

My Journey of faith (Julya Walsh)

1. Julya Walsh is a Local Preacher in the Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Circuit.
2. My parents were both registered disabled but my mother far more so. She was crippled by her disease all my life but she had a love of life and Christian values, although she seldom attended a church building. Towards the end of her life, I found that she had an unshakable faith and a generosity of spirit too.
3. I was sent to Sunday School and confirmed in the Church of England. During the preparation course for this I found I couldn't equate the God of love we hear about with the vengeful God the minister preached each Sunday. Shortly after, I left the Church.
4. In my wilderness time I had a boyfriend who asked me to join the Methodist Youth Group Drama Club. I did so but when I went to the church I thought I was in the hall because, apart from the Wesley stained glass window, there was nothing to show it was a church. The idea of simple, personal worship without overbearing ritual intrigued and excited me, but I wasn't ready for God yet.
5. I then had a very unhappy and unsettled period in my life, which included a short failed marriage and the loss of a baby. I blamed and hated God and denied him at every opportunity. But, when working with the Samaritans, I met a woman filled with the joy and love of God and she shared this during our night shifts.
6. I also worked on a local radio station programme, 'Sunday PM', as the resident agnostic alongside a mixture of faiths. I slowly learned that God loved me despite my mistakes and failings and I learned to love me too. I then joined the Methodist Church.
7. I've held many posts in the church and, as a good organiser, thought this was what I was meant to be doing and that my relationship with God was okay thanks. I thought diving with sharks and getting my motor bike licence were the height of achievement but reckoned without God.
8. When asked if I had considered becoming a Local Preacher, I immediately said 'no' and then fell to pieces for days. Much love and support later I was a truculent and grudging trainee who refused to conform and was probably a pain to work with.
9. Now I really know what a close relationship with God is. I am excited by the challenge and change we are facing as the people of God. I believe that we should be 'out there' with people just as the Wesleys were and that everyone should be able to experience God's love. I truly feel that we are coming in a full circle and that the Wesleys' style of 'church' is more relevant today than it has been for a long time.
10. I also believe the words in Isaiah 49:1 – 'before I was born the Lord chose me'. So – tattoo, motorbike, jeans and all – he will use me to do his work.