

Dear Friends,

I well remember the first sermon that I preached. It was in the Dorking and Horsham Circuit at an evening service at the south end of the Circuit (Chapel? Partridge Green?). I had gone with my wonderful Local Preaching mentor David Ensor (who was publishing editor of 'The Methodist Recorder' - esteemed company!).

I was 19 years old and had poured my heart and soul into the handwritten words that I was to share with the congregation that night. God was going to work a wonderful miracle. The world was going to change. Lightning and fire would come from heaven. Revival was about to begin!

I spoke for about seven minutes. How could it have gone so quickly?

At the end of the service, I stood with David at the back door of the Chapel as the congregation made their way out into a summer's evening. An elderly, saintly man held his hand out to shake mine. What awestruck words of wonder was he going to share? Had the Spirit changed his life?

He smiled and said, 'That was your first sermon, wasn't it?'

Oh dear.

Since that time, I have preached many, many sermons. I don't keep count, but it'll be in the thousands. I have also heard some extraordinary sermons that have lifted and transported me in ways that I could have never imagined. David Winwood at MAYC London Weekend, Donald English at the University of Leeds, Archbishop Michael Ramsey in Durham, Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin at Canterbury Cathedral.

Preaching for me is an extraordinary activity. Colin Morris tells the story of Anton Rubinstein, the 19th century piano virtuoso on tour in New York. He was asked whether he would like to go to Church and replied, 'Yes, if you can take me to a preacher who will tempt me to do the impossible.' Preaching at its best opens the kingdom of heaven and offers an experience of God. It teaches, unpacks, inspires, and challenges. It comforts and brings peace - it offers to open windows on the activity and the life of God.

On February 4th we have an evening Circuit Service at Trinity which celebrates all that preaching has been, is and can be. We will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hugh Bowerman's ministry of Local Preaching which is an extraordinary privilege. But the God who worked in the life of Hugh 25 years ago calling and equipping him to do this task - that God does not stop calling. Perhaps you should ask yourself the question - Is God calling me? Perhaps to preaching - perhaps to some other ministry in the Church?

If you are feeling that call, do speak to your minister or to me. We'd love to hear from you.

Blessings,

Paul

Resources/Good News

Unbounded Love

God's love doesn't stay in the lines

Charles Wesley's famous hymn Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (Singing the Faith 503) talks about Jesus as 'unbounded love' – a kind of love that cannot be contained, that works in our lives and in our world to free us and heal us. Unbounded Love is the theme of the Lent campaign of the Methodist Church in 2024 – holding together our commitments to be a justice-seeking church, and a people who experience and proclaim the good news of God's uncontainable love.

Sign up for daily reflection emails during Lent

Throughout Lent we are sharing daily email reflections that explore the theme of Unbounded Love. Sign up to receive these each day, beginning on Wednesday 14 February and discover a rhythm of reflection over Lent. You'll also be signed up to future reflection series.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

**Wey Valley Circuit Service to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of
Hugh Bowerman becoming a Local Preacher**

Woking Trinity Methodist Church, Brewery Road, Woking, GU21 4LH

Sunday 4th February 6.00pm

(refreshments from 5.30pm)



This service will take the form of a normal Foundry piece of worship which combines contemporary praise with an opportunity for thought and discussion.