

North The Methodist Church Bedfordshire Circuit

34/1

Magazine

Issue No.52

Summer 2024

All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all.



Singing the Faith 330

Circuit information...see inside for further details.

Sunday 19th May

Pentecost Praise at Kempston East

Sunday 14th July

Farewell Service for Rev Lorna Valentine

Sunday 1st September

Welcome Service for Rev Paulette Tedd

For diary dates, see page 34

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
(comprising Ampthill, Clophill, Flitwick),
(Rest day – Friday) 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
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A Pastoral Letter

by Rev Leslie Noon (and Wookie)

Hello my hooman friends

Wookie here, Rev Leslie's dog. Earlier in the year I went on holiday with my hoomans to WILTshire. I think we went there because my hoomans were wilting and needed a break. It rained a lot and we didn't do much, but I did get lots of attention so I was happy. While we were there we went to a place in BARKshire. (I'm sure it's spelt that way, although my hooman says it's BERKshire). I'd like to go back there, because I think it must be a place where dogs are welcomed and where they can bark as much as they like.



Barking is how dogs communicate – well that as well as begging and pawing for attention. It's not how you hoomans communicate though. You use words and language such as 'sit' and 'stay'. I think my favourite word in your language is 'treats' – hint, hint...!

Dear friends

Leslie here, just interrupting Wookie! Speaking of language, it's something we so often take for granted. Communicating what we want or what we need, being able to express our thoughts is a basic human necessity – and when we can't (for whatever reason) we are often left feeling frustrated and isolated.

And language isn't always as obvious as it seems. Take this true record from a court hearing:

Lawyer: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your lawyer?

Witness: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

Words and language are not always clear. And especially in church, we must take care to talk in words and language and thought forms that actually make sense. Religious platitudes (e.g. The Lord never gives

someone more than they can handle) and religious phrases (e.g. Jesus died to save us from our sins) are simply not good enough.

In a society in which the Christian faith is so often seen as irrelevant, it is vital that we can share what we believe in ways that make sense, in ways that connect with others. You have permission to kick me (not too hard please!) if you ever hear me use religious claptrap!

And I urge you also, to find words and language that express your faith in ways that others can understand. Think things through for yourself – don't repeat religious jargon, but really think about how to talk about God.

Talking about God, or in other words evangelism. It's often something we shy away from, for we've probably witnessed or experienced cringeworthy attempts. But putting our faith into action, talking about God in ways that make sense, is actually something all of us can do. Over the summer, give it a try!

Lawyer: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

Witness: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

With love,
Leslie



Welcome to a new venture in Mid Bedfordshire

People are afraid of change: a regular comment, but what is less clear is that change is often difficult, and takes time and lots of meetings. So it was that three churches in Mid Bedfordshire were persuaded that it was time for a change, and that bold action was needed to ensure a sustainable Methodist future in the triangle of country which includes Ampthill, Flitwick and Clophill. All of these distinctive communities have been swollen by new housing, especially over the past decade.

However, the congregations in all three individual churches have remained static, if somewhat older in years. This is common across the Circuit, with fewer than 700 people attending in all churches of the North Bedfordshire Circuit, and the majority over the age of 70.

Some five years ago the three churches became part of the same Mission Group, and the journey from this to a more formal arrangement began with general consultations, which brought forward lots of questions and reservations. However, regular sharing between the three congregations blossomed, with sharing of United Services on a monthly basis, and with guidance from the Circuit and under the leadership of Rev Silas Wood, the decision was eventually taken at the Church Councils to take the bold step and begin to merge the functions of the three churches. The first step was the creation of an overarching Church Council in September 2023, which led to combined roles spanning all three congregations. Joint meetings of Stewards followed, with a single Church Secretary, Treasurer, Pastoral Coordinator and posts such as Safeguarding Officer. This was welcomed, as increasingly the burden of filling every vacant position became a little easier.

Two thorny questions remained. Firstly, the complicated task of merging the finances of all three and crafting a new system to make the accounting reliable and efficient. Secondly, naming this new baby! A range of options was agreed and congregations were asked to vote. Yes, democracy is alive and well in Methodism! So, the GREENSAND COMMUNITY METHODIST CHURCH (GCMC) was launched in late 2023, with a new logo, Facebook page and identity.

The next step was to begin - on the first Sunday in April 2024 - a new trial schedule of worship, which further implants the idea of a united church and a unified congregation. For those who are wedded to a routine of a worship service at 10.30am in the local church, this will require some careful management of a diary and an alarm clock. One constant feature in the trial is maintaining the 10.30am United Service on the first Sunday of each month, beginning with the gathering of all three congregations at Clophill on 7th April, then at Flitwick on 5th May, with the final United Service on 2nd June at Ampthill. These new arrangements also offer each month a 9.30am Communion Service, a 10.30am Local Preacher-led service, or an 11.00am Messy Church,

Café Church, or Bible Study. The benefit of this is, that there is scope for innovation described as ‘informal worship’. On a 5th Sunday in a month we hope to go out into the community, perhaps to the pub or litter picking... This trial has been mapped out until the end of June, when the reactions can be assessed.

The other gain is that the Presiding Minister will be more visible, with two services each Sunday in two of the three churches. There is also a reduced demand on the core group of dedicated Local Preachers, and also the requirement to fill slots with Local Worship is eased. The challenge is to keep track of the moving targets of services, and there will be printed cards, posters and Facebook postings.

The challenge with these radical steps is to allow the identity of individual communities to be maintained. Each church has a sound building at the heart of the town or village, and these are in demand for a multitude of local and community events, plus church activities. Ampthill church building hosts regular gatherings of the *Community Café*, *MIND* mental health charity, yoga and other community events on a hire basis, which greatly assists the flow of funds into the church. Clophill and Flitwick have *Tea and Chat*, Clophill has *Coffee and Croissants*, Flitwick hosts *Baby Comes Too*, *Boys’ Brigade* and *Girls’ Association*, as well as *Men’s* and *Ladies’ Breakfasts*.

However, the thrust will be on joint initiatives where possible. Examples include Bible Month (the book of Genesis), an outing to the *Methodist Modern Art Collection* display at Welwyn, and a Lent course. The formation of the GCMC also makes cooperation with the Churches Together simpler and hopefully more effective. Looking forward, the planning of Carol Services, Harvest Festivals and other larger events can be coordinated.

To quote Sir John Timpson in The Telegraph 23/02/24: ‘*The Body Shop failed because it did not reinvent itself to stay relevant*’. We must stay relevant by reinventing ourselves.

Brian Kerr and others

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.



Trinity Methodist Church in Biggleswade have for many years supported the Prebend Street Day Centre for the homeless in Bedford, now run by Smart CJS, through collecting and donating clothing, bedding and food, and also supporting the CRIB (Cold Relief in Bedford) appeal at Christmas. Below is a brief summary from them of how they support the homeless in Bedford. Further information can be found on the website www.smartcjs.org.uk/smart-prebend-centre

SMART is a charity based in Bedford town centre which provides safe spaces for people from all walks of life who are facing or experiencing homelessness. Services include emergency accommodation, rough sleeper outreach and a day centre, all of which provide ongoing support to relieve hardship and distress caused by homelessness and other complex issues, helping individuals cope at a point of crisis.

Our highly trained staff provide individually tailored support to help people through extremely difficult times and challenges, helping them to get back on track. At the Prebend Support Centre people can access one-to-one focussed support, along with hot meals, second-hand clean bedding and clothing, hot showers (including toiletries and towels), foodbank vouchers, and even GP/nurse appointments. We have relationships with other local organisations including the NHS Path to Recovery Team, the Housing Team at Bedford Borough Council, Housing Associations, landlords, the team at PBIC (Polish British Integration Centre) and other charitable organisations.

In 2023 SMART helped over 700 individuals, with the Support Centre receiving over 19,000 visits. As the only service of its kind locally, the Centre provides essential services to prevent people in the homeless community from experiencing further difficulties and by relieving isolation. Disappointingly, the Centre receives very little funding from the local authorities and therefore we have no choice but to raise the money needed to run the Hub. This costs £275,000 a year.

If you would like to donate to SMART, this is the link:
<https://smarcjs.enthuse.com/cp/4f5b0/Fundraiser#!/>

SMART CJS is a Registered Charity number 1069087



>>> NEWS FROM CHURCHES <<<

Priory Methodist Church, Bedford

Pure Unbounded Love Thou Art

The line from the well-known hymn *Love divine*, by Charles Wesley has the line '*pure unbounded love thou art*'. That sentiment, of there being no boundaries to God's love, was enacted at Priory Methodist Church on Friday 8th March, International Women's Day, when Tammy and Tania got married. The first same-sex marriage in Priory, the first in the Circuit, and the first (we think) in a church in Bedford. It was a wonderful occasion: the couple wrote their own, very moving vows, lit their wedding unity candle and walked down the aisle to the song by Stevie Wonder '*Signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours*'. Damp eyes everywhere!





I have been asked to write a little about MHA for this magazine and MHA Sunday in particular. (Although it is always the 2nd Sunday in June, any Sunday can be designated an MHA one!) MHA Sunday is an opportunity to give thanks and celebrate our specialist care services across the country. Held annually, it offers a time of reflection where we can pray for those in later life and those who support them, as we raise awareness of our charity in churches across Britain.

This year the focus is on **befriending**. Those preparing resources have used the analogy of seeds. Seeds grow mysteriously and unexpectedly; they are not under our control, and grow so much bigger from when they began. The mustard seeds of Jesus times came from a large black mustard tree that would grow to over eight foot tall.

Using the analogy, MHA has changed so much since its beginnings.

It began through the inspiration of Walter Hall and was established by the Methodist Conference; it has been here to support those in later life since 1943. It has changed over the years, from just running care homes, to then building up nursing and dementia services. Music therapy has become an integral part of what MHA offers and chaplaincy has been there from its inception. More recently, MHA began providing sheltered accommodation and is now also supporting people in their own communities and homes. For the latter they have developed a telephone befriending service, so that wherever you live, you are able to get support.

There has been much change in chaplaincy recently.

Rev James Francis has just been appointed as the new Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality, part of the Leadership Team. Working with him will be one Head of Chaplaincy (rather than the two we've previously had), Area Support Chaplains and then the Chaplains themselves.

In Bedford MHA we now have a second Chaplain, Mike Mari, as there were more hours budgeted than we were using. I've reduced my hours slightly, doing 18 a week, usually over three days, and Mike does 12 hours over two days.

I reduced my hours at Anjulita in order to have some flexibility to take on some work requested by MHA, in support of my Area Support Chaplain Rachel. This might include speaking to Circuits or Synods, etc. I'm waiting to see how this will evolve.

As mentioned above, this year MHA Sunday is focusing on befriending. Befriending is when a volunteer commits to making one phone call a week to someone. The difference it can make to both befriender and recipient can be enormous. Relationships can build up and flourish.

Of course, at Anjulita we also have opportunities for volunteers to come in, as general volunteers or specifically chaplaincy ones. Some come and meet with individuals; others will support activity groups, and others chaplaincy services and work.

Please feel free to make contact if you are interested in becoming an MHA befriender or a volunteer at your local MHA home.

Blessings to you all

Rev Sarah Burrow Chaplain to Anjulita and Ladyslaude Courts

North Bedford Churches Together

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ... and God saw that it was good” Genesis 1 NIV

“Tenants of the King” is a four-session Bible-based course to explore a Christian perspective on the environment and to consider the practical implications for our daily life and witness. The course is put together by “Operation Noah”, a Christian charity working to inspire action on climate change. The course was run for four weeks in Lent 2024 and our hosts were St Mary’s Goldington on Wednesday afternoons, repeated at Priory on Wednesday evenings, and our praise and gratitude go to the volunteers who led the sessions. Each enjoyable session comprised an icebreaker chat to warm us up, a Bible reading to give context to our thoughts, a short video from a different speaker each week, followed by an activity and a discussion, and then a short act of worship to conclude. The speakers (Bishop Graham Tomlin, Rev Mark Melliush, Dr Ruth Valerio and Dr Justin Thacker) all had experience of different Christian environmental initiatives and were inspirational.

So what did we learn? In week 1 we learned that God intends creation to reflect His glory and that, when we pray “Thy will be done on Earth”, we are addressing the whole ecology of the world. In week 2, we reflected on our broken world and where we can see creation groaning today. Week 3 had a very uplifting message – that we can all make significant, though small, changes to improve the environment, and that Jesus will be alongside us in the journey. Week 4 encouraged us as churches to speak up for the environment and “speak truth to power”.

As well as helping us to focus on the Christian response to climate change, the course enabled us to share with others from local churches; the coffee and the fellowship were an important part of the experience. As we take away the messages to eat less meat, switch off appliances and travel by train rather than plane, we look forward to further opportunities to share our faith with our neighbours.

“What a wondrous temple this world is, for in truth it is the temple of God’s building wherein men ought to worship him.” C H Spurgeon

Sue Allen – Putnoe Heights

Henlow Methodist Church

In the Circuit Magazine a few months ago there was an article about how old some of the churches were in the Circuit, but for two or three no actual dates as to when they were built could be found, Henlow being one of them.

When I say Henlow, I am talking about what is now the hall but was originally the church.

So I have done a bit of research myself. On the outside of the building there is a stone commemorating the stone-laying service on 13th September 1923.

I then found some more information in the vestry! In 1918 the congregation had outgrown the onion loft worship centre in Henlow. There is a blue plaque on what is now a residential house, stating when Methodism first came to Henlow.

So the managing Trustees had the task of looking for land in the village to build a new larger church. The land on which the existing church now stands was purchased for £50.10s. Unfortunately, due to insufficient funds, World War One and building restrictions at this time, the work of building the church was delayed until 1923.

So efficient were the Trustees that not only were drawings and estimates obtained, but in addition the stone-laying ceremony took place only six months later on 13th September 1923.

More marvellous still was the fact that the opening services were taking place upon ~~the~~ completion of the building only five months later in February 1924. Which means that in February 2024 we celebrated 100 years of our church in Henlow. On 25th February this year we were planned for a Local Worship service and thought it would be a good idea to hold our Sunday worship in the hall which had been the church. We had photographs on display, and looking at the photographs we were able to set the hall out as it had been for Sunday worship 100 years ago. Two or three members shared their memories of weddings, christenings, and attending Sunday school: lots of good times and people remembered.

We are so blessed and grateful to all those people who through the past 100 years have given their time and talents for God's witness in the village of Henlow.

Brenda Ballantine

Visiting Preacher
Rev Terry Wright
Forces Chaplain, Chicksands

Dear Methodists in North Bedfordshire,

I was asked to say a few words about myself as an introduction. Well, I am currently a Military Chaplain working at Defence Intelligence Chicksands near Shefford. I have been in post two and a half years and absolutely love every minute. I have had a long association with the military from my younger days as a Royal Engineer in the Army and later being a Chaplain in training Regiments as well as the Army Cadet



Force. I come from Cornwall originally and grew up in the Methodist heartlands of the clay mining area of St. Austell. Chances are you've eaten a bit of my homeland, as the clay is used in pharmaceuticals, such as indigestion tablets and aspirin! Mind you, pasties taste far better.

As a little boy, my mum and dad wanted peace and quiet on a Sunday, so I was dispatched to the local Methodist church Sunday School. A very saintly Sunday School teacher named Mrs Bray imparted some of the wonderful stories of a man called Jesus, and although me and Billy Dyer ran amok (as little boys do), a lot of what Mrs Bray said stuck in my mind, and as a young soldier I became a Christian and returned to that little Methodist church to thank Mrs Bray! Not long after that she passed away and the chapel closed, but I hope in some way I carry the legacy on, as I now talk to young (and slightly more mature!) service personnel about this man named Jesus whom I met years ago.

So I hope to see some of you as I'm invited to preach, but for now from me, Shirley (my wife) and Bonnie the dog – BFN, In Christ, *Terry*

P.S. You might hear me coming before I arrive, as I'm a very keen motorcyclist and my bike's called *John Wesley's Horse*.

FROM THE EDITOR ...

It has been my privilege to serve as Editor of this magazine for ten years, and on the editorial team for much longer, previously in the old *Bedford South and Ampthill Circuit*. I now feel it is time to step down, and I would like to relinquish my post sometime between now and next summer. We have a very small team, and the remaining members have indicated that they would not be able to continue to produce the magazine without a designated Editor. If the magazine is to continue in its present form, therefore, it will be necessary for someone to step into that role. Requirements are few:

- a desire to connect our large and diverse Circuit
- the ability to work in a team
- attention to detail
- a sense of humour (this is vital!)

Please consider whether this is something you could do. Or perhaps you know someone you think might suit the role.

If you would not want to be Editor, but would like to be part of the team, you would be welcomed with open arms! We have been looking for years for people to join us.

Please contact myself or one of the other team members if you would like to know more. We look forward to hearing from you.

Cheryl Benfield

Circuit Matters

by Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Dear Friends

Circuit Leadership Team – report for Circuit Magazine

It has been a busy year for churches across the Circuit. Most continue to offer regular worship and outreach in their local communities, and seek to find ways of engaging more effectively with their congregations and beyond.

In terms of staffing there will be some changes this year. From September, Rev Chris Sandy will have Primary Pastoral Responsibility for Priory, Putnoe Heights, Park Road and London Road churches. For the first time there will be one Minister responsible for the churches in Bedford, hopefully enabling those churches to focus on working together as the Bedford Methodist Churches.

Rev Lorna Valentine will be leaving us this August and we are pleased for her that she is moving to a Circuit in the Fens. She will be much missed. The Farewell Service for Lorna will take place on Sunday 14th July at 3.00pm at Shefford Methodist Church. Rev Leslie Noon continues to look after Trinity, Sandy and Beeston but will also pick up Henlow, Langford, Shefford and Upper Caldecote churches.

We are delighted to be welcoming a new Probationer Minister from September – Rev Paulette Tedd, and she will have responsibility for Sharnbrook, Oakley, Clapham, Willington and Cardington (Howard Memorial) churches. The Welcome Service for her will take place on Sunday 1st September at 3.00pm at Oakley Methodist Church. Rev Silas Wood continues as Deputy Superintendent.

In respect of Circuit Stewards, Alan Davis has resigned due to health issues – and we thank him very much for his wisdom and expertise over the past few years. He has done some excellent work and we wish him well. The remaining Stewards are myself, Phil Timms, Nick Guy, Christina Sawkins (formerly Costin-Webb) and Michael Carr, who has taken on the role of Circuit Finance Steward.

There are continuing challenges for us all in terms of both personnel and finance. As a Circuit, we have been reviewing the current Assessment system, which is the amount of money that each church gives to the

Circuit. The new system, based on criteria such as membership numbers, income from lettings, reserves and a range of other factors, means that some churches will be required to contribute more than they do now. It is recognised that some will find this difficult, so there is provision for an 'appeal' – in other words, a process for those with real concerns to plead their case.

The system was agreed at the Circuit Meeting in March, and will be operational from later this year. Thanks to those Treasurers who have helped with this. Whilst we hope it will be fairer, the underlying challenge of declining congregations and money is still a major concern.

It is good to see more churches – whether through choice or necessity – working together and sharing resources. Greensand Community Methodist Church (previously Flitwick, Amptill and Clophill) is now one church in governance terms, and we look forward to hearing more about their experiences this year and how we can learn from them.

Another focus of action this year will be introducing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training across the Circuit. This is about ensuring our churches are inclusive and welcoming to all, and actively celebrate the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church. There are some local training sessions planned, (see page 31) but the training can also be completed online.

We continue to look at how we can move forwards, as God's people called Methodists, and pray that God's Holy Spirit will be on us all today, this year and always.

Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward



Social Action Mission Stream

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

NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT – OUR CHURCHES

GCMC Ampthill	----- Dunstable Street, corner Chandos Road, Ampthill	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
GCMC Clophill	----- High Street, opposite The Causeway, Clophill, Bedford	MK45 4BE
GCMC 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	----- Ampthill 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
2018	Paul Burgin	1975	Chris Robinson
1976	Michael Carr	2008	Glynne Rowlands
2011	Paul Cooper	1996	John Sackett
2021	Anne Foley	1983	Ros Salisbury
1997	Graham Follett	2010	Geoff Talbot
2010	Chris Fox	2009	Perilyn Thomas
2011	Hazel Hitch	1970	Janet Watts
1973	Keith Lilley	2021	Angie Woodcraft
1990	Pat Lilley		

PREACHERS UNABLE TO TAKE APPOINTMENTS

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

WORSHIP LEADERS

GCMC Ampthill

Patsy Aston
Margaret Byass

Beeston

Sonia Butler
Mary Millar

GCMC Clophill

Anne Cooper
Victoria Higgins

GCMC Flitwick

Maryan Pateman

Kempston East

Rosemary Simms
Stuart Simms
Terry Stevens (T)
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

Sandy

Jenny Endersby

Sharnbrook

Marian Blyth

Shefford

Beckie Gray (T)
Mairi Perks

Stewartby

Elaine Sullivan

Trinity (Biggleswade)

Tricia Mapletoft

Willington

Pat Davies
Keith Tompkins

(T) = In training



Methodist Women
in Britain

For women, for justice, for Christ

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) ~ Circuit News ~

“Together we are Stronger”. During the last weekend in February, seven ladies from our Circuit joined with 18 other ladies, most of whom were from our District, for a weekend on the subject: *“Together we are Stronger”*. After the welcome, introductions and devotions early Friday evening, we enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of High Leigh, Hoddesdon, with a very tasty dinner. After that came an enjoyable evening sharing a mixed selection of favourite poems, books and hymns. On Saturday we were very blessed to have with us Alison Bryan, who is involved in healing prayer ministry at Christchurch, Hitchin, and also serves on the prayer team at Methodist Central Hall Westminster. She was miraculously healed of ME while at Spring Harvest in 1996, and since then has been passionate about helping people to encounter Jesus the Healer for themselves. This sometimes, but not always, brings physical healing. However, most of the people she prays with experience healing and wholeness in other areas of their lives.

Alison based her four sessions on Mark 2 verses 1-12, the story of the four friends who brought a paralysed man to Jesus for healing. First, we were given a wonderful Bible study to set the scene and begin to think about where the story led us. After coffee, the personal aspects of it were explored as Jesus called the man *“My Child”*. How does this personal relationship with Jesus make us feel? After lunch we looked at: *“Your sins are forgiven”*, and were helped to deal with our own *“Bin Bag of Regret”*. Sometimes the hardest thing is to forgive ourselves for things we have said or done. We then asked the Holy Spirit to fill us with peace. Finally, we considered: *“Stand up, pick up your mat and go home”*. This was the time when any who wanted prayer could have a personal moment with Alison, and most of us took advantage of this as she blessed us in the name of the Lord. The personal words which she

gave to me I shall not forget, but they were personal, so I will not share them. I hope others found the day as helpful as I did.

After supper we had a really fun quiz, with not a religious question in sight!

Sunday morning was taken up with a beautiful meditation given by the nameless Samaritan Woman at the Well in John chapter 4. Then in groups with the focus: "Leaves on the Trees", we considered our lives "Looking Back" and our faith "Moving On".

Our final worship was a Communion Service based on liturgy from the Iona Community and led by Supernumerary Minister, Rev Femi Cole-Njie. After lunch, we made for home following our stimulating weekend. High Leigh as a Conference Centre seems to improve every time. Certainly the food was of the highest standard and the rooms as comfortable as ever. Unfortunately, unless anyone else is willing to take over the organisation of these weekends, this was our last. Enormous thanks are extended to Ruth Watkins who has been the lynchpin since the 1990s, when we were still part of the London North-West District.

Other MWiB News:

I hope everyone has made use of the Easter Offering envelopes which were distributed at Easter. This is our one united effort to contribute funds to the work of our overseas partners and brings in a considerable amount of money. Last year £190,000 was collected nationally, of which over £1,800 was from our Circuit.

The theme this year is: "Let Justice Roll", and the Circuit Service at which the Offerings will be dedicated takes place at Putnoe Heights Church on Sunday 2nd June at 4.00pm. We hope for a good attendance, but it has been suggested that some churches might like to produce their own service. All information can be downloaded, or I can give you more details.

Jenny Broadbridge
Circuit MWiB President

MWiB is a Registered Charity No: 1156626

Lorna's Reflections

LORNA'S REFLECTIONS

by Rev Lorna Valentine

I think many of you know that when I was preparing to come into Circuit for the first time, I mentioned in my profile that I liked the sea. I was then stationed here in Bedfordshire, which is about as far from the sea as you can get! I won't lie, there are times I have longed to be just a little bit nearer to the sea, but actually I feel



that I have been exactly where God needed me to be in my eight years here in the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit. Thank you all for the way in which you have accepted, nurtured, and supported me as I have learned, grown, and put down my roots here. I have seen God at work in this place and its people and I have loved being here.

At the first Communion Service I took in the Circuit, I was at one of my churches. They gave me a little stone with part of Jeremiah 29:11 on it by way of a welcome. The whole verse says this:

*'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord,
'plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.'* Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

It is a verse I have struggled with at times. It was offered to me a lot when I had several months being out of work after redundancy. I found it something of a trite platitude, as it is quite hard to feel what those plans are when you are worried about making ends meet.

I came to really appreciate the passage though, after studying it at college. I learned that it came as the people were being told they needed to put down roots in a place they did not want to be. That they needed to learn to seek the welfare of the city in which they were currently living, not look back with rose-tinted glasses or forward with unrealistic expectations.

Once I read the verse in context, I understood that this was indeed then, a reassurance and hope for difficult times. A promise that, wherever we found ourselves, even if it was hard and not what we expected or even wanted, God would be there.

My moving on from here means that there will be changes. Changes for me and for Mark – we'll be nearer the sea for a start, as we are moving to Wisbech! But changes for the Circuit too. Such changes can be an unsettling experience, and it may feel at times as if what we say we might like or want may seem quite far removed from the reality of the situation we find ourselves in.

Yet I believe that the promise of God we find in Jeremiah holds true. That God has plans for us, but that we need to listen to what God is saying will enable those. That might mean we need to let go of some of what has already passed. It probably means too that we need to be realistic about the future, and that is hard. I think though, if we follow the urging of God to put down our roots in the places where we are, and seek how to enable those places to thrive and to prosper, we will see God at work.

That question of where we see God at work has been something I have asked many times in my ministry here. I really appreciate how people have continued to tell me their stories of God at work as I have asked. Sometimes that has been in the routine of life, but at other times you have shared completely unexpected ways in which you have recognised God. This gives me reassurance and hope.

However hard the future, however unexpected, whatever change I, you, we may face, God will be with us. It is not a trite platitude, it is the promise of hope we are given as people of God. My prayer for us all in this time of change then is this: may we know and see God's plans in our lives, in our churches and in our communities. May we put down our roots and see the hope and future we have in God.

And if you are in the Wisbech area, do say hello. We'll tell you how we are getting on being nearer the sea!

Every blessing, *Lorna*

Rev Chris Sandy – Sabbatical notes and reflections

Introduction and background: Chequered Sabbatical

My Sabbatical commenced on Wednesday 1st November 2023 and ended on Wednesday 31st January 2024. During my pre-Sabbatical planning, I outlined in my Sabbatical prospectus that I would like to accomplish three things during my Sabbatical.

1. Conduct a research study into the reason the state police in USA, Ghana or South Africa lead funeral processions and the rationale behind it.
2. Conduct a research study into modern-day slavery and human trafficking from West Africa, Sierra Leone to be precise, to Europe and the Middle East.
3. Have time to rest and re-energise myself.

Having this outline in mind meant that I was going to travel to the United States, Ghana or South Africa and Sierra Leone.

Pre-Sabbatical Work: South Africa



In September 2023, I was fortunate to have been invited to attend part of the annual Conference of the Methodist Church in South Africa, that met in Kumkani Hintsa District in East London. This culminated in the Ordination of Presbyters and Deacons of whom one had been my supervisee and critical friend.

Immediately after the Conference and Ordination, we got our flight back to Johannesburg and subsequently Pretoria. It was in Pretoria that my host helped me to secure an appointment to have a

conversation with the Director of **Kgatso Funerals**. This meeting was held on Zoom and it lasted for 45 minutes.

Setting the scene:

After a death occurs and prior to the funeral/burial, the family will have to go to the municipality's office with the death certificate of the deceased, to ask for help with escort/traffic control to the site of burial or cremation. In cases where funeral parlours are used, the family might ask them to coordinate the arrangements with the municipality's office. This escort could either be from the home of the deceased or from the church or funeral parlour. This is a one-off and one-way service provided by the municipality free of charge.

The procedure:

On the day of the funeral, traffic wardens on bikes would ride ahead of the funeral cortège to stop traffic especially at intersections, to allow the funeral party to proceed without interruption. This is now the norm in South Africa, and because of their cultural values and the importance of dignity and respect for the dead, people are used to it and drivers would comply without any force from the traffic wardens.

The unusual:

In cases where there is a funeral of a known gang member with the expectation of possible riot, violence, or fracas from other gangs, TRT, a special task force, will be deployed for tactical reasons. They will be intentionally visible, patrolling the entire funeral proceedings. This tactical force will work in coordination with the police.

During the period of COVID-19, police were used to manage every entry point to cemeteries and crematoriums because of the restrictions in place. Armed robbery during a funeral could be an

isolated incident, not that it doesn't happen, but it is very rare in South Africa because people place a very high value on customs and traditions.

Sabbatical Period: 1st November 2023 – 31st January 2024

Most of November was spent at home in the UK, working on my doctoral thesis, knowing too well the constraints I might experience in Freetown, especially with connectivity and intermittent and unstable electricity.

On Sunday 26th November, I left to travel to Freetown via Istanbul in Turkey in the early hours of the morning. After going through security, I received a phone call from my brother that there seemed to be unrest in Freetown, but the details he could not tell. I paid no attention to it but went on to board my flight for Istanbul. I arrived safely in Istanbul, and I received a second phone call from Freetown, telling me that a failed coup d'état had taken place and as a result all airspace in and around Sierra Leone had been closed and all flights in and out of the country suspended.

Accra, Ghana:



At that juncture, I asked the airline to divert my flight to Accra, Ghana, which is about a two-hour flight from Freetown. The reason was that, should the situation change to normality, I would be able to get to Freetown with much ease. The following day, 27th November, I got another flight to Accra where I stayed for ten days with friends. Whilst in Accra I was again fortunate to witness a funeral procession whilst visiting a friend. Even though there were a few similarities with findings in South Africa, it differed a lot on the

other hand. In this scenario, musicians and drummers led the hearse, the mourners following the hearse singing or chanting, and the police officers walking alongside the mourners and the hearse. From what I was told, there are different cultures in Ghana, most of which command their own funeral and burial rites, which can differ a lot between tribes and cultures. However, in the case of this particular funeral procession, the police officers were there to maintain crowd and traffic control.

Freetown, Sierra Leone:



On Friday 8th December 2023, I flew into Freetown, Sierra Leone, to a nation very tense and on high alert because of the failed coup. There were roadblocks and checkpoints manned by the security forces. It was difficult, even after settling for a few days, to move about freely or gain access to resources including key people to do with my pending research into modern-day slavery and people trafficking from Sierra Leone.

This difficulty was further exacerbated by the infrequent electricity and connectivity issues. In addition, I was unlawfully detained at gunpoint by military personnel for 30 minutes with a threat to shoot, because my driver had made a supposed wrong U-turn in a private compound. Nevertheless, I tried to make something good out of a difficult situation. I got myself involved in the ministries of four Methodist churches in the city, namely Wesley Methodist Church at Lamina Sankoh Street, Charles Knight Memorial Methodist Church in Sussex, Emmanuel Methodist Church in Hamilton, and Bishop Baughman Memorial United Methodist Church in Brookfields. I led

worship services for a minimum congregation of 250 people in all of those churches. On 7th January 2024, I led my final Holy Communion and Covenant Service at Charles Knight Memorial to a congregation of 500+, which service lasted for three and a half hours. It was an uplifting and Spirit-filled service.

I finally left the shores of Sierra Leone for the UK on Wednesday 10th January 2024. My aim was to relax and later write my report, but unfortunately I became seriously ill, culminating in my admission to Bedford Hospital for two days on Tuesday 30th January 2024.

Summation:

- Though it was not part of my planned prospectus, I felt spiritually empowered and refreshed to have been able to minister to four churches in Sierra Leone with such magnitude in church attendance as compared to here in the UK. Despite the hiccups, I was able to impact the lives of others through the Word and Sacrament.
- My detour to Ghana is one that also left indelible memories with me. Because I got to Ghana not on my planned schedule, it meant I was not protected against malaria fever. The first three days were fine and relaxing, but eventually I got struck down by malaria for about a week with high temperature and loss of appetite, and I was feverish, tired, and very weak. It taught me to be prepared for any eventuality during travels.
- In all of it, I give thanks and glory to God and the Methodist Church for the gift of this Sabbatical. Though I did not initially return to active ministry physically fit, I was spiritually enlightened and uplifted.



At Kempston East Methodist
227 Bedford Road,
Kempston MK42 8DA

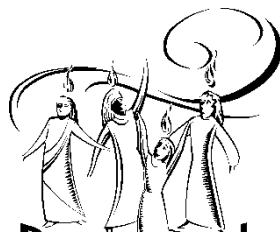
PENTECOST PRAISE

Sunday 19th May 6.00pm

'Come and share in the celebrations'

- The worship will be led by the **Willingtones Band** together with musicians from Kempston East and Wootton.
- This service 'Celebrating Pentecost' is open to all local churches and Circuit Methodist Churches.
- The worship will include a wide range of songs and hymns.
- There will be testimony and offer of informal prayer ministry.
- Refreshments after the service in the main hall.

For more details, contact
Rev Michael Giles on 01234 930882
www.KempstonEastMethodist.org



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion are everyone's business. The Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and other Churches and organisations recognise the importance of EDI and hence facilitate its training in order to ensure equality, recognition, and celebration of the diversity within the Church and organisations, and the inclusion of all, irrespective of age, gender, colour of one's skin, disability, religion or nationality in its policies, practices and governance.

As the MCB is aiming and seeking to be an inclusive, justice-seeking church, it is imperative that a policy is in place to address issues of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, hence the EDI toolkit. Promoting and delivering EDI in the workplace is an essential aspect of good people management. It's about creating working environments and cultures where every individual can feel safe and a sense of belonging and is empowered to achieve their full potential. In the UK the Equality Act 2010 provides legal protection for nine protected characteristics: ***age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.***¹

The Methodist Church through its Discipleship and Mission committees developed the idea of an EDI toolkit to help facilitate

¹ <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/diversity-factsheet>, accessed 05/03/2024.

mandatory training for all those in **leadership** within the Church, including **Ministers, Stewards, Local Preachers, Worship Leaders, and Lay Workers**. Research has revealed that most of the challenges some of our cross-cultural Ministers experienced in churches are due to the unconscious ignorance of the general congregation; hence the reason to educate or train the entire Circuit on matters of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is not a reaction to the law, but it is part of the Church's response to its understanding of what it is to be God's people.² No form of discrimination will be allowed, and as a discipleship movement shaped for mission, we will continue to learn to live with contradictory convictions. People and cultures take time to change, so it might be prudent to require ongoing training to help limit biases and bad behaviour.³

We therefore would like to encourage every member and adherent of the Methodist Church in this Circuit to take this opportunity to be a part of this process. Training can be done online individually or in groups, or face-to-face in groups at a venue near you.

Andrew Brazier, the District EDI lead will be running courses within the Circuit as follows:-

Saturday 11th May, 9.30am at **Priory**

Tuesday 21st May, 1.30pm at **Priory**

² *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit* | Module 1.1, <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/30652/edi-toolkit-1-2-0923.pdf>, pp.8-9, Accessed 27/02/2024.

³ J. R. Thompson., *Diversity and Inclusion Matters: Tactics and Tools to Inspire Equity and Game – Changing Performance*, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2022, pp.6-8.



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.

LONDON ROAD (Bedford)

Many thanks to everyone whose hard work made our Easter Messy Church such a success once again. It was a really busy one, as there was a record attendance of 68 people. As we remembered the mode of transport Jesus chose for his entry into Jerusalem, we enjoyed a quiz about donkeys and a cartoon featuring Dave the Donkey in conversation with his grandfather, both of them having played a very important part in Our Lord's story.

Lots of fun activities took place, including an active Easter egg hunt, where everyone got involved.

Everyone put their crafts in the take-home goody bags, which also included activity sheets for both Palm Sunday and Easter Day, as well as a chocolate treat.

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 at approximately 5.00pm.



Dates are as follows:-

Tuesdays 21st May and 18th June.

No meeting in July because of various end of term school activities

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 07740 863 215 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 drink and fruit snack.



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 May, 15th June, 20th July.

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

This year we are changing to a Thursday for Messy Church, usually the third Thursday of the month.

Dates are as follows:-

Thursdays 16th May, 20th June, 18th July.

All from 3.15pm - 5.30pm.

Please check with Pat on 01234 838667.

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.

MAY

- | | | |
|-----------|--------|---|
| Sat 11th | 9.30am | EDI training at Priory
– see page 31 for details |
| Sun 19th | 6.00pm | Pentecost Praise at Kempston East
– see page 29 for details |
| Tues 21st | 1.30pm | EDI training at Priory
– see page 31 for details |

JUNE

- | | | |
|----------|--------|--|
| Sun 2nd | 4.00pm | Circuit Easter Offering Dedication Service
at Putnoe Heights |
| Wed 26th | 7.30pm | Circuit Meeting at Kempston East |

JULY

- | | | |
|----------|--------|--|
| Wed 3rd | 7.30pm | Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
at Beeston |
| Sun 14th | 3.00pm | Farewell Service for Rev Lorna Valentine
at Shefford |

SEPTEMBER

- | | | |
|----------|---------|--|
| Sun 1st | 3.00pm | Welcome Service for Rev Paulette Tedd at Oakley |
| Sat 14th | 10.00am | District Synod in the North Bedfordshire Circuit
at Stratton School, Biggleswade |

NOVEMBER

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--|
| Wed 6th | 7.00pm | Church Safeguarding Officers' Meeting using Zoom |
|---------|--------|--|

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 (Vicar at 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 *julieiw2@gmail.com* 01234 405530

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

Rev Douglas Ford

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

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Stephanie Field *northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com* 07522 928936

Churches should send their dates for the next Plan (with details of preachers they have booked) to **their Minister** by **Sunday 30th June**

Preachers should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 30th June**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 7th 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. 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 **Thursday 16th May** at 7.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 35)

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