

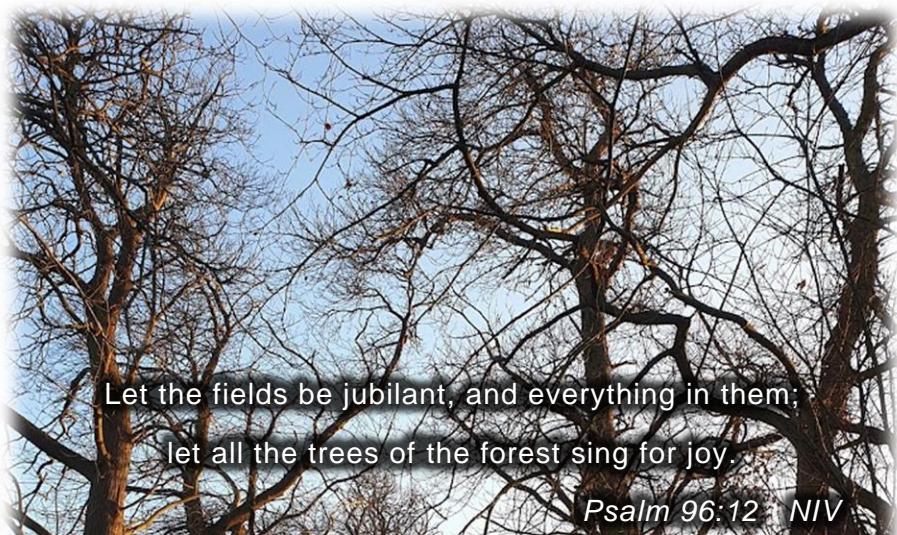


34/1

Magazine

Issue No.50

Winter 2023/24



Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Psalm 96:12 NIV

Circuit information...see inside for further details.

The events listed within may be subject to hybrid arrangements. Please check relevant information prior to attendance.

Sunday 3rd December Circuit Advent Service : 4.00pm at Priory

For diary dates, see page 26

Chair of the District

Rev Dr David M Chapman *david.chapman@behdistrict.org.uk* Office 01279 657195
[District Office email *beh34office@gmail.com*]

Circuit Ministers

Superintendent

Rev Michael Giles *michaelgiles2017@gmail.com* 01234 930882
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Kempston East, Kempston West, Stewartby LEP,
(Rest day – Saturday) Willington and Wootton

Deputy Superintendent

Rev Silas Wood *swood11@me.com* 01525 571392
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Greensand Community Methodist Church
(Rest day – Friday) (comprising Ampthill, Clophill, Flitwick),
Haynes and Lidlington LEP

Rev Leslie Jane Noon *leslienorthbedsmethodist@gmail.com* 01767 304635
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Beeston, Cardington LEP, Priory (Bedford),
(Rest day – Saturday) Sandy and Trinity (Biggleswade)

Rev Chris Sandy *christopher.sandy@methodist.org.uk* 01234 860464
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Clapham, London Road (Bedford), Oakley LEP,
(Rest day – Friday) Park Road (Bedford), Putnoe Heights (Bedford) and Sharnbrook

Rev Lorna Valentine *lorna.valentine@methodist.org.uk* 01462 813284
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Henlow, Langford, Shefford
(Rest day – Tuesday) and Upper Caldecote

Circuit Stewards

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Jane McVey *janecmcvey@aol.com* 07866 802179

Michael Carr *mcarr49@hotmail.com* 01234 824504

Christina Sawkins *ccw281969@gmail.com* 07813 785813

Nick Guy *nick.guy1@btinternet.com* 07980 985125

Phil Timms *philiptimmskempston@yahoo.co.uk* 07732 771690

A Pastoral Letter

by Rev Lorna Valentine

Dear Friends

On a sunny September afternoon, during one of the hottest weeks of the year so far, I am thinking about winter and the letter for the Circuit Magazine! It made me reflect though, that although here we associate the months of December, January and February with cold weather and the potential for snow, for other people and places it is a time for being on the beach or enjoying a summer BBQ.

I think forgetting to look beyond our own experience or perspective is something we can all struggle with at times. I have just completed my very first 'Stationing profile' as I will be moving to a new Circuit in the summer of 2024. It's the form I fill in to help everyone decide where I go next, so it is fairly important! One of the questions it asked was 'What do you find most enriching or fulfilling about being a Methodist Presbyterian and what aspects of ministry do you feel called to develop?'

As I answered, I noted how much I have enjoyed being in a more rural context, the blessing of sharing Holy Communion with people in their homes, the privilege of being entrusted to lead funeral and thanksgiving services, walking alongside those in and connected with the churches, finding the ways we can work and worship together and my love of music as just some of the fulfilling aspects of my role I would want to develop. I noted too the challenges of making space for all these things.

As I wrote though, I became aware I was mainly referring to things I have experience of, what I know and is familiar, so perhaps already feel comfortable with. These are important, but I have found over the years that often what I have found most rewarding and fulfilling are the things I didn't anticipate or even think were possible.

I was sure I was never going to be a preacher, and yet leading worship remains one of the most rewarding aspects of ministry for me. I never thought I would be able to stand in front of a school and lead assembly, but now I'm confident enough to ask questions and listen to answers,

and I'm often amazed by the wisdom of the children. It is also so lovely that when I'm out and about I'll sometimes hear a cheery 'Hello Rev Lorna' from the children who attend the schools I visit. Another worry was leading funerals, as I can be quite an emotional person, but it has been so humbling to journey with people at such a difficult time and be trusted with this important ministry.

All of this means that I took the slightly scary decision to finish my answer by noting how God can work in unexpected ways and saying that 'I really do want to leave space for God to surprise me'. I will have to let you know what happens!!

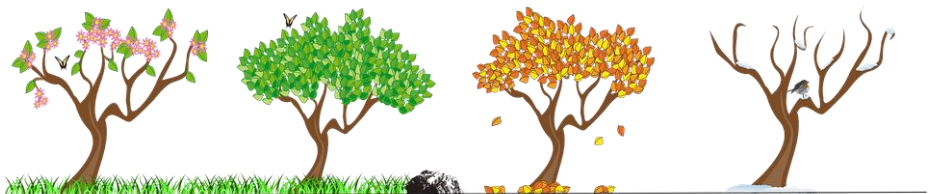
It can be tempting, can't it, to only stick with the things we know, even in our churches? This is particularly true when we have limited time and energy and it feels as if even doing what is familiar is a challenge. Yet I do truly believe it is important that we leave space for God to work in those ways we just don't expect, to surprise us and to show us how fulfilling that can be as we grow and develop.

Hymn writer John Bell wrote in a hymn we may well be singing during the months of this magazine and Plan,

'God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day'

I hope, I pray that we as individuals and as churches can all leave space for God to surprise us in this time and season.

Every blessing, *Lorna*



Renewing, sustaining and growing the ministry of the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit



Circuit Mission Statement

We will follow the
Holy Spirit who is
calling us to LOVE

- God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength
- one another, as Jesus loved His followers
- all others, even enemies, as God does

and be
DISCIPLES OF JESUS

- becoming like Christ
- behaving like Christ
- bringing others to meet and follow Christ

working for
GOD'S KINGDOM

- that God's will be done
- in the Church, and on Earth
- for all, as it is in Heaven...



Our Circuit Bible Verse

The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. *Micah 6:8 (NLT)*



Our Circuit Prayer

As your church
in this place,
help us to do justice,
love mercy
and walk humbly with you,
O God.
Amen.

BEESTON METHODIST CHURCH

- - - - REVISITED - - - -

As for many churches, the last five years have brought many changes and challenges to Beeston Methodist Church. We have survived a pandemic and learned many new skills including, for those with computer access, what Zoom is, how to listen or take part in online services, meetings etc. We shared worship with members of our Mission Groups, the Circuit, the wider Methodist Church and also churches in other Circuits. For those without computer access, printed services were delivered to them each week.

We also survived periods of not having a designated Minister. Rev Dalwyn Attwell was appointed as our Probationer Minister, but just a few weeks after his ordination he sadly died. We thank God for his time with us. We then had a period where we were supported by Rev Lorna Valentine and Rev Silas Wood, our Additional Ministers, and we are very grateful for this support. In September 2022, Rev Leslie Noon joined us as our Mission Group Minister, and this past year has been an exciting time under her care. She has introduced us to many new ideas and encouraged us to get to know and work more closely with our friends and colleagues in Sandy and Trinity Methodist Churches. From September 2024, restructuring will take place in the Circuit, sadly because of a shortage of Presbyters and Local Preachers, and it seems we will probably be part of a new Mission Group with the churches from the former Biggleswade Circuit. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges this will bring and pray for Leslie as she copes with seven churches.

We hold an annual service and BBQ for the three churches in our current Mission Group in August, and God has looked favourably on us, as each year the weather has been good and we have been able to worship outside in the car park.

Our house group meets once a month and as well as a period of Bible study, lively discussions take place on the previous Sunday's service as well as what we can do to strengthen our faith, how we can support people in our village and how we can encourage others to come to our services.

Our Coffee Mornings continue to be a great success and are well attended. Many of those who attend these assist us with fundraising events, but we still have hopes that some of them will come along to our services, even if it is only to "special events".

Through our services and Coffee Mornings we support several charities, including an annual Macmillan Coffee Morning, The Need Project, Action for Children, World Missions and Sue Ryder, the latter by members of the congregation bringing along eggs at Harvest Festival which are then donated to Sue Ryder - a tradition that has taken place since I was a little girl.

We have an excellent team of Stewards who support each other and prepare and lead services for Local Worship.

We are a Fairtrade church, have a Bronze Eco Church Award and are working towards gaining a Silver Award. We are hoping to improve the environment by erecting exterior bird feeders.

Our church building is in very good condition, having been recently decorated, and is maintained and improved by members of our congregation. We are very fortunate to have good parking facilities at the rear of the property.

We continue to look forward to the future, whatever it brings, and pray that we will have the confidence and ability to meet whatever challenges come our way.

Mary Millar



“So God imparts
to human hearts
the blessings of
his heaven.”

What is **Christmas** really all about?

What happened to the **Baby Jesus**?

What has it got to do with **me**?

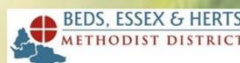
If the Christmas season leaves you with unanswered questions then this is an opportunity to explore those questions.

God, Jesus and the journey of life in 6 sessions

A gentle introduction to the Christian Faith and what it is all about. The course is there for you to explore the Christian Faith with no commitment to attend church.

New Start Course begins Wednesday 24th January on Zoom

Email Angela Brydon dde@BEHDistrict.org.uk to register and for details



From the archives... by Jeanette Letch ~~~ How old is your church? ~~~

I have been trying, successfully, to find the Certificate of Registration as a Place of Worship for Oakley, in order to register our church for same sex marriages. To my delight, it is dated 15th February 1898. This got me wondering how old our various churches are, so I did a bit of digging around.

We do have a long history of Methodism in the county – John Wesley first came to Bedford in 1755, and visited the area many times subsequently, although he did complain that the congregations were somewhat sleepy. Initially most “churches” met in rooms, or barns, until they could no longer accommodate their growing congregations, when purpose-built chapels started to be built.

The table opposite lists our churches, together with dates associated with the first mention I found of a chapel, and also the age of the current church. Unfortunately I don’t have ready access to much information on the more southerly churches, and for some I totally failed to find any information. Apologies for any errors, and feel free to email me with any corrections. If you want to find out more about some of the churches, *My Wesleyan Methodists* and *My Primitive Methodists* websites are a good source of information, as is the *Bedfordshire Archive* website – look at the Community Histories section.

www.mywesleyanmethodists.org.uk

www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk

<https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/Archives-Service.aspx>

Church	Current building	Earliest building	Registered as a place of worship	Notes
Ampthill	1884	1813		My Wesleyan Methodists web
Beeston	1865	1832		Methodism in Biggleswade
Cardington	Closed in 1984	1823	1824	My Wesleyan Methodists web
Clapham	1876	1874	1876	Beds Archives website
Clophill	1938	1853		My Primitive Methodists web
Flitwick	1873	1873		Beds Archives website
Haynes	1875	1826		Beds Archives website
Henlow				
Kempston E	1904			Beds Archives website
Kempston W	1860	1839	1854	Beds Archives website
Langford	1869	1835	1854	Langford Methodist Church
Lidlington	1863	1850	1861	My Primitive Methodists web
London Rd (Bedford)	1964 extension	1936		
Oakley	1974	1849	1898	
Park Road (Bedford)	1887	1883	1895	The Chapel in Black Tom
Priory	1969	1952	1953	(Formerly St Paul's)
Putnoe Heights (Bedford)	1957	1957		
Sandy	1910	1868	1854	My Primitive Methodists web
Sharnbrook	1911	1911	1911	Beds Archives website
Shefford	1912	1835	1854	Jubilee booklet
Stewartby		1911		Beds Archives website
St Paul's (Bedford)	Closed in 1968	1832		Early Methodism in Bedford
Trinity (Biggleswade)	1834	1795	1854	Methodism in Biggleswade
Upper Caldecote	1909	1856		Beds Archives website
Willington	1868	1851		Beds Archives website
Wootton	1872	1811		Beds Archives website

Lidlington Church's "Favourite Charity"

At Lidlington Church, we do not have a single favourite charity, but we do support many different "favourite" ones, not least because members of the church work for or are trustees of many charities. Here is some information about just one of them.

The NEED Project

This project is the foodbank which supports the people of Central Bedfordshire. A church member was involved in voluntary sector liaison when The NEED Project was first set up out of Stotfold Baptist Church in 2011. The project has grown immensely since then, and is now funded



to provide the foodbank service for Central Bedfordshire Council. We became directly involved when a Marston hub run by Vale Community Church was opened. We operate a referral and support service and deliver the food parcels to Lidlington residents. This enables the church to get to know people who are struggling.

The relationship with The NEED Project has grown and we deliver between 9 and 14 Christmas food parcels each Christmas, adding seasonal goodies and perishable items donated by our members. We think this is an amazing charity supporting those most in NEED in our own community.

We also have a community box in the chapel for emergencies, and this is donated to the hub now run by Cranfield Baptist Church if it hasn't been needed for a while. The community box soon fills up with donations from the kind people in the church.

The Need Project is a Registered Charity No: 1157691



Social Action Mission Stream

If you have any questions about what we do, please contact
Marian Blyth by email at marian.blyth@btinternet.com

~ Our New Circuit Library ~

Why do you read books? Entertainment, knowledge, inspiration, challenge, growth? Whatever the reason, there should be something suitable available in the Circuit Library. This is a collection of Christian books stored by myself, Jenny Endersby, at Sandy Methodist Church. Gathered over the years from different sources, this diverse selection of Christian literature is available to borrow on short-term loan to sample, savour and maybe inspire you to get a copy for your own bookshelf.



An almost complete listing of what is available to borrow can be found by looking at the North Beds Methodist Circuit Library profile on Goodreads (see link below). Goodreads is a free global forum that anyone can join, and it made sense to host the library's details on it despite a few drawbacks. Under the profile, the books are sorted into different

genres ("tags" determined by myself), and by the three default shelves: "Read" (books with reviews), "Want to read" (books without any reviews - I'm slowly working through reading, reviewing and rating them and welcome help with this), and "Currently reading" (titles added recently). Searches can be done by author or title - just be sure you are only searching the profile's bookshelves, not the whole of Goodreads!!

I plan to fulfil borrowing requests and collect returns at the Circuit and Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' meetings (please email me requests a couple of days before the meeting date). I am also willing to bring a sample selection to the occasional church service.

There is a private Community Group "North Beds Methodist Circuit" tagged to the profile, where discussions and thoughts on books can be shared with other Circuit members and friends. Just request to become a member within the Goodreads webpages.

And if you have books that you are willing to share, I'm always on the lookout for new titles.... Wishing you many hours of happy reading!!

Jenny Endersby

JennyEndersby2@gmail.com

www.goodreads.com/user/show/169294661-north-beds-methodist-circuit-library



**Methodist Women
in Britain**

For women, for justice, for Christ

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)

~ an update ~

During the past couple of years our District MWiB have supported the charity Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest, especially the Centre at Tilbury. We are currently launching a new charity, Project Dora, which supports Ukrainian girls. More information about this will have been forthcoming at the District Day at St Andrew's Church in Harlow on 28th October.

On Sunday 3rd December at 4.00pm at Priory, we are holding a Circuit Service for Advent, to which all are invited. Looking ahead to 2024, the District Weekend at High Leigh is from 23rd-25th February, with Alison Bryan, Healing Ministry Coordinator at Methodist Central Hall Westminster. Details and booking forms will shortly be available. This is always a weekend of Faith, Fellowship and Fun - plus plenty of good Food thrown in!

Further details about MWiB nationally can be found on the website, which also gives plenty of information, resources and encouragement.

Jenny Broadbridge

Circuit MWiB President

MWiB is a Registered Charity No: 1156626



Circuit Matters

by Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Greetings to all ... it is a busy time in the Circuit as we all go about our business, whether in each church or across several churches, or the Circuit or indeed more widely. I enjoy reading about all the activities that are taking place in this autumnal season. I was fortunate enough to take part in two different kinds of service at the end of October – one was a joint SCALLOPP* service at London Road in Bedford – welcoming new members, singing great songs, a wonderful uplifting message, followed by a super tea and excellent fellowship. Then I went to a great service at Howard Memorial Church in Cardington led by young people – and

some challenging thinking about our changing world. Both services reminded me of the diversity and creativity of our people – and the welcoming love of God that we find wherever we go.

So yes, lots happening around the Circuit. Three things to mention in particular:-

Appointment of Finance Officer

We are delighted that Damilola Obajemu has joined us as the new Circuit Finance Officer. She started work on 30th October, and you will hear more about her in future magazines, but in the meantime, I am sure you will all welcome her and make her feel at home.

Circuit Assessment

Still on the theme of finance, we are still working our way through a proposed new model of managing the Circuit Assessment. It will mean some churches paying more, and we hope to be able to be in a position to share this more widely early in the New Year. Whatever the direct implications for your particular church, we (like many other organisations) need more money in order to sustain our existing churches and Presbyters and staffing. Please pray for everyone involved as we work together and seek the way forward.

Probationer Minister

We are pleased that our profile for the above role from September 2024 (covering Cardington, Clapham, Oakley, Sharnbrook and Willington) has been approved, and we now wait to see whether there is a 'match' for us. We expect to know more in January. One thing we do need is a name for the new section....any ideas?

We have purchased a new manse for the person to live in – in Saxon Fields in Biddenham. Thanks to all the team involved in this.

Finally, as we anticipate the season of Advent, and then Christmas, we pray for all our ministerial team – Rev Chris Sandy has just gone on his Sabbatical – we wish him well – and for all the others as they lead us all in worship and through the many challenges in our churches and Circuit.

Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

* The SCALLOPP Mission Group comprises Sharnbrook, Clapham, London Road (Bedford), Oakley, Park Road and Putnoe Heights churches.

NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT – OUR CHURCHES

Amphill	----- Dunstable Street, corner Chandos Road, Amphill	MK45 2JS
Anjulita Court	----- Bramley Way, Bedford (access from Tyne Crescent)	MK41 7GD
Beeston	----- The Baulk, Beeston, Sandy	SG19 1NR
Cardington	----- Cople Road, Cardington	MK44 3SH
Clapham	----- 27 High Street, Clapham, Bedford	MK41 6EQ
Clophill	----- High Street, opposite The Causeway, Clophill, Bedford	MK45 4BE
Flitwick	----- Chapel Road, Flitwick	MK45 1EA
Haynes	----- Silver End Road, Haynes	MK45 3PS
Henlow	----- High Street, Henlow	SG16 6BS
Kempston East	----- Bedford Road, Kempston	MK42 8DA
Kempston West	----- High Street, Kempston	MK42 7AL
Langford	----- High Street, Langford	SG18 9RU
Lidlington	----- Church Street, Lidlington	MK43 0RJ
London Road, Bedford	--- London Road, corner Barford Avenue, Bedford	MK42 0NT
Oakley	----- High Street, corner Chapel Pound, Oakley	MK43 7RQ
Park Road, Bedford	-Park Road West, corner Beaconsfield Street, Bedford	MK41 7SB
Priory, Bedford	----- Newnham Avenue, Bedford	MK41 9QJ
Putnoe Heights, Bedford	--Putnoe Heights, opposite Arrow Leys, Bedford	MK41 8EB
Sandy	----- St Neots Road, opposite Engayne Avenue, Sandy	SG19 1BP
Sharnbrook	----- Park Lane, Sharnbrook	MK44 1LS
Shefford	----- Amphill Road, Shefford	SG17 5BD
Stewartby	----- Park Crescent, Stewartby	MK43 9NL
Trinity, Biggleswade	-- Shortmead Street (near Trinity Close), Biggleswade	SG18 0AP
Upper Caldecote	-Biggleswade Road, corner Ashby Drive, Upper Caldecote	SG18 9BL
Willington	----- Station Road, corner Chapel Lane, Willington	MK44 3QH
Wootton	----- Cause End Road, Wootton	MK43 9DE

PREACHERS TAKING APPOINTMENTS

1992	Brian Addington	2008	Liz Little
1992	Roz Addington	2021	Meredith Major
2000	Brenda Ballantine	1993	Ebo Ofori-Quaah
1992	Helen Boshier	2008	Claire Peck
2009	Angela Brydon	2003	Sue Plant
1976	Michael Carr	1975	Chris Robinson
2011	Paul Cooper	2008	Glynne Rowlands
2021	Anne Foley	1996	John Sackett
1997	Graham Follett	1983	Ros Salisbury
2010	Chris Fox	2010	Geoff Talbot
2011	Hazel Hitch	2009	Perllyn Thomas
1973	Keith Lilley	1970	Janet Watts
1990	Pat Lilley	2021	Angie Woodcraft

PREACHERS UNABLE TO TAKE APPOINTMENTS

1969	David Bushman	2005	Thea Lee
1991	Alan Davis	1965	Vivian Martyn
1966	Chris Izzard	1978	Jim Ragless
1978	Keith Jordan	1954	Daphne Stiles
1961	Pat Larman	1969	Silvia Thomas
		1957	Archie Whitby

WORSHIP LEADERS

Ampthill Patsy Aston Margaret Byass	Kempston East Rosemary Simms Stuart Simms <i>Terry Stevens (T)</i> Geoff Talbot Barbara Tipping	Priory (Bedford) Lynne Gound Marian Knights Carmen Rowe
Beeston Sonia Butler Mary Millar	Langford Jenny Broadbridge	Sandy Jenny Endersby
Clophill Anne Cooper Victoria Higgins	London Road (Bedford) John Caves Andrew Constant	Sharnbrook Marian Blyth
Flitwick Maryan Pateman	Oakley Noel Evans Jeanette Letch Jane McVey	Shefford <i>Beckie Gray (T)</i> Mairi Perks
		Stewartby Elaine Sullivan
		Trinity (Biggleswade) Tricia Mapletoft
		Willington Pat Davies Keith Tompkins

(T) = In training



In April this year I joined the Trustee Board of a small Christian charity called *The John Ray Initiative* (JRI). Its vision is to bring together scientific and Christian understandings of the environment in a way that can be widely communicated and lead to effective action. Despite its size, JRI is doing exciting things with this blend of theology, the environment and science, so I'm really pleased to be able to share something about what we do with readers of this magazine.

Amongst a growing number of Christian environmental groups and charities, JRI's niche is education. This means that we provide a whole range of resources to help equip churches and Christians seeking to make change happen in their congregations and communities.

JRI runs a distance learning course called *Christian Rural and Environmental Studies* (CRES). This is a really flexible and affordable open access programme which allows students to follow their own interests through a diverse choice of modules covering theology, environmental science and ethics. I took the course between 2019-21 (and wrote about the experience in the Winter 20/21 edition of this magazine!) and thoroughly enjoyed it. Not only did I learn a lot, but it was pivotal in helping me take seriously a call to environmental theology. The course is run in partnership with *A Rocha UK*, who also manage the *Eco Church* programme, and *Ripon College Cuddesdon*.

Another key area of work is publications. The website hosts blog posts and book reviews which cover a wide range of topics, while *Briefing Papers* tackle issues in more depth. JRI also collaborates with other organisations such as *Messy Church*, developing resources for *Messy Church does Science*, *Messy Church Goes Wild* and the new *Messy Adventures* programme.

A newer development is a webinar series which allows guest speakers to share their expertise. There's plenty of time for questions, giving participants the opportunity to be part of the conversation. These

complement regular in-person events held at Ripon College Cuddesdon, opening up to more people the opportunities to hear from experts.

A final major strand of work is engagement with theological colleges of all denominations, to promote the inclusion of environmental understanding within ministerial training and formation.

Through these varied activities, we are seeking to build a learning community of Christians engaged with environmental issues, who are equipped to take that learning into their different contexts and communities.

I'm really looking forward to getting more involved and using my experience of working in the charity sector in a Christian setting. This is a challenging time for the whole charity sector due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Please do pray for the work of JRI and the wider Christian environmental movement.

You can read more about the work of JRI at <https://jri.org.uk> or feel free to ask me any questions.

In case you're wondering just who was John Ray...?

John Ray was born in Essex in 1627. He went on to study at Cambridge and is widely regarded as one of the earliest parson-naturalists. Ray resigned his fellowship at Trinity College in 1662 as a matter of religious conscience following the Act of Uniformity, as he felt he could not subscribe to all the terms of the Act. He left Cambridge and began travelling, observing the natural world around him. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1669.

He published books on botany, zoology and theology. He was one of the first people to try and classify plants according to similarities and differences that emerged from observation, rather than on where they were found. His work paved the way for Linnaeus and later scientists, who further developed systems of classification. He died in 1705, having lived through a period of great change for the country, including the Civil War and the beginnings of the Enlightenment or 'Age of Reason' period.

Shelly Dennison
(Putnoe Heights)

The John Ray Initiative is a Registered Charity No: 1067614



Friends for Life (FFL) is a Bedfordshire-based registered charity offering a volunteer befriending service to lonely care home residents who have no family or friends to visit them. FFL started life over ten years ago with the aim of coordinating existing visiting by the Bedford churches. It gained charity status in 2017 and continued to grow up to the start of the pandemic, with around 60 volunteers visiting in 35 care homes.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought our operations to a near halt as regards face-to-face visiting. However, contact with many residents was maintained, with our volunteer befrienders writing letters to their residents, using tablet computers which were provided by grants from the local authority. These helped some residents to keep in contact with family, with help from care home staff. FFL also channelled fundraising and grants into the purchase of many Robo pets. These lifelike animals (cats and dogs) respond to human touch and sound and proved to be a real favourite of many residents, especially dementia sufferers.

The pandemic caused a reduction in befriender numbers and made operations difficult, but it also resulted in a renewed national and media interest in personal isolation, especially for those in care homes. FFL has now grown back to pre-pandemic levels, with an enhanced board of Trustees and with the essential small support staff working from an office within the Community Voluntary Service centre in Bromham Road, Bedford. Policies and procedures have been brought up to date and new ones written to keep up with the needs

of grant providers, insurers and for good governance. Befrienders now use an app on their phones to record their visits and to give simple feedback as to how it went. In this way the charity can gather vital evidence about the value to residents of their service, information which is essential in supporting vital grant applications which provide 90% of our funding. We are hugely grateful for grants we've received from many of the major local trusts and charities, but our income requirements continue to grow as we try and match the need. Great care is taken in matching a new befriender with a resident and many a befriender has said that they get much benefit from their work with FFL, as do the residents.

The need in care homes for regular and reliable befriending has grown, as has the realisation of its importance, and FFL has ambitions to be able to take on all the new referrals from the homes that come our way. We are also developing a growing outreach service to further enrich the lives of socially isolated care home residents.

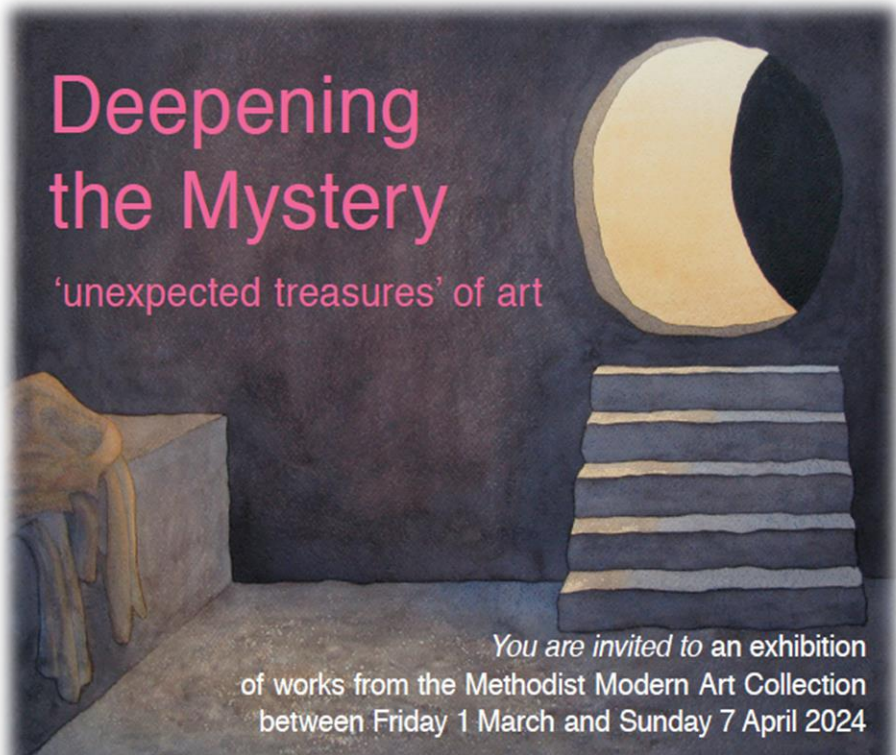
Our need for more volunteers is ongoing, both as befrienders and in other 'back office' tasks. Look out for news about a major match-funding campaign before Christmas, which we're hoping will further support our fundraising work.

The best way of finding out more is on our website at www.friendsforlife.org.uk

Mike Elliott (Hon. Treasurer)

Deepening the Mystery

'unexpected treasures' of art



*You are invited to an exhibition
of works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
between Friday 1 March and Sunday 7 April 2024*

Focolare Centre for Unity

69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JG

The Methodist Modern Art Collection

*'... one of the art world's unexpected treasures, including some of the most
powerful and arresting religious art of the 20th and 21st centuries.'*

Tim Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of the Design Museum, London,
and former Artistic Director of the Royal Academy

The Collection includes exhibits by key figures of 20th and 21st century British art (such as Graham Sutherland, Elisabeth Frink), as well as works by international artists. The exhibition will include a programme of workshops and lectures for all ages.

For more information, see Facebook: Art 2024 at WGC
or contact art2024@focolare.org.uk

*'The Empty Tomb' by Richard Bavin. Image from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.*



Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), which is registered as a charity, number 233280 www.brf.org.uk

Messy Church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being Church which is particularly suited to families, but welcoming to all.

It usually consists of all-age craft activities, worship and a meal for all the family. There is no fixed charge, but donations are welcome to cover costs. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Please check church websites or Facebook pages for details regarding Messy Church events around the Circuit.

CLOPHILL Saturday 9th December from 4.30pm – 6.00pm

LONDON ROAD (Bedford)

We started our Harvest Festival weekend with a Messy Harvest session, where we thought about the stories Jesus told of the lost sheep and the lost coin, reassuring us that every single one of us is valuable to Him. There were plenty of activities that everyone enjoyed, including making cookie shepherds, creating cards for the Foodbank and herding some lively sheep.

Thank you to those who attended, those who donated items for Bedford Foodbank and those who helped in any way.

Our next Messy Church will be our **Messy Nativity**
on
Sunday 10th December 2.00pm – 4.00pm
All welcome.

Hannah Mason

OAKLEY

Messy Church for All takes place after school from 3.30pm – 5.30pm at Oakley Methodist Church (all ages welcome – all children to be accompanied). Sessions include a two-course meal for all.



Dates are as follows:-

Tuesdays 14th November, 12th December, 16th January, 13th February and 19th March.

Sessions are from 3.30pm – 5.30pm. All ages welcome.

If possible, please do let us know that you can come by calling 01234 824504 or sending an email to mcarr49@hotmail.com

Contact Jan Follett or Michael Carr for more details.

There are also sessions for pre-school age children every Thursday in term-time only from 10.00am – 11.45am at St Mary's Church in Oakley.

Sessions include a fruit snack.

PRIORY (Bedford)

We have a pattern of a Messy service each quarter, which is planned in conjunction with the leaders of our youth groups, and we have been building these services up since COVID. We have a short time of worship, then a range of activities around a theme, ending with a time of sharing and closing worship.

This month, we had plans for a Messy Baptism for Poppy, daughter and granddaughter of church members. Activities were planned, including the making of Baptingles, with an apple, symbol of life, instead of an orange, a blue ribbon representing the water, a candle and suitable symbols representing names and love. (Google it if you want to know more!) Then things really got messy – on the Friday before the service, we found out that Mum Emma had been admitted to hospital and the baptism would need to be postponed. What to do?

Within no more than 12 hours, we had a new theme - peace and friendship, especially relevant at this difficult time. New hymns were suggested, new activities identified and prepared and everybody worked together to make a different, but very appropriate, Messy service. As part of the worship, friendship bracelets and doves of peace were fashioned, prayers written on doves and fridge magnet crosses decorated. Pictures of people holding hands formed a treasure hunt around the



church, a card was made for Poppy's parents and discussions were held. Some of the items were placed on a worship centre at the front of the church as a focus for our thoughts.

We hope that Poppy will be baptised before too long, and we are glad that Emma was soon home, grateful for excellent care from the NHS and the love and prayers which supported her. We have been reminded that it's amazing what can be achieved when we all work together with each other and with God – even if it does get messy sometimes!

Liz Little

TRINITY (Biggleswade)

Messy Church happens on the third Saturday of the month.

Families are invited to join in crafts, activities, Christian stories and enjoy a meal together.

Dates are as follows:-

Saturdays 18th November, 16th December (Christmas Messy Nativity), 20th January, 17th February, 16th March.

Sessions are from 10.30am – 12.30pm with lunch included.

Watch our Facebook page for the 'theme of the month'.

It is very helpful to know if you are coming!

Please indicate on the Facebook page or send an email to bmapletoft@hotmail.com

WILLINGTON

Dates for Messy Church sessions during the winter are as follows:-

Wednesdays 15th November, 13th December, 17th January, 21st February and 20th March.

The sessions run from 3.15pm – 5.30pm.

Please check with Pat on 01234 838667.

HOLIDAY CLUB REPORT : CARDINGTON

Sheep, Lions, Fish and a Donkey All part of the Bible Story

This summer, from 31st July to 4th August, the *Adventure Ark Holiday Club* was held at Howard Memorial Church, Cardington.

It was all about the animals in the Bible – 38 children came and learnt about Jonah, Daniel, the disciples and Jesus, and the part that animals play in God's world.



There were crafts, messy challenges and stories, and a very catchy song to sing along to (with actions!)

- From Daniel in the Lion's Den we learnt about **COURAGE**.
- From Jonah and the Big Fish we learnt that sometimes we need to say **SORRY**.
- Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem to bring **PEACE**.
- The disciples cast their net over the other side of the boat, and their **TRUST** in Jesus brought them a huge catch of fish.
- And the Good Shepherd finds the one lost sheep because He **LOVES** His flock.

Ken Oliver

HOLIDAY CLUB REPORT : CLAPHAM

Powerpoint Children's Club – Summer 2023

Every year in Clapham we run a children's Holiday Club during the summer holiday. This year it was called *Restoration Station* - a place where damaged or spoilt things could be mended and restored into how they were meant to be.

This was a five-day Scripture Union programme for ages 5 to 12. It was a joint Anglican / Methodist event, with some help from the King's Arms Church to help reach out to the 95% of children who do not go to church.

We had just under 60 young people, experiencing stories from parts of John's Gospel via presentation and age-group teaching.

Every day we learnt how Jesus restored people's lives and how He could restore the lives of broken people today into a healed relationship with God. The children loved it, and so did we, although it was hard work. Quite a few of the helpers were once Powerpoint children, returning to give what they received many years ago. We hope that helpers will come forward for next year's Powerpoint mission. The children need to hear about Jesus. This is a fun way to get involved. "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*" Luke 18:16 (NIV)

Keith Jordan (Chíp)



Circuit Service for Advent
Priory Methodist Church
Sunday 3rd December at 4.00pm
all are invited

Circuit Diary Dates

FOR DETAILS OF OTHER EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT PLEASE
SEE THE CIRCUIT WEBSITE www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk

*The events listed below may be subject to hybrid arrangements.
Please check relevant information prior to attendance.*

Circuit Men's Luncheon Fellowship is held
on the second Wednesday of each month (October to May inclusive)
at **Priory, Bedford** from 12.15pm until around 2.30pm.
Please tell Mike Elliott (mike.elliott@zapboing.com) if you are interested
and he will send you any updated information and reminders.

DECEMBER

Sun 3rd 4.00pm Circuit Advent Service led by MWiB at **Priory**

JANUARY 2024

Tues 23rd 7.30pm Circuit Church Treasurers' meeting using **Zoom**

Wed 24th t.b.c BEH District "Start" Course using **Zoom**

Mon 29th 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
using **Zoom**

MARCH 2024

Mon 11th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting (venue to be confirmed)

APRIL 2024

Sat 20th 10.00am District Synod at **Christchurch,
Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF**

JUNE 2024

Wed 26th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting (venue to be confirmed)

Ministers in other appointments

Rev Chrissie Howe *howec@methodistchurch.org.uk* 07799 902568
(Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board)

Rev Terry Wright *terry.wright144@mod.gov.uk* 07581 009784
(Forces Chaplain at Chicksands)

Ecumenical, Authorised & Associate Ministers

Rev Sarah Burrow *sarah.burrow@mha.org.uk* 01234 273642
Anglican (Anjulita Court and Ladyslaude Court MHA Chaplain)

Rev Martin Truscott *martintruscott@gmail.com* 07989 965172
URC (Minister - Cardington)

Rev Catherine Wilson *vicar@bromhambenefice.org* 01234 825665
Anglican (St Mary's Church, Oakley)

Rev Petra Yates *curate@bromhambenefice.org* 07504 118405
Anglican (Curate at St Mary's Church, Oakley)

Supernumerary Ministers

Rev Richard Barrett *regbarrett2@btinternet.com* 01767 312723

Rev David Bown *davidbown47@hotmail.co.uk* 01234 589194

Rev Julie Bradshaw *julie@jw2.co.uk* 01234 405530

Rev Bill Davies *wjdavies35@outlook.com* 01234 210918

Rev Douglas Ford

Rev Jim Gorringe *jimgorringe@icloud.com* 01234 216352

Rev Cassandra Howes *cassandra.howes@gmail.com* 01234 793177

Rev Alan Kirk *alankirk58@hotmail.com* 01234 317699

Deacon Vera Pearson 01234 270737

Rev David Winwood *david.j.winwood@btinternet.com* 01234 359930

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(Technical Editor)

Churches should send their dates for the next Plan (with details of preachers they have booked) to **their Minister** by **Sunday 24th December**

Preachers should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 24th December**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Wednesday 3rd January** please

The Circuit Manager (Stephanie Field) is mostly home based, and can be contacted either by email northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com or mobile 07522 928936. She does not work on Fridays.

The Circuit Finance Officer (Damilola Obajemu) works on Mondays 9.00am-2.00pm, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.00am-4.00pm, and she can be contacted either by email northbedsfinance@gmail.com or mobile 07798 808988.

Both are happy to meet people at the Circuit Office if required.

Circuit Office c/o Willington Methodist Church,
Station Road, corner Chapel Lane, Willington MK44 3QH

Magazine editorial information

A meeting to discuss the content of the next issue will be held using Zoom on **Friday 24th November** at 7.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 27)

Communication: We are trying to communicate the Circuit News by the most effective methods we have available, which include email, Circuit and church websites and a limited number of printed copies.

IMPORTANT: If you are reading a paper copy of this magazine, then please pass to another person or recycle once you have finished with it. Thank you.

Contact details can be found via the Circuit Directory
or via the Circuit Office on 07522 928936

see also The Circuit website at www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk
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