

North Bedfordshire Circuit

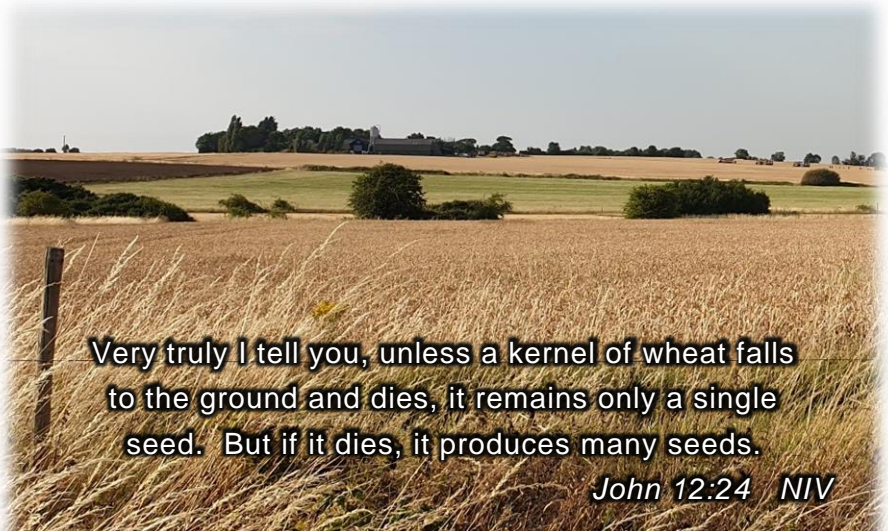
The **Methodist Church**

34/1

Magazine

Issue No.49

Autumn 2023



Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24 NIV

Circuit information...see inside for further details.

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

Sunday 3rd September Circuit Service at **Upper Caldecote** to commission Paul Cooper to take Holy Communion Services in the Circuit

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 LEP,
(Rest day – Friday) Park Road (Bedford), Putnoe Heights and Sharbrook

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

Circuit Stewards

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Jane McVey *janecmcvey@aol.com* 07866 802179

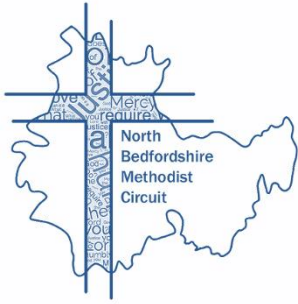
Michael Carr *mcarr49@hotmail.com* 01234 824504

Christina Costin-Webb *ccw281969@gmail.com* 07813 785813

Alan Davis *alaned163@gmail.com* 01234 215057

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

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



RENEW, SUSTAIN AND GROW

*From Rev Michael Giles -
Superintendent*

Dear Friends,

Welcome to a New Connexional Year. It has now been a year since we had a new Circuit Bible verse and prayer, since I took up my role as Superintendent, since we welcomed Presbyterian Rev Leslie Noon and our Deputy Superintendent Rev Silas Wood. Together with Revs Lorna and Chris, Stephanie - Circuit Manager, the Circuit Stewards and many more in our local churches, we have a great team in place.

It has gone very quickly, and since the February Circuit Meeting we have started to give a more definitive direction of travel. The heading used at recent Circuit Meetings was '*Renew, Sustain and Grow the ministry of the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit*'. There is no room for complacency, as events local, national and global continue to disrupt and challenge settled ways of planning and organization.

RENEW - Sometimes we need a new set of tyres for our cars because they become worn and unsafe for travel. The same applies to Church life including our worship, fellowship, outreach and properties, at both Circuit and local church level. Jesus called His disciples (students of faith) to follow Him, so it's a journey that we are on. Let us not become too settled and comfortable in our ways.

Question : *Which parts of your church life need renewing?*

SUSTAIN - The times we are living through are financially challenging, but more importantly from a people perspective, challenging in our ability to sustain ministry. It was recently observed by our Chair of District that we shall run out of people before we run out of church buildings. Rather than trying to juggle endless activities, we should focus on a smaller number of ministry activities and do those very well.

Question : *What are the crucial areas of ministry your church should focus on?*

GROW - I received an email from the leader of the Start! course (northern equivalent of The Alpha Course), in which he stated that he strongly believed that numbers in churches do matter. When I was training for the ministry at Wesley College, Bristol (1988 to 1991), I was planned for a church service in the Forest of Dean. The church building was larger than Kempston East, but we met in the back room: two people, a dog and myself. That church has long since closed. Numbers do matter, so evangelism and outreach must be a regular part of the DNA of local church life.

Question : *In what ways is your church encouraging growth?*

Encouraging Signs

Around the Circuit, churches are beginning to look at greater flexibility in Sunday service times, partnerships and multi-site churches. The Worship Leaders' training has been updated to offer three routes for training that are much more user-friendly. Some churches have received new people on a regular basis. Certainly, there feels like a greater openness to where God the Holy Spirit is leading us.

A New Church Year is an opportunity to commit ourselves to Renew, Sustain and Grow the ministry of the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit. The famous missionary David Livingstone said: 'I will go anywhere provided it be forward'. If we are to move forward in ministry we need to place at the centre our loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, serving with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

Blessings, *Michael*

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.



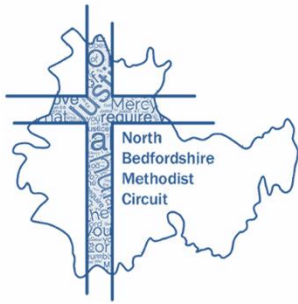
Strategy Working Group (SWG)

Please see below the
Primary Pastoral Responsibility (PPR)
 (see details on next page)

as at 01.09.2023 based on current information.

Teams are referred to as A-B, ministers as 1-5.

Church	PPR from 2022	Team from 2022	Notes	Membership Estimated as at 12.06.2023
Henlow	1	B	(i) + (ii)	19
Langford	1	B		26
Shefford	1	B		53
Upper Caldecote	1	B		15
Amphill	2	B	(i) + (iii)	36
Clophill	2	B		17
Flitwick	2	B		36
Haynes	2	B		13
Lidlington LEP	2	B		24
Kempston East	*3*	B/A	(iv)	95
Kempston West	*3*	B/A		33
Stewartby LEP	*3*	B/A		10 + 1 Methodist
Willington	*3*	B/A		22
Wootton	*3*	B/A		26
Beeston	4	A	(v)	17
Cardington LEP	4	A		14
Priory	4	A		83
Sandy	4	A		18
Trinity	4	A		47
Clapham	5	A	(v)	38
London Road	5	A		17
Oakley LEP	5	A		30
Park Road	5	A		25
Putnoe Heights	5	A		60
Sharnbrook	5	A		21



Legend for previous page

- 1 = Lorna Valentine
- 2 = Silas Wood
- 3 = Michael Giles
- 4 = Leslie Noon
- 5 = Chris Sandy
- * * =Superintendency

Notes:

- (i) Ministers 1 & 2 working together. Plus looking at joint Church Councils in their own church grouping.
- (ii) Lorna : District Probationers' Secretary
- (iii) Silas : Deputy Superintendent
- (iv) Superintendency and no change in churches since 09/2020.
- (v) Ministers and Priory / Putnoe churches exploring closer working together.

Please note that membership figures (*on the previous page*) do not fully reflect the life and faith of the local church. There are many fellowship groups, café church, toddler groups and other missional activities that take place in the churches from small to large.

I DREAM OF A CIRCUIT

I dream of a Circuit

Where worship will be a celebration,
Where there will be laughter and loving,
Where there will be songs and dancing,
Where all people will celebrate the joy of living as God's people.

I dream of a Circuit

Where the organ and piano will play with the clarinet,
and the big bass drum and every instrument will sound out the praise of the living God.

I dream of a Circuit

Where the quality of its life matters more than the size of the congregation,
Where what we read in the Gospels comes alive in our life together,
Where all differences will be ended, so that there will be one church, just as we have one Lord.

I dream of a Circuit

Where the poor, the disabled,
the lonely and those with problems find themselves helped, not just by anything said but by acts of kindness.

I dream of a Circuit

Where each person will read, pray and grow each day, in faith and hope and love,
Where each one of us will give to Jesus Christ the first place, in all we have and are and do.

I dream of a Circuit

That is freed from the past and open to the future through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Lord Jesus we pray for ourselves, for we are the Circuit.

Rev Michael Giles

(adapted from a prayer at Lee Abbey)

Called to be a Worship Leader : Maryan Pateman

I had led Local Worship (untrained) as a Steward over several years, but just before COVID reared its ugly head, I was led to a meeting at Beeston with a group of people (mainly Worship Leaders) from our Circuit who were planning some services for Local Worship to be used in our churches which would be accessible from the Circuit website.

I had no notion of doing the Worship Leaders' course, but found myself saying to Rev Gill Baalham at the end of the session that maybe that was something I should do. I have never heard a voice like Samuel, or listened like Mary (as in Martha and Mary), or responded without hesitation like Amos, but God leads me by the hand into new adventures for Him. We are all called to use our gifts and talents throughout our lives, even, and especially in some cases, to our last days. We just need to be open and receptive. Hence this picture...

SHEPHERD'S VOICE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



© 2009 Michael D. Waters
www.joyfultoons.com

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
- JOHN 10:27 KJV

In the first brief I had to do I was asking myself, 'What is the difference, or is there a difference, between being used by God and being called by God?' I concluded that surely if we have accepted God into our lives, then every talent we have been given and then importantly we use, is a calling.

I was brought low when my husband David died in 2017 but never felt deserted by God, quite the opposite. With more time on my own and of my own, I was able to open myself up to other God-centred opportunities. For me the timing of the pandemic was a blessing, giving me even more time for my studies. I was also lucky that the Worship Leader training had just been updated. The training and learning is quite rigorous, and in spite of finding some of the study quite hard and in too much depth for me to understand fully, I persevered and found that the fact that it was intellectually challenging really woke up my brain, allowing me to consider and reflect more thoughtfully on my faith and my beliefs, and I have learned an incredible amount which has enhanced my journey with God.

The study part of the course was interesting, but the best part for me was responding to this learning by thinking about and completing the briefs, of which there were 12, from PowerPoint presentations, to linking a theme of loneliness into leading a service of worship; collaboratively planning a service and providing a reflection as part of it; learning what exegesis is and how to do it (basically looking in depth at a Bible reading from many different angles and viewpoints); learning more about prayer and lament; the use of painting, journaling, article writing, and devising Bible studies. There was a freedom and you can play to your strengths whilst still challenging yourself, as you choose how to answer the briefs. The tutors were very encouraging as they steered me to think more deeply in my work, and members of my church family were integral to my ongoing development in their amazing support. In this, the year in which I become 70, I know I will be used well as a Worship Leader in this place and will continue to learn and develop in my faith.

Maryan Pateman

PRIORY METHODIST CHURCH

◦ ◦ ◦ ◦ REVISITED ◦ ◦ ◦ ◦

The five years since we last shared news of Priory have been pretty tumultuous, especially because of COVID, but this has also been a time of learning, of revival and of new ventures. The spectre of change is ever with us; God is always presenting us with new challenges and new possibilities, but also with the resources to face them.

We have had a change of Minister, from Andrew to Leslie, and have been placed in Mission Groups with a number of different churches at different times. We have been building up our links with Putnoe Heights, regularly sharing services. Both Minister and Mission Group will change yet again next year and all this can feel a bit bewildering at times, but Priory is certainly not alone in that.

So what have we learned from COVID? At the start of the pandemic we put together a video for every Sunday and uploaded it to our website so all could follow a local service each week – then along came Zoom! This allowed church members and others to follow a live service at home rather than watch a recording. When COVID restrictions eased we held a hybrid service, with those able to attend church worshipping alongside those attending through Zoom. This proved to be very popular and we have continued with this pattern, now also recording the service and posting it on our website and on YouTube, so those unable to attend on a Sunday morning for whatever reason can still access the service. We have an average of eight regular Zoomers – including a member's son who joins us from the USA – and around 45 hits on the recordings each week. This is an important ministry. The Zoom link can be obtained from the church office and the links for recordings are included below – do join us sometime if you can't get to church!

Our other realisation during COVID was that we could use our front garden as a place of witness rather than a barrier hiding the church. We had a series of displays, inviting passers-by to add ribbons and prayers to our trees on a number of themes. Whilst people were walking regularly, there was a good response to this, and people became aware of an active church on their doorstep. More recently, we have had displays on themes such as Harvest, Remembrance and the Coronation, and our youth groups enjoy taking part in this witness. During Lent, the Stations of the Cross are displayed, culminating with the open tomb and the flowered cross on Easter Sunday. Lots of people take time to look at this as they come to use the building or walk by. We are proud to have gained the Bronze Eco Church award, and are involving our uniformed groups in making our outdoor space more eco-friendly as we work towards Silver.

What have we been able to revive? Many of our pre-COVID activities have resumed, and we are particularly pleased that our Messy services are up and running again, with one scheduled for each term and attendance building up. These services are planned jointly by the appointed preacher and the leaders of our uniformed groups, Junior Church and Eternal Light youth group. A theme is chosen, and a short act of worship leads to a time of different activities (craft, physical activities, discussion) followed by sharing and closing worship. In June, we marked Pride Month, celebrating our diversity, and in October, we will have a Messy baptism. That does not mean water everywhere, but a chance to celebrate this special occasion with a church family and to explore the meaning of baptism in different ways.

Our monthly Craft Club is also back on the first Monday of each month, offering a time of fellowship and practical crafting. As well as Priors folk, this attracts people from other churches in the area and a number of non-church people. The craft for the day is demonstrated and materials

are provided for a small charge, but for many, the chat, refreshments and social time are every bit as important as what they may produce.

And what of new ventures? We continue to use our premises to serve the local community, and we are particularly keen to support groups which focus on health and wellbeing in a broad sense. We host a number of exercise classes, diabetes education groups and groups such as the local Wildlife Trust and community choirs. Post-COVID we welcomed on a “temporary” basis two new groups who are still with us. Barnardo’s needed premises for their family contact service whilst they sought a permanent centre. This has expanded and it seems likely that even when their new provision is ready, some of this work will continue at Priory. Impakt lost the town centre site for their community larder and we were happy to welcome them on a Friday morning, now extended to Thursdays too. Their aim is to reduce food waste and improve food security. Anybody can use the larder, no referral is needed, and there is often a queue outside before they open. This is clearly meeting a need at this time, and is also making good use of resources.

We are planning a quarterly afternoon service, in place of morning worship, using our lovely chapel (also now Zoom-equipped!), to begin in August. We aim to provide a less formal service, with opportunities for discussion and reflection, a pattern which has proved successful in other Circuit churches. We are also hoping to begin a monthly in-person group exploring how Scripture and our faith impact our daily life.

An exciting possibility has opened up as we plan to sell the caretaker’s bungalow adjacent to the church. If we are successful, we will have some money available, and discussions have begun as to how best to use this for God’s work in our area. In all of this, we look to our faithful God who has brought us here, and we trust that even if we sometimes find it hard to see the way, God will continue to lead us on.

*<https://www.priorychurch.org.uk/recordings-a.htm>
www.youtube.com/@priorychurch3306*

Circuit Matters

by Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Dear Friends

At the Circuit Meeting in June, we were pleased to hear a little about Rev Michael Giles' travels during his Sabbatical. It was particularly inspirational to hear about Tonga, their culture and worship, and it was good to see the Methodist spirit alive and well in different parts of the world.

Back in North Bedfordshire, our churches continue with all the usual activities, but many are also forging new partnerships. Our friends in Flitwick, Clophill and Ampthill have agreed to form one church across several sites, and it will be interesting to see how that develops. Other churches prefer to strengthen and build partnerships in different ways – but the aim is the same – to maximise resources (both people and money), so that we can continue and enhance our witness as God's people called Methodists in North Bedfordshire.

There have been discussions over recent months about the configuration of Mission Groups, or Sections, and the changes we will need to put in place in 2024 when Rev Lorna Valentine leaves us.

The Circuit Meeting approved the appointment of a Probationer Minister to cover Sharnbrook, Oakley, Clapham, Willington and Cardington from September 2024. This will enable the bringing together of the Bedford churches (Priory, Putnoe Heights, London Road and Park Road) under one Minister – Rev Chris Sandy. So, yes, there will be some changes for a number of us.

A Circuit Invitation Committee has met to begin compiling a profile for the new appointment, and we are hopeful that we may be able to attract a candidate, although we will have to wait and see.

There was inevitably some regret at either losing a Minister earlier than planned, or changing some of the relationships built up over many years, but also an acknowledgement that the new arrangements made sense. I am sure that we will continue to work with others whichever 'Section' they are in – we are Methodists after all – and where an existing arrangement works well, we will keep it.

There are implications for our manse strategy too. We did explore the option of using the Hartop Close manse in Bedford for the new Probationer, but it would not be as financially beneficial (due to levies

we have to pay and the potential loss of rent) as buying a new manse, so it was agreed we should proceed to buy a new property in the Bedford area.

We are sad to be losing Anne Ainley this autumn. She has done an outstanding job as Circuit Finance Officer – ensuring that people get paid and that our finances run smoothly. We would like to extend our thanks to her for her work. Alan Davis is also retiring as Circuit Finance Steward, and it was agreed to recruit a Bursar (or similar role) to cover both their roles. There is an additional cost to this, but the Circuit needs, as a pre-requisite, to manage its finances, and given that no one has come forward to take up the Circuit Finance Steward job, we do not have any other options.

It is great to see that there is still some energy across the Circuit – both for maintaining existing work – but also for new challenges, and we look forward, in faith, to what the new Church year will bring,

Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward



The authorization of Lay People to preside at the Lord's Supper

In recent years the number of ordained Ministers in our Circuit able to lead Holy Communion services has declined from 26 in 2012 to 9 in 2023. The number of churches though has only declined from 29 to 25 in the same period. The Methodist Church believes that it is important that no congregation or group of congregations be deprived of regular celebrations of the Lord's Supper. The leadership of the North Bedfordshire Circuit identified Paul Cooper as a suitable individual to be authorized and therefore his name was put forward to the Circuit Meeting and the District, and was agreed by the Methodist Conference 2023.

Paul will undergo training and begin leading services of the Lord's Supper in the next Preaching Plan (September to November 2023). We shall hold a special Circuit Commissioning Service for Paul at 4.00pm on Sunday 3rd September at Upper Caldecote, his home church.

Please pray for Paul, the local churches and the Circuit as we recognise this important ministry.

Rev Michael Giles
Superintendent

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

Ampthill

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

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*

A Pastoral Letter

by Rev Silas Wood

Dear Friends

When you last went to the supermarket to buy fruit and veg, did you notice those that are now labelled as 'wonky'? Apparently the British shopper likes uniformity in their fruit and veg, so those that are anything less than uniform are deemed second-rate and sold off more cheaply as 'wonky'.

In our fridge we currently have some 'wonky' blueberries, raspberries, carrots and apples. But you know what, I think they are great. They prove that 'beauty isn't just skin-deep', because they taste just the same as those deemed 'worthy'.

In the same way that this is true for fruit and veg, so it is for people. Who amongst us wouldn't be marked up as 'wonky'? I know I would!

As humans, we come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. But it's all too easy to judge people by their appearance and maybe compare them to ourselves - noticing how they are 'not like us'. And in comparing we often find ourselves judging, which is never going to end well. I'm sure we all know that we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, and the same goes for people.

It is good for us to remember that God isn't interested in the external things about us. God sees us where our real beauty is. God sees what is inside us, our hearts and minds. God knows what we are like through our words and actions, not by our outward appearance. We can't hide from God, or pretend to be someone we aren't. Psalm 139 reminds us how well, and for how long, God has known us. Verse 13 says: 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.' From before we were born, God knew us. And that doesn't change as we go through life. 'You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.' (v.1) [NIV]

Our role is not to decide who is 'wonky' or 'worthy', to judge others. No, we are called to love as God loves, and God 'so loved the world'. That's the whole world and everyone in it. All people are different but we are all children of God, no matter how 'wonky' we are. Thank God for that!

Silas

Michaelmas at St Michael and All Angels Church, Bedford

by Cyrus Moghtadaii

Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are the three named biblical angels, seen as the beloved messengers of God. Michael, which means, 'who is like God', is described as the protector of Israel and leader of the armies of God. He is perhaps best known for his victory over the dragon, which is described in the Revelation to John. He is regarded as the protector of Christians against evil.

A church near Rome was dedicated in the 5th century in honour of Michael on 30th September. Celebrations typically begin on the eve of this day. 29th September is now kept in honour of Michael throughout the Christian Church.



Michaelmas Day, as it is sometimes called, was also one of the few days for a holiday and time for celebration. This was not so for geese, as they are traditionally eaten as a part of the festivities.

At St Michael and All Angels Church in Bedford, we celebrate our Patronal Festival in a number of ways. We typically celebrate Michaelmas alongside our annual Harvest Festival and host a 'bring-and-share' lunch following our Communion Service. Members of our congregation regularly provide generous donations of food, drink and other items to local charities, including the Bedford Foodbank and the SMART Prebend Centre. We often invite members of other local churches to join us for our celebrations, including members from both London Road Methodist Church and Christ the King Catholic Church.

Our Patronal Festival has become a much-anticipated time in our liturgical calendar, where we commemorate the occasion through our worship, teaching and fellowship with one another. We take the opportunity to learn and discover more about St Michael the Archangel, whilst celebrating the occasion alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray that we can continue to celebrate this occasion for many years to come and continue to learn and grow in faith with one another.

Visiting Preacher
Rev Dr David M Chapman
Chair of District



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to explain my role and work in the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District of the Methodist Church. As District Chair, I exercise a ministry of regional oversight for the Ministers stationed in the District, as well as for the 11 Circuits and more than 160 local churches. For this reason, my name and contact details are listed on Circuit Preaching Plans as a way of indicating how Circuits are ‘connected’ to the Methodist Church.

The District manse is situated in Bishop’s Stortford, near to junction 8 of the M11 motorway. From here, I can reach the furthest parts of the District (Walton-on-the-Naze to the East, and Tring to the West) within about 75 minutes by car. Conveniently, the District office is a 10-minute walk from the manse, easily accessible to visitors. Here, my personal assistants, Carol and Sarah, answer phone calls and assist me with much of the necessary administrative work required of the District. An important aspect of my work is to support Superintendents, Ministers and Circuit Stewards in their responsibilities, through offering appropriate guidance and advice. Matters related to Stationing and continuing ministerial development also take up a great deal of my time.

Each week, I lead Sunday worship in a different church somewhere in the District. I generally offer preaching dates to Superintendents and

invite them to plan me in their Circuit, preferably at a church which I have not previously visited. I have now led Sunday worship at every local church in the District at least once and in many cases more than once. Besides the opportunity this gives to meet as many people as possible, I greatly enjoy sharing in Sunday worship with the diverse congregations across the District. It also gives me a useful overview of the churches in the District.

I became District Chair on 1st September 2016 after 21 years as a Circuit Minister, serving in the Wimbledon Circuit then the Dorking and Horsham Circuit before becoming Superintendent of the Central Sussex United Area. The invitation to serve as District Chair was for an initial period of six years, which was renewed for a further five years until 2027.

Prior to ministerial training at Wesley House, Cambridge (1991-95), I was a Local Preacher in what was then the Bedford (South) and Ampthill Circuit. I worked for the GEC company in St Albans, then Milton Keynes, as a systems engineer. My wife, Sue, and I were married in 1985. We have three children, all now independent. Our son is married and living in New Zealand; our elder daughter and her husband live in Hampshire, and our younger daughter lives in London. I give thanks to God for the many blessings I have received, and for calling me to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. It is indeed a great privilege to exercise a ministry of Word, Sacrament and pastoral oversight for the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District.

Grace and Peace

David M. Chapman

Sabbatical focus by Rev Michael Giles

TONGA: The Friendly Islands (quote by Captain Cook)

Dear friends,

Every seven years a Methodist Presbyterian or Deacon is gifted a three-month period (Sabbatical) for 're-equipping, refreshment and renewal'. I have always felt an important responsibility to feed back the insights and resources collected. In previous Sabbaticals, my visits to Ghana in 2009 and to Kerala, South India, in 2016 were through church members' family links. This Sabbatical continued the theme with both an international and a local focus. The international journey took us to Singapore, New Zealand, Tonga and home via San Francisco. The local UK focus of my Sabbatical was on the itinerant preacher John Bunyan, author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress', who spent much of his life and ministry around Bedford, as well as developing creative resources.

Why visit Tonga as part of my Sabbatical? When I was Minister at Hatfield Road Methodist Church, St Albans from 1997 to 2007, I conducted the wedding of a rugby player who was from Tonga. During his time at Hatfield Road, Tevita played for Saracens, and together with his wife ran the church youth group. Since then, it has always been a wish of ours to visit Tonga. This Sabbatical was an opportunity to visit the island kingdom, and it proved to be a journey of discovery.

In reflecting on this adventure I also had a booklet printed and used the broad approach by Andrew C. Ross in his biography 'David Livingstone: Mission and Empire.' That book looked at the breadth of Livingstone's ministry, including mission work in Africa, the opposition to slavery and colonialism, his medical interest in quinine as a cure for malaria and the award of a Gold Medal from the Royal Geographical Society for his study of the landscape. In this limited article I can only give a few short snapshots of my experiences and reflections which I hope you find helpful:

Small nation on a big map: Tonga is a small Pacific island nation consisting of 176 islands, scattered over 270,000 square miles with a population of about 110,000. During our ten days' stay we also spent three nights on 'Uiha, a very remote island where Tevita's parents lived.

Reflection: How do we view our local communities?

Faith: 30% of the population is Methodist and the royal family are members. The Rev James Moulton, a Methodist missionary, arrived in Tonga in 1865 and helped to translate the Bible and much literature into Tongan. Together with Tongans he also set up the education system. The Tongan culture is immersed in the Christian faith and it flows naturally into daily life.

Reflection: In what ways can our faith influence daily life?

Explorers: Abel Tasman, the first European to discover Australia and Tasmania (it had already been inhabited for thousands of years), and Captain Cook both visited Tonga during their travels. It really struck us how courageous and brave they were.

Reflection: How far are we willing to step outside our comfort zone?

Environment and Climate: Volcanoes, Earthquakes and Tsunami: One of many experiences that made a big impression was the impact on daily life of extreme environmental and climate threats. In Tonga and New Zealand, the countries are regularly affected by volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunami. In San Francisco it's earthquakes and tsunami, and in Singapore it's just heatwaves. Then we arrived back in the UK in late April to unseasonably cool weather, but without all the threats to daily life.

Reflection: How aware are we of climate and environmental issues?

Sport: If you are a rugby fan you will be aware that many players from the Pacific are well known for their build, quality of play and gentle nature off the field. In Tonga, if your son plays rugby overseas, you usually have a carved wooden rugby ball on your fence.



Reflection: How would we adapt to living in a totally different culture?

A Pacific islander's prayer: Jesus, Be the canoe that holds me up in the sea of life.

Be the rudder that keeps me on the straight course.

Be the outrigger that supports me in times of great temptation.

Let your Spirit be my sail that carries me through each day.

Keep my body strong so I can paddle steadfastly on in the voyage of life. AMEN

Blessings *Michael*

Lifepath Elstow 2023

Lifepath is a Scripture Union initiative designed to help children to learn about the Christian faith through the lives of local figures from the past. There is a basic pattern which is adapted by local groups of churches and volunteers working together. In this area, Lifepath events are based on the lives of John Newton, held in Olney, and John Bunyan, held in Elstow.

This year it was the turn of Bunyan, so over three days at the end of May, almost 1,000 school children and their teachers and helpers descended upon Elstow village green to share in a day of fun, activities and learning. Many of the leaders were in period dress to add to the atmosphere (see our three Bedford schools' workers in the photo).



The schools taking part had already received a briefing and some information, so they came prepared. They were divided into groups of around 15 – 20, each with a teacher and a volunteer guide. Each group had a name (Seekers, Explorers, Striders, Wanderers – you get the theme!) with a banner. The day began with songs, jokes and a drama about Bunyan, then there were four sessions, two before and two after lunch.

Every group went to two of the sessions at some point. In Elstow Abbey they saw the stained-glass window about Bunyan, the font where he was baptised and the pulpit he was not allowed to preach from. At the May Fair, they played the kinds of games which Bunyan would have played on the same green as a boy. The other sessions were different for

different groups; some were about life in Bunyan's time, some were crafts like weaving or bell-ringing, and there was also a creative prayer space. Each group had plenty of variety.

The children ate their packed lunch on the green (we were blessed with good weather) and had a workbook with some information and puzzles to keep them amused. After the four activities, each group followed the path of Pilgrim's Progress laid out on the green:



there was a burden to carry, which was left at the Cross, obstacles and temptations to overcome, a sweet at Palace Beautiful, roaring lions and finally a scroll with the name of each child giving them entry to the Celestial City.



The day ended with more songs, jokes and a reflection before they left, having clearly had a great time. This event was organised by our local Impact schools' workers, people from Bridgebuilder Trust in Milton Keynes and Scripture Union workers. They will be building on the things which were shared as

they go into local schools in the days and weeks to come. We pray that the seeds sown in Elstow in May will bear fruit.

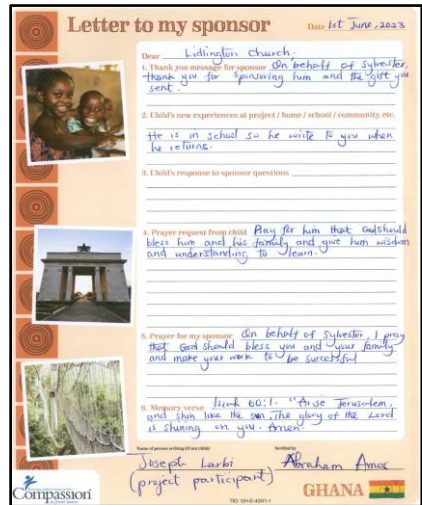
Liz Little

Lidlington Church's "Favourite Charity"

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

Compassion

It started many years ago when quite a few church members went to New Wine annually. One year there was a great worship band called Delirious who were promoting Compassion. A wonderfully passionate lady, Jackie, who had a great heart for those in severe poverty, suggested the church sponsor a child. Our first child was Alice from Burkina Faso whom we have sponsored for about 13 years. She is now 18, and our sponsorship will continue until she is 21. We get regular letters from her as well as updates from the project, and we write to her twice a year plus birthday and Christmas cards. Our second child is Sylvester from Ghana. He is now 16 years old, and again we pass on words of encouragement. Compassion is a wonderful organisation which works in some of the most difficult countries, through local churches, to bring hope for the future to children. They support them with clothes, healthcare, home needs and education. They also support the family to ensure the best environment for the children to grow up in. A number of church members individually sponsor other Compassion children, and we have a speaker from the organisation about every two years.



Jeff Bulled

CHRISTINA COSTIN-WEBB – CIRCUIT STEWARD – WHO AM I?

Let me introduce myself. I am Christina Costin-Webb, and I worship at Sandy Methodist Church. I have been a member there for nearly 30 years, with my parents worshipping there also.

I'm a mum and a proud new nanny to a baby born the day before the King's Coronation.

I have many different roles within many different organisations. I have been a governor and chair of governors of a lower school as it was then in Sandy, and governor at a place of work in Bedford. I've also sat on the national board of the Girls' Brigade. I'm currently a leader at 1st Wootton Girls' Brigade, after having to close 1st Sandy Girls' Brigade due to COVID after 20 years of running.

My work role is at Bedford Free School as a key stage 4 pastoral leader dealing with safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. This is intense, challenging and consuming, but worthwhile with some of the results.

I live in Bedford, and I enjoy walking, history, music and spending time with my family.

I feel very privileged to be on the Circuit Leadership Team, having felt that I have been called to share my skills, although I'm still learning and taking in lots of the information, I am sure. I'm hopeful that with the Lord's Holy Spirit we can be guided into making the right decisions for the overall work of the Circuit.



Social Action Mission Stream

If you have any questions about what we do, please contact Marian Blyth by email at [**marian.blyth@btinternet.com**](mailto:marian.blyth@btinternet.com)



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 15th September and 8th December – both from 2.30pm – 4.30pm

LONDON ROAD (Bedford)

We had another sunny, fun-filled Messy Church at London Road on Saturday 24th June. This time we got really messy outside with water, green slime and planting. The theme we focused on was God's creation and the amazing things we find on Earth. Did you know it is estimated that there are around 8.7 million species on Earth today and more than 80% of species are still undiscovered?

We sang songs and played instruments loudly for all to hear. Then we played some team games like water relay and running under a parachute; all got involved, young and old. Finally everyone had a tasty picnic lunch and took their crafts and goody bags home. Thank you to all who helped on the day – we are always looking for extra helpers, if anyone is interested. Our next Messy Church is our Messy Harvest on Saturday 7th October. All are welcome.



← *A photo of us playing a parachute game at the June Messy Church.*

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:-

Tuesdays 19th September, 17th October, 14th November, 12th December

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

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

Contact Jan Follett or Michael Carr for more details.

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

Sessions include a fruit snack.

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 as follows:-

Saturdays 23rd September, 21st October, 18th November, 16th December

Sessions are from 10.30am until 12.30pm.

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

It is very helpful to know if you are coming!

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

WILLINGTON

Dates for Messy Church sessions during the autumn have yet to be fixed, but it is usually on the third Wednesday of the month 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.

SEPTEMBER

- Sun 3rd 4.00pm Circuit Service at **Upper Caldecote** to commission Paul Cooper to take Holy Communion (See page 15 for information)
- Sat 16th 10.00am District Synod at **St Paul's C of E Church, Blandford Road, St Albans AL1 4JP**
- Mon 18th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting at **Kempston East**

OCTOBER

- Sat 14th 10.00am – 4.15pm Healing Day at **Christchurch, Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF**
RSVP to info@christchurchhitchin.org.uk
(for details, see Magazine No. 48, page 28)

NOVEMBER

- Wed 1st 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting using **Zoom**
- Wed 8th 7.00pm Circuit Safeguarding Meeting using **Zoom**

JANUARY 2024

- Tues 23rd 7.30pm Circuit Church Treasurers' meeting using **Zoom**
- Mon 29th 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' 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

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

Circuit Finance Officer

Anne Ainley *northbedsfinance@gmail.com* 01234 831174
07787 104540

Circuit Property Secretary

Richard Ward *richard.ward4@btinternet.com* 01234 852400

Circuit Meeting Secretary

<< POSITION VACANT >>

Circuit Safeguarding Officer

Stephanie Field *northbedssafeguarding@gmail.com* 07522 928936

Circuit Manager

Stephanie Field *northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com* 07522 928936

Magazine Editorial Team

Cheryl Benfield (Editor) *cheryl.benfield@ntlworld.com* 01234 851600

John Caves *johncaves@btinternet.com* 01234 831361

Shaun Endersby *shaun@oddpst.com* 01767 220623
(Technical Editor)

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

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

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 1st October** 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 25th August** 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