

'LOAVES & FISHES' at Methodist Eclipse Party

Like when Jesus fed 5,000 on the banks of the Sea of Galilee with limited resources, a Methodist circuit on the Fylde coast unexpectedly found itself dealing with thousands of people arriving after having only prepared for a fraction of their number.

A multitude of 2,000 spectators descended on one Methodist Church organised eclipse party last week, with attendees sharing just 200 pairs of special glasses – drawing comparisons to the famous loaves and fishes miracle.

Like when Jesus fed 5,000 on the banks of the Sea of Galilee with limited resources, a Methodist circuit on the Fylde coast unexpectedly found itself dealing with thousands of people arriving after having only prepared for a fraction of their number.

But what looked like scarcity turned into abundance on the evening of Wednesday 12 August, at Fairhaven Lake, as the specialist glasses allowing people to look at the rare phenomenon were shared widely, sparking conversations and community among the attendees.

Huge crowds gathered at Methodist Church eclipse watching parties across the UK and Ireland as churches opened their arms to communities as part of a Day of Outreach.

Western Europe's skies darkened for the most significant solar eclipse since 1999, and the last until 2090, as the Moon passed between the Earth and the Sun, blocking sunlight for over two minutes.

But for many churches it was a celebration that lasted hours, as people from across the community – from Church members to those of different faiths or none – were drawn together to watch and celebrate, with amazement, the spectacle.

Many organisers were shocked at the massive response from local communities, with many flocking to the parties which were often organised alongside different partners.

Superintendent Minister Stuart Wild, of the Blackpool and South Fylde Methodist Circuit, said: "We came prepared to welcome a few hundred people, but God had other plans. What began with a worry about whether we would have enough became a beautiful demonstration of what happens when people share what they have.

"Like the loaves and fishes, God can take what seems insufficient and use it to bless a multitude. For us, this was a powerful reminder that the Church is called to make space for everyone and to be a community where generosity, welcome and wonder can flourish."

"The eclipse lasted only two hours, but the witness of generosity and community may last much longer."



The Methodist Church

Church Stretton
IN THE SHROPSHIRE & MARCHES CIRCUIT



MINISTER

REV'D GEORGE HEINZ

Telephone: 07538480626

Church Website

[www.churchstretton-
methodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.churchstretton-methodistchurch.org.uk)

A WARM WELCOME TO YOU ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. IF YOU ARE VISITORS WE TRUST THAT YOUR HOLIDAY WILL BRING YOU JOY AND REFRESHMENT OF SPIRIT. PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE & FELLOWSHIP IN THE HALL FOLLOWING THIS SERVICE.

SUNDAY SERVICES

SUNDAY 23rd AUGUST 2026

10.30 am Rev Brian Spencer

SUNDAY 30th AUGUST 2026

10.30 am Kathryn Lewis

TUESDAY 25th AUGUST 2026

11.00 am Sandford Service -at the home

WEDNESDAY 26th AUGUST 2026

10.00 am to 12.00 Baby & Toddler Group – NO MEETING

2.30 pm – 4.00 pm "Cuppa & Chat" – in church hall

**WE ARE ASKED TO PRAY
FOR THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE**

Trish & Darren H, Christine & David H,
Rev George & Beth H, Sue & Rob H, Trish H,
Stella & David J, Kathryn L, Christine & Gerry R.
Residents and Staff of Sandford Nursing Home,

SANDFORD SERVICE

Our next communion service at the Sandford Nursing Home will be at approximately 11am next Tuesday, 25th August. I understand there are a few new residents who are interested so it will be good to meet them. Come and support us if you can. **Ann C**

'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.'

When this tune is played before our preacher of the day leads us in worship, please take this time to be still and quiet and reflect. Thank you. It could be a time to turn in "Singing the Faith" to number 20 or to ponder the three aspects mentioned in the hymn - the presence of the Lord, the glory of the Lord and the power of the Lord.

**Items for the Church Notices for 30th August 2026 to
cdgtorridon@aol.com or 01694 328319. Thank you**

"SINGING THE FAITH" 117

**"Sing praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation.
The God of power, the God of love, the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul he fills, and every faithless murmur stills:
to God all praise and glory!"**

John Langridge chose this hymn for the second Sunday in August. It would not be surprising if some of us found it unfamiliar because we have sung it only three times in all the sixteen years we have been using "Singing the Faith". It was not in the repertoire of the village Methodism where my early faith was nurtured – I learned it from Ward.

It is based on a German hymn of nine verses written by Johann Jakob Schutz and published in 1675. In 1841 Frances Elizabeth Cox, a single lady who lived all her life at Oxford, published a book of hymns translated from German. It included verses 1, 3 and 4 as in "Singing the Faith". Verse 2 was translated later by Honor Mary Thwaites who died aged seventy-nine in 1993. She came to Britain from Australia in the 1930s. She became very involved in the work done by the Quakers in helping to rescue people from Nazi Germany.

This 'Hymn of Praise' as it was originally called has the final line of each verse "to God all praise and glory". The words are the work of three people writing in a period of well over 200 years. Surely it is a tribute to the careful work of the three that the verses fit together so well. The hymn was originally based on the thanksgiving song of Moses after he had finished writing the Law (Deuteronomy 32). There are also echoes of other words of scripture, such as Psalm 100 and 146; the healing balm of verse one refers to balm of Gilead (Jeremiah 8 and 46) which is the basis of the gospel song "There is a balm in Gilead to cure the sin-sick soul". The tune, Mit Freuden Zart, has been variously translated as 'with tender joy' or 'with gentle delight'. It is a German melody dating from the sixteenth century. It has been described as majestic, exuberant, cheerful and bright – a hymn to bring out the best in a congregation. **R.D.**