



North Bedfordshire Circuit

The Methodist Church

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Magazine

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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 4th June Easter Offering Dedication Service at **Ampt Hill**

For diary dates, see page 30

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: Ampthill, Clophill, Flitwick,
(Rest day – Friday) Haynes and Lidlington LEP

Rev Leslie Jane Noon *leslienoan@hotmail.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,
(Rest day – Friday) Park Road (Bedford), Putnoe Heights 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

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Finance Steward

Alan Davis *alaned163@gmail.com* 01234 215057

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

and be
DISCIPLES OF JESUS

working for
GOD'S KINGDOM

- God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength
- one another, as Jesus loved His followers
- all others, even enemies, as God does
- becoming like Christ
- behaving like Christ
- bringing others to meet and follow Christ
- that God's will be done
- in the Church, and on Earth
- for all, as it is in Heaven...



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.

A Pastoral Letter

by Rev Sarah Burrow
MHA Chaplain at Anjulita Court
and Ladyslaude Court

Dear Friends

As I write this in Eastertide my greeting is: Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

I've been using this this verse in prayer, and encouraging my residents to do so too: Psalm 62:1a: **'On God alone my soul in stillness waits.'**
[The Common Worship psalter is © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, 2000]

This year I was struck by how much fear and terror are a part of the Resurrection accounts. Often fear linked to astonishment, amazement, or joy, but nevertheless fear. And in response to this, the repeated refrain – 'Do not be afraid'.

Fear seems to be pervading our society at present. (Perhaps that is why there is so much aggression and anger around too?) Whether it is the global fear we feel for the environment, or fear of mass migration as never before witnessed, as more and more land becomes uninhabitable, or fear of war spreading unbounded. Or personal fears – perhaps health, financial, bereavements, old age. And with dwindling resources there is fear within church institutions too.

Into this fear Jesus breaks through. And we are invited to live a new life **now**.

In recent years a young Dutch Jewish woman, Etty Hillesum, has caught my attention – so much so that later this year I have planned a four-day pilgrimage to Holland to trace her steps. Etty Hillesum wrote diaries (800 pages of them!) in which she explores her inner world. The entry of 30th May 1942 is an example of her extraordinary sense of the Divine, a 'knowing' that there was a deep source of life greater than the source of war. Here is a short extract: *'I know about the mounting human suffering. I know about the persecution and oppression and despotism*

*and the impotent fury and the terrible sadism. I know it all... And yet – at unguarded moments, when left to myself, **I suddenly lie against the naked breast of life, and her arms round me are so gentle and so protective, and my own heartbeat is difficult to describe ... so constant ... and so good and merciful as well.***¹

Patrick Woodhouse, a scholar of Etty, says that in words written on 12th July 1942, (a year before she found herself interned in Westerbork transit camp, from where she was transported to Auschwitz and to her death), she faced the question of trust in God in the face of ‘deadly pestilence’ [Psalm 91:3]. Addressing God she writes: ‘*Alas there doesn’t seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold you responsible, You cannot help us, **but we must help You and defend Your dwelling-place inside us to the last. There are some who, even at this late stage ... are saying ‘I shan’t let them get me into their clutches.’ **But they forget that no one is in their clutches who is in Your arms.*****’²

Recently, a contributor to the Church Times named Etty as the one she’d most like to meet. Her summary of Etty’s journaling was so helpful: ‘(She wrote) about the spaciousness within, where she found what was deepest and best in her, which she named God.’³

I pray that we may all give ourselves time, space and stillness over the coming months to find this spaciousness within ourselves, and so be able to face our fears and journey through them.

Sarah Burrow

¹ Patrick Woodhouse: *Life in the Psalms*, Pages 85-86

² Patrick Woodhouse: *Life in the Psalms*, Page 229

³ Church Times, 3rd March, 2023: Interview with Helen Warwick

Patrick Woodhouse’s book about Etty is called ‘*Etty Hillesum: A Life Transformed*’

Visiting Preacher : Roger Gadsden

I can't remember a time of not going to church, which was Marston Bedford Road Methodist. Growing up in that environment was a great blessing and full of memories – Sunday School Anniversaries, recitations, Bible memory passages, outings, teas, Harvest Suppers.

The most significant moment was when three churches, Cranfield, Bedford Road and Marston Shelton had a week-long mission. A double-decker bus would pick us up, leaving Cranfield and arriving at Marston Shelton. It was at these meetings that I came to know the Lord as my Lord and Saviour. In the evenings there was a coffee bar, and if memory serves me right it was called the Net.

When I left school I started work in an accountant's office in Bedford and attended night school in Business Studies. We started a Youth Club at Bedford Road and played brass instruments with the Gadsden Band which is now in its 113th year. The band's beginnings were in Primitive Methodism (another story). The village was looking for a Scout Leader which I undertook for a number of years. In the early 70s I moved to Oxford to play with the Morris Concert Band, whilst working in the Morris Motors factory as a paint inspector and later internal auditor for the Thames Water Board. However I still maintained my links with Methodism and went to Rose Hill Methodist Church in Oxford.

I helped in the youth work at a time when a new teaching series was being introduced aimed at reaching unchurched youth. This was ideal, as we were reaching out to a needy estate near the church.

During this time I began to sense a call to ministry and moved back home. The Minister at that time was Rev Bernard Reynolds, who advised me to see him again in a year and meanwhile do the Local Preachers' course and link up with the Share Jesus Team led by Amos Salisbury. This was a great experience, and we held several missions in the Circuit. Amos and I went to a Christian holiday camp in Filey where I met my future wife, Joy. Joy was about to start at a Bible college in South Wales and during our courtship I became increasingly drawn to the teaching and staff. I finished my Local Preachers' course and did the final sermon and was accepted.

I entered college and during my first year, 1980, Joy and I were married. In 1982 our first daughter was born. On completion of the course after three years I was called as Assistant Pastor of a church in Whitchurch, Shropshire. This was part-time alongside a Christian wholesale and retail book distribution. Our second daughter was born in 1984. I then applied to join the London City Mission, was accepted and moved to London, where our third daughter was born, and where we ministered for 30 years until my retirement. We ran a Christian Centre in South-East London, and I was appointed as Chaplain to a railway company before becoming a Ministry Director with responsibility for a variety of ministries based at the HQ in Tower Bridge Road. During our time in ministry we had several trips to Bedford Road for the Toy Services, and other visits to Clapham and Wilstead. So our links to Bedford continued, and then we retired here in 2018.

Roger Gadsden

>>> NEWS FROM CHURCHES <<< CLOPHILL METHODIST CHURCH

The “Warm Space” provided by our church is combined with our weekly “Tea and Chat” event held throughout the year. This is well attended by a variety of people who come not only from our village, but by many who used to live in Clophill plus some that never have. The teas, coffees, biscuits and conversation flow freely on many subjects. We also provide written information to help with claiming benefits and general support.

We notice the numbers have grown steadily through the winter months and realise this is a much-needed service within the wider community.

John Errick



TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

• • • • REVISITED • • • •

by Richard Pool

Since our last feature in Summer 2018, a great deal has happened at Trinity.

At that time, we were looking forward to welcoming Rev Dalwyn Attwell as a Probationary Minister, and in August of that year we welcomed him and Pete to Biggleswade. Dalwyn brought a freshness to our church, and whilst supporting our many initiatives, he also introduced different ways of worship. When COVID struck in 2020, we had to find new ways of doing things, and Dalwyn created a blog and recorded messages and services for us via the Internet, so we were able to keep in touch.

Dalwyn was ordained in 2021, but sadly and unexpectedly, he died two weeks later. The church family was devastated, and still being under COVID restrictions felt almost rudderless. Our faith in God was severely tested, but with much prayer and the support of a strong and determined team of Stewards, we managed to get through a difficult period. We were delighted to welcome Rev Leslie Noon and Geoff in August 2022, and in the short time Leslie has been here, we realise that God answered our prayers. and with her encouragement there is renewed enthusiasm which is revitalising our faith and spirits.

Messy Church, held on a Saturday morning, has been part of our church family for 10 years. During lockdown, with Dalwyn's expertise we managed to keep in touch with a few families through 'Zoom Meetings' and by delivering bags of activities to their door. Once we returned to meeting at church, we struggled to regain numbers until a) Leslie's arrival & willingness to help and b) a mum helper's expertise with a new Facebook page. God is working on Facebook for certain, as many new families are now coming to and enjoying this fun, food & fellowship! A great outreach to the younger families of our community.

Our Tuesday Coffee Mornings are very well supported and are a vital link to the Biggleswade community. Since 2014 when Footprints was first started, over £30,000 has been raised for All We Can. We divert these funds at times to help other causes and most recently, to the Turkey/Syria earthquake appeal and the MWIB Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest appeal.

Other church activities include a monthly craft group, monthly soup & cake lunches and Open the Book which continues to visit Upper Caldecote Lower School. Our premises are also used by many local groups : Toddlers, Cubs, Brownies, Guides, Biggleswade History Society, BATS theatrical group (Biggleswade Amateur Theatrical Society), Biggleswade Choral Society, The Amici Singers, Sing and Sign and others.

Pre COVID, our Church Council made the decision to raise funds and install a defibrillator on the outside of the church to enable access to the community 24/7. This was put on hold during COVID restrictions, but in October 2021 it was installed at the rear of the church, all made possible by some very generous donations.

Two years ago, I could not see how we were going to move forward in our mission, but with Leslie's enthusiasm, tempered by her acknowledgement of the challenges we still have to face - especially the maintenance of our premises - I feel we will continue to show our faith and share God's love through our outreach, both in Biggleswade and in the wider community.

Richard Pool

Church Steward



Sing a New Song

Part 2

by Rev Lorna Valentine

I last wrote for this magazine in 2022 when my Sabbatical preparations were just starting. Now it has been and gone and it hardly seems possible to me! So, what did I get up to and did I write any songs?

I started the Sabbatical by going to Norfolk to contemplate the sea.



I have always found water inspiring, and there is a great musicality to the ocean. Also, I'd just lost my mum at that point, and actually I found being by the sea invaluable in helping me start to come to terms with the grief that I do

still feel. I even wrote a song for Mum with a lilting accompaniment that reminded me of the waves. The picture is a view of Cromer at night from the Pier which inspired me.

I had some great help with that and my other songs from an amazing singer-songwriter based near Bath. I spent two full days in workshops with her, learning about the different parts of a song and what their functions are, tips for writing and just singing and exploring together. It was truly inspirational and it helped that she was only a short distance away from our best friends, so Mark and I were both able to stay with them. They are musical as well, so gathering around the piano in the evening to explore what I was learning was an added bonus.

The other songwriting course I did on my Sabbatical was by Gary Barlow of Take That fame. It was an online course and came with lots of videos of Gary sharing his experiences and creative processes. So, I didn't actually get to meet him or work with him in that sense!!!! Even so, I absolutely loved doing the course. It was fascinating to see him at work in his studio, and how a small spark of inspiration from a word or a note could start to shape and develop into a song. And even if you aren't a fan, there's no denying that his songs have spoken to many different people in many different ways, providing them with a soundtrack to life that is now spanning more than one generation.

At one of the services I took recently, I spoke about the experience of the Sabbatical. In it, I shared that I'm pretty sure my songs will never have the acclaim of those written by Gary Barlow. I can't tell you if they will stand the test of time, be sung or shared or even remembered. However, that doesn't bother me if I am honest, because it isn't the point. Even if no-one ever sings the songs I wrote, just the process of writing them itself did something for me. It lit a fire, re-ignited a creative spark that, in the busyness of ministerial life, has sometimes felt diminished. I am sure many folk in our churches recognise this. How life, and indeed church, can get so busy with the things that have to be done, that we somehow lose our creative spark, our sense of fun, the things we enjoy.

So yes, I have written some songs and you are welcome to have a copy of them and sing them if you would like to - just ask me. There are eight in total in the booklet I have done, and cover Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and other times.

Thank you for the gift of the Sabbatical, and I hope we can all find those new songs that bring us joy and spark life!

Every blessing, LORNA



Methodist Women in Britain

for women, for justice, for Christ

“The Beauty and Wonders of Creation as seen through The Colours of the Rainbow”. This was the title of the Beds, Essex & Herts MWiB District Weekend held from 24th - 26th March in

the comfortable surroundings of High Leigh Conference Centre in Hoddesdon. Seven ladies from our Circuit joined with 21 others from around the District for a weekend of fellowship, worship, fun and thoughts about rainbows, with Bible references pertaining to each colour of the rainbow. Our speaker was Esther Hume, ably assisted by her husband, Ian, who looked after the technical side. High Leigh is a lovely centre, with comfortable en suite rooms, a selection of meeting rooms, beautiful grounds, excellent food and helpful, friendly staff.

On Friday evening we had our opening devotions and a session introducing us to the beauty of the rainbow in pictures, word and song. With the weather being both sunny and wet, many of us had been blessed with the sight of a rainbow while travelling to Hoddesdon. Many of us remembered the mnemonic *“Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain”* - Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet. The pictures which Ian projected for us throughout the weekend were truly wonderful. The beauty and variety of God’s amazing world was evident, and appreciated by us all. Who knew that frogs could be found in so many different colours?!

In three sessions on Saturday we considered the colours in pairs, leaving the colour Violet until Sunday. Six of the seven colours are mentioned in the Bible. In place of Orange we looked at Amber. In each session we sang a hymn and heard a Bible passage relating to the colours - there were quite a few readings describing the magnificence of Solomon’s Temple with all its jewels and hangings. Red showed the blood on the doorposts as the Israelites prepared to leave Egypt, as well, of course, as the blood of Jesus. Blue is mentioned in the book

of Esther as being worn by Mordecai, when the Jews were saved by Esther, who was raised to royal position “*For such a time as this*” (Esther 4:14). The crowd sat down on the Green grass at the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus was dressed in a Purple robe (Indigo) when the soldiers mocked Him before His Crucifixion, and at our final session on Sunday morning we looked at the colour Violet and Lydia the seller of purple - a wealthy businesswoman in Philippi. Each session we were given relevant questions to discuss. Saturday afternoon was free for us to sleep, talk, enjoy the lovely grounds (although the weather was quite cool) or do whatever we liked, and in the evening we had a bit of fun with a couple of silly games. Sunday morning worship included a short dramatic interpretation of an old Indian legend involving all the colours of the rainbow arguing over which was the most important. Of course the conclusion showed that all were equally important. We sang a new hymn not in any of our hymn books “*God has set his sign, a rainbow*”, using the familiar tune “*Abbot’s Leigh*”, and concluded the service with Communion led by Rev Femi Cole-Njie. During the morning, another rainbow aptly appeared in the sky, and the weekend finished with a delicious Sunday lunch and farewells all round.

Easter Offering Information

The theme for this year’s Easter Offering is “No Borders to God’s Love”. This Annual Offering and Service is organised by MWiB each year on behalf of the World Church. All the money collected goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain, supporting and working with over 100 Partner Churches and organisations around the world. The Dedication Service is at Amptill Methodist Church at 4.00pm on Sunday 4th June.

Circuit Matters

by Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Dear Friends,

As I write this, we are at the beginning of Holy Week, and I have just watched one of the videos produced by Rev Leslie Jane Noon for us all to use on our journey towards the Cross and then the Resurrection. It reminds me how good it is to be able to join with others across the Circuit and beyond. Many of you will have used Lent resources together, or joined a study group or Bible study. Some churches are livestreaming worship too – all of this gives us choice of how and when we worship, and it is wonderful to see what technology can do. We must thank all those who work to make these things possible – often without us knowing who they are ... so thank you.

Following the Circuit Meeting in February we are actively joining together more and more – not only to make best use of our people and finances, but also to offer a wider, more varied worship and ways to help our Christian discipleship.

We have heard recently that our friends in Flitwick, Ampthill and Clophill have decided to become one church on several sites, and we wish them well on their journey. It may be a model for other parts of our Circuit too, and we will all need to understand what that would mean and how it could help us. Other sections are having discussions about greater partnerships and actively considering how they can share resources in a helpful way.

At the Circuit Meeting we also explored how we could re-organise ourselves more effectively when Rev Lorna Valentine leaves us next year. We know it will be unlikely that we will be able to recruit an

experienced Presbyterian, and of course we have some challenging financial issues too. At the same time we have some anomalies with the existing 'allocation' of Ministers, and there is a view that having one Minister for the central Bedford churches would make more sense and enable those churches to work more closely together. So this means there are likely to be some changes to Ministers' pastoral responsibilities from September 2024, and some change around of existing Ministers at that time.

We may be able to find a suitable Probationer Minister – and if so, we are considering where they can best make a contribution. Discussions are continuing with churches over the coming months, but we will need to make a decision by June this year in order to enable us to go into Stationing this summer.

Whilst I know that there is some sadness at potential changes to existing sections, we can be reassured that existing relationships – built up over many years – can still remain. After all, in Methodism, we are all part of the 'Connexion' in Jesus Christ, and this means we will always reach out to one another and support each other as best we can.

I would also like to thank the rest of the Circuit Stewards: Alan Davis who has stepped up to the Circuit Finance role, Michael Carr, Nick Guy and Phil Timms. They give most generously of their time and gifts.

We are pleased that Christina Costin-Webb has been appointed as a Circuit Steward, and you will no doubt see more of her in the future.

Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

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 | Perilyn 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 |
| 1970 | Keith Harding | 1978 | Jim Ragless |
| 1966 | Chris Izzard | 1954 | Daphne Stiles |
| 1978 | Keith Jordan | 1969 | Silvia Thomas |
| 1961 | Pat Larman | 1957 | Archie Whitby |

WORSHIP LEADERS

Amphill

Patsy Aston
Margaret Byass

Beeston

Sonia Butler
Mary Millar

Clophill

Anne Cooper
Victoria Higgins

Flitwick

Maryan Pateman

Kempston East

Rosemary Simms
Stuart Simms
Marjorie Stevens (T)
Terry Stevens (T)
Geoff Talbot
Barbara Tipping

Langford

Jenny Broadbridge

London Road (Bedford)

John Caves
Andrew Constant

Oakley

Noel Evans
Jeanette Letch
Jane McVey

Priory (Bedford)

Lynne Gound
Marian Knights
Carmen Rowe

Sharnbrook

Marian Blyth

Sandy

Jenny Endersby

Shefford

Beckie Gray (T)
Mairi Perks

Stewartby

Elaine Sullivan

Trinity (Biggleswade)

Tricia Mapletoft

Willington

Pat Davies
Keith Tompkins

(T) = In training

“Where apes swing to and fro”

Do you remember singing in church in days gone by that line from Percy Dearmer’s “Remember all the people”? It was number 864 in “The Methodist Hymn Book” of 1933.

Quite a few years ago, apes would have felt perfectly at home in the front garden of London Road Methodist Church (Bedford). Then they lost their habitat in a clearance programme, which resulted in that part of the grounds being set to lawn. The premises became much more visible to everyone passing by on this busy route in and out of the town. We could even display banners on the outside wall, demonstrating that the church was alive and welcoming.

Another great result was that open-air worship and events could take place, and we have taken full advantage. As we look forward to this summer we have two open-air services planned, the first of which is our Church Anniversary service when we will be joined as usual by our friends from St Michael and All Angels. Out will come the percussion instruments and we will worship the Lord with joy, as we thank Him for another year through which He has blessed us.

Of course, the English climate has a large say in whether or not Plan B needs to be put into operation, namely an indoor service out of the rain. Usually, though, we are blessed with fine weather.

We often wonder about the best way of arranging the chairs. Should the congregation or the preacher face the main road? Whatever decision we make, we always have good amplification, in the hope that pedestrians going by can hear above the Yamahas, Kawasakis and Hondas roaring past. “Pedestrians going by”? No, we don’t want them to go by, we want them to come in and join us, so the tea trolley is wheeled close to the gate and out goes the board proclaiming “Tea and coffee now being served”. Yes, people do come in and enjoy fellowship with us.

We give thanks to the Lord for the space we have to hold open-air witness, and we pray for the blessing of fine weather so that once again we can close our service by dancing and playing our instruments, as we tell our neighbourhood that “We are marching in the light of God”.

John Caves

This quarter we are starting a new devotional series, and aim to include a reflection, prayer, poem or other devotional material in each issue of the magazine. So far, Local Preachers have been approached for suitable items, but we would be pleased to receive contributions from anyone who has a piece they would like to share. We look forward to hearing from you.



The 51st Psalm

Psalm 51 is one of the so called 'penitential psalms' and refers in its title to King David's grievous sin regarding his adultery with a beautiful woman called Bathsheba and the killing of her husband Uriah the Hittite. Five of the Ten Commandments were broken in one sordid and cynical episode.

David thought he had got away with it, and it was only the living Word of God through God's prophet Nathan that brought David to repentance. No Bible story describes the heart's conviction of sin quite like 2 Samuel 12; no Bible prayer expresses the lips' confession of sin quite like Psalm 51.

In Psalm 51 we get one of the most perfect and classic accounts of sin and how a man or woman can get rid of their sin, for it tells us all we need to know about ourselves in our frequent need of the conviction of sins and repentance. The 51st Psalm is the classic statement in the Old Testament, perhaps in the whole of the Bible, on the question of repentance.

But not only does it give us a model for our prayers of confession, but directs our attention to other basic truths and facts concerning our life, both in this world and the next, for it also deals with other aspects of the great matter of salvation.

Here we have at one and the same time a terrifying exposure of the need of mankind in sin, and the provision that is made for us in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. You do not get that in its fullness in this Psalm, but you get an introduction to it in a very extraordinary manner. Here is expressed in embryo what we have in greater detail in the New Testament.

It is when we see ourselves as we are, on the one hand rebels against God and under the judgement of God, and on the other hand prisoners of our corrupt nature, that we come, like David, to despair of ourselves and to cry to God for mercy. And the mercy of God expresses itself in meeting our need, giving us both pardon and purity.

As a result of God's mercy, David resolves that his attitude to other people and to God will be different. In this way we are reminded of our responsibility both to our fellow human beings and to God.

We have sinned against our fellow human beings, so now our responsibility is that we should serve them in a new way. We have sinned against God who will show us mercy, so then our responsibility is to use our lips to worship God and praise Him.

Perllyn Thomas

**SNAPSHOTS
FROM
UGANDA**

My husband and I were lucky enough to visit Uganda in February – one of our sons has been working there for the Foreign Office for over two years and this was our first opportunity to visit. Our

main aim was to spend some time together with him and his family, and also with our other son and daughter and their families, who gathered from all corners of the globe: our first family reunion for three years. However, we also took the opportunity to explore a little of the country.

We packed a lot into our visit, but I would like to share just a few things which struck me about this fascinating country. Like most African countries, Uganda has its problems: there is poverty, a very young population with high levels of unemployment, even among graduates, and an unpopular authoritarian regime, which has recently passed even more draconian laws, making homosexuality and same-sex activity punishable by death or life imprisonment.

However, there is also much that is admirable in this complex country. A country of some 46 million people hosts well over 1.5 million refugees and asylum seekers, the most in any country in East Africa. They are welcomed, and where possible given some land, materials to build a simple house and some money to support them until they can get work or grow food. Rather than being placed in camps, the aim is to place them in communities, where they will become part of the local economy and have a chance to integrate. Refugees are also entitled to access jobs and government-funded social services. Whilst things don't always work perfectly, and funding is a huge challenge, this generous and compassionate approach is striking.

The country has stunning scenery and extraordinary wildlife, some of it unique, so it is good to see the steps being taken towards conservation. The mountain gorillas are protected; white rhinos, which had disappeared from the country, have been re-introduced in a large sanctuary and are thriving. There are a number of national parks where

the landscape and wildlife are protected (but the discovery of oil in one presents dilemmas). Conservation provides jobs, encourages tourism and improves the relationship between local people and the ecosystem, although there are still conflicts.

On my final morning in Kampala, a Saturday, I went to visit St Paul's Cathedral, pictured below, which stands on top of one of the seven hills in the city; two others are dominated by a mosque and a Baha'i temple. St Paul's is part of the Anglican Church of Uganda, and the first cathedral on the site was built in 1890. The current one was built between 1915 and 1919.



I was not able to spend much time in the splendid sanctuary, as there were seven weddings taking place that day! I did meet a man who, seeing me peeping into a large meeting hall, broke off from a big group planning mission work to greet me and make me welcome. He asked to pray with me and I was moved to feel that, despite some of our differences, we were united in Christ. He sent greetings from Kampala to the Christians in Bedfordshire.

Liz Little



Social Action Mission Stream

The **Social Action Mission Stream** continues to focus on environmental matters which we consider to be one of the most important issues in the world today.

Churches around the Circuit are showing their commitment to playing their part in addressing climate change by registering as an Eco Church or applying for Bronze Awards.

Of the churches in the Circuit, 21 are registered as Eco Churches, of which 10 have either received or applied for Bronze Awards. A recent Zoom forum encouraged those heading for Silver with ideas of further actions that could be taken.

The Methodist Church has recently published its road map for Action for Hope – a project to make the church Zero Carbon by 2030.

The first action is to measure the energy usage for your church (which is also an action for Eco Church). One of the recommended surveys is by Climate Stewards ***www.climatestewards.org***

We hope soon to get a worship service outline on the Circuit website to support this action.

Marian, David, Shelly, Andrew and Stephanie

ACTION for HOPE

Methodist Church project for Zero Carbon by 2030



Assess your Building & Energy Usage

Calculate your carbon footprint

Use **360° Carbon** through **Climate Stewards** which is an online tool that can be used for churches and by individuals.

Take First Steps

Look at the **Net Zero Carbon Checklist** to check church premises and determine next steps. These actions are relatively easy, with relatively fast payback.

Make a Bigger impact

These are actions with a reasonably fast payback for a church with medium energy usage, used a few times a week.

Down to Net Zero

These are bigger, more complex projects, which only busy churches with high energy use are likely to consider.

See the Methodist Church website for further information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/environment-and-climate-change/action-for-hope/>

From the archives... by Jeanette Letch
~~~ Bedford County Hospital ~~~

Having taken on the role of Circuit Archivist, I have been presented with a vast quantity of documents, most of which are fairly mundane, but occasionally a little snippet jumps out.

One such snippet is this letter from the Bedford County Hospital (shown opposite), to, I assume, Shefford Methodist Church, dated August 1947, which I hope you can read.

I'd never really considered how hospitals were funded before the NHS, and this letter provides some information. The interesting bit is that places of worship provided a significant contribution to the running costs of the hospitals – in 1945 they provided £1,941, and in 1944 more than £2,000.

In 1946, Shefford Methodist Church donated £17.10s.00d, worth approximately £876 today. This was somewhat more than the donations from the Parish Church and the Baptist Church, and presumably a significant sum for the church to raise.

This helped fund 31 inpatients and 74 outpatients, at a cost of £475.17s.06d, or £23,779 in today's money.

Patients were assessed for their ability to contribute to their costs by the Almoner, a hospital official, usually a lady, who would interview the patients in their homes. This term was also applied to the officials who were responsible for patient welfare and aftercare, which evolved into the modern profession of medical social work.

Amazing what you can learn from an old letter, isn't it?

BEDFORD COUNTY HOSPITAL.

August 1947.

My dear Sir,

The "appointed day" when Hospitals are taken over by the Ministry of Health under the National Health Act is now fixed for July 5th 1948. This means that in our case the present Board of Management are responsible until that date. They are anxious, in their last year, to continue to give the best service possible. Expenditure, however, is so enormous that it is earnestly hoped that all our many supporters will continue their assistance for this year. The expenditure in 1946 exceeded the income by £5,500, this sum being approximately the amount paid in salaries and wages in excess of the previous year. The average daily cost of an inpatient was 17/- and that of an outpatient 14/3d. For the first time in the history of the Hospital there were over 3,000 inpatients in a year. The help and sympathy of congregations at Places of Worship has been very generous, and I am deeply grateful for this thoughtful kindness which, last year, amounted to £1,941 and in 1945 exceeded £2,000.

I feel sure, therefore, that you will once more be good enough to assist us, as a Board of Management, to bring our work of 145 years to a conclusion worthy of our earnest desire to show the spirit of sympathetic service in aiding those who need our help, remembering that Bedford County Hospital has tried to bring to many lives Brightness, Comfort, Healing.

With much gratitude and good wishes.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J. ARNOLD WHITCHURCH.

CHAIRMAN.

SHEFFORD 1946.
.....

Collections from Places
of Worship.

| | £ | s | d |
|----------------------------|----|----|---|
| Church..... | 11 | 12 | 6 |
| Methodist Chapel... | 17 | 10 | - |
| Baptist Children's Service | 9 | 10 | : |

Hospital Guild

23..3..7.

Other Sources

180..18..6

£342. 14. 7.

..31. In-Patients at a cost of

..423..3..0

..34 Out-Patients at a cost of

...52..14..6

£475. 17. 6



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

Fridays 16th June, 15th September and 8th December – all from 2.30pm – 4.30pm

LONDON ROAD, BEDFORD

Our Easter Messy Church was very busy and very enjoyable. We set a new attendance record – 57 in total! It was very lively indeed!

We had lots of activities including making biscuit tombs and Holy Week wreaths.

Everyone drew around their hand on arrival and wrote their name on the shape. The shapes were then cut out and displayed very effectively in the form of a cross which remained at the front of the church over Easter, to remind us that Jesus died for each and every one of us.



In the celebration session, we journeyed from Palm Sunday to Good Friday and on to the “gloriously bright” Easter morning and had our traditional egg hunt as well as lots of instruments and music!

Finally, everyone shared a tasty packed lunch and each of the youngsters took home a little bag with some goodies inside, including an

activity sheet based on the happenings on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.



Many thanks to everyone who helped in any way. We really appreciate your support!
Please check out our Facebook page for photos of the fun day, and why not join us
at our next outdoor Messy Church on Saturday, 24th June from 11.00am to 1.00pm.

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 as follows:-

6th May and 27th June. The June meeting will be a picnic and games at Linch Furlong in Oakley.

If possible, please do let us know that you can come by calling 01234 824504 or send 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 Oakley.

Sessions include a fruit snack.

TRINITY (Biggleswade)

Messy Church happens on the 3rd Saturday of the month:

20th May / 17th June / 15th July

10.30am – 12.30pm ... FUN, FAITH & FOOD

FAMILIES WELCOME

Watch out on our Facebook page for themes. It would be good to know if you are coming, so please email bmapletoft@hotmail.com

WILLINGTON

Messy Church takes place on the third Wednesday of the month:

17th May / 21st June / 19th July (none during August)

3.15pm – 5.30pm

FOOD AND FUN CLUB NEWS – PRIORY

Our next session will take place during May half-term, 29th May – 2nd June.

Details from Priory Church Office

office@priorychurch.org.uk 01234 353523

ADVENTURE ARK – CARDINGTON

Cardington is running a Holiday Club called "Adventure Ark" (the overall theme being animals in the Bible) from Monday 31st July to Friday 4th August from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

POWERPOINT – CLAPHAM

Clapham joint churches are holding Powerpoint Children's Holiday Club for young people aged 5-12 at the Hilda Tinsley Fellowship Centre in Clapham from Monday 31st July to Friday 4th August from 9.30am (for 10.00am) until 12.00 noon. For more information, please contact **pwrpnt@gmail.com**

The church's
ministry of healing



A study day for all
who lead worship

**"Proclaim the Kingdom of God
and heal the sick" Luke 9:2**
...How are we doing?

- Led by Alison Bryan, Coordinator of Healing Ministry, Methodist Central Hall Westminster
- With contributions from Rev Gill Newton, 2023-24 President of the Methodist Conference

Saturday 14th October 2023 10am - 4.15pm

Christchurch, Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF

Hot/cold drinks & biscuits provided, please bring a packed lunch.

RSVP to: info@christchurchhitchin.org.uk

Sponsored by the Beds, Essex & Herts District

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

9 days based in Jerusalem & Galilee



27 May - 4 June 2024

With Revd Andrew Hollins,

Revd Caroline Weaver and Mrs Jenny Harris

For full details call or email

Tel: 07714 588599

jharris34@live.co.uk



McCabe
PILGRIMAGES

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 at **Priory, Bedford** from 12.15pm until around 2.15pm. Please tell Mike Elliott (mike.elliott@zapboing.com) if you are interested and he will send you any updated information and reminders.

MAY

Fri 26th – Mon 29th Cliff Festival – “Eden Restored” at **Cliff College**
See previous magazine for details or visit
www.cliffcollege.ac.uk/news-events/festival-2023

JUNE

Sun 4th 4.00pm Easter Offering Dedication Service at **Amphill**
Thurs 22nd 7.30pm Circuit Meeting at **Putnoe Heights**

JULY

Mon 31st 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
using **Zoom**

SEPTEMBER

Sat 16th 10.00am District Synod at **St Paul's C of E Church,
Blandford Road, St Albans AL1 4JP**

OCTOBER

Sat 14th 10.00am
– 4.15pm Healing Day at **Christchurch, Hitchin**
(see page 28 for details)

NOVEMBER

Wed 1st 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
at **Henlow**

Wed 8th 7.00pm Circuit Safeguarding Meeting using **Zoom**

JANUARY 2024

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

APRIL 2024

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

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)

Supernumerary Ministers

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

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

Rev Julie Bradshaw *julie@iw2.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

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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 25th June**

Preachers should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 25th June**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 2nd July** please

The Circuit Manager (Stephanie Field) is mostly home based, and can be contacted either by email northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com or mobile 07522 928936.

The Circuit Finance Officer (Anne Ainley) works on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings mostly from home, and can be contacted either by email northbedsfinance@gmail.com or landline 01234 831174 or mobile 07787 104540.

All post can now be sent to the Circuit Office.
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 26th May** at 7.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 31)

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
Circuit Charity Registration No. 1129523