



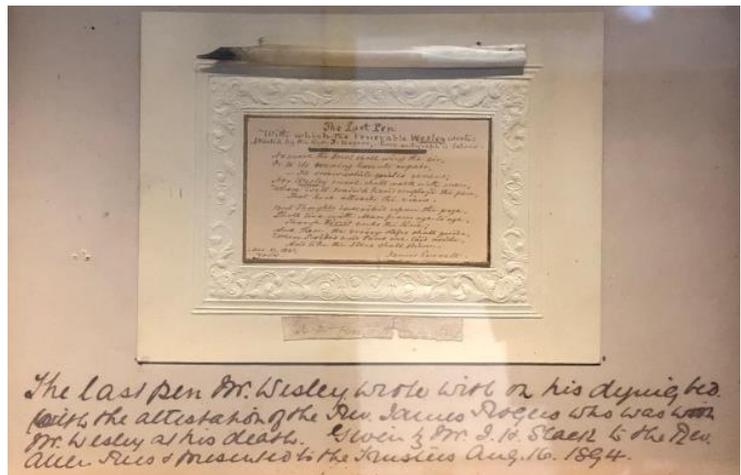
Wey Valley Methodist Circuit – Pastoral Letter 2022 Rev Barrie Tabraham

“Is the Pen Mightier than the Sword?”

Dear friends,

Since these thoughts will appear very close to 24th May, which in Methodism is celebrated as ‘**Wesley Day**’, I thought some words on John Wesley might not be inappropriate – and those of you who know me, will not be surprised! Forgive me, Merrow members, if you’ve read part of what follows before a couple of years ago in another article.

As some of you know, I am a heritage steward at the **Museum of Methodism** in City Road in London. At the museum, there is an artefact on display that is so small that you could easily miss it as it sits in one of the cases downstairs. It’s a goose quill pen belonging to John Wesley, with the caption underneath: ‘*The last pen Mr. Wesley wrote with on his dying bed with the attestation of the Rev. James Rogers who was with Mr. Wesley at his death.*’



The significance of the pen is that it was almost certainly the pen John Wesley used to write his last letter before he died, to **William Wilberforce**, encouraging him in his efforts to combat the evils of slavery. Wesley’s letter concludes: ‘*Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being “a law” in our colonies that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this? That he who had guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir, Your affectionate servant, John Wesley.*’

Why write this short piece about a little pen and a brief letter written over 200 years ago? Not just to illustrate that ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’, nor to show that Wesley’s zeal for social holiness was unabated (he was a very old man when he wrote it, and died just over a week later), but to remind us that the battle against racism and injustice has been a long one, and continues – even in our own country in 2022, with such movements as ‘**Black Lives Matter**’. We are, however, in good company, and – however old we may be – we should persevere in fighting evil, knowing that God works through the small and seemingly insignificant, to achieve his purposes.



Here are some familiar words of St Paul which adds some theological 'flesh' to the argument:

'Paul speaks out about equality' – (Galatians 3 : 23 – 29)

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.



A Prayer: Gracious God, forgive us for our reluctance to embrace the demands of the Gospel that Jesus preached and embodied. Renew our commitment to justice and equality, and help us all to witness to your all-encompassing love which can transform humanity into what you long for us to be. Through Christ our Lord, **Amen.**