesley would express as the 'warmed heart'. Christian conversion and a daily devotional life that emphasised a personal relationship with God were fundamental to their Christianity. They loved the Bible, meeting with other Christians in fellowship groups and sharing in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in the church and in the wider world.

John Wesley liked borrowing ideas from other Christian groups. One of the things he borrowed from the Moravians was the watchnight service. Wesley held his first watchnight service in London in April 1742. Many early Methodists who had formerly spent the night at the alehouse began to spend the time in prayer but while Wesley valued these services they eventually became quarterly and finally yearly on New Year's Eve.

Today, watchnight services have all but died out. If I wanted to be overly pious myself I would say it is because most people would rather go to a party than to a prayer meeting but, I must concede, the watchnight services I attended in my childhood were desperately dull— though I still remember some of the hymns including this one by Frances Havergal which is perhaps fitting for us all to reflect upon as we begin a new Methodist year in the circuit:

Another year is dawning/Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting/Another year for Thee.

Another year of progress/Another year of praise
Another year of proving/Thy presence all the days.

On 10 September at 7.00 pm at Central, we say 'goodbye' to Revd Gavin and Mrs Angela Hancocks as they move to new avenues of service as Gavin will be superintendent minister of the Dorking and Horsham Circuit. We have already said 'thank you' to Mrs Margaret Newman who has completed seven years as circuit steward and is succeeded by Mr Stephen Lemming. Gavin is succeeded by Revd Jon Doble. There will be a formal service of welcome for Jon and supper following on Saturday 24 September at 7.00 pm at Central.

Another year is dawning/Dear Master let it be
On earth, or else in heaven/Another year for Thee.

God bless you in the coming year.

John Haley