

CIRCUIT NEWS SUMMER 2016



NEWS FROM THE BRENT

Here at the Brent, we enjoyed a very inspirational Lent Course based on the Lord's Prayer. We had five speakers, all of whom took a section of the prayer and talked about it. This was followed by lively discussion. We were joined by friends from other Churches, including Sutton at Hone, Spital Street, Hextable and St. Andrew's. We learnt a sung version of The Lord's Prayer in the weeks preceding the course and sung it acapella on the evenings the course was running. It was very emotive and many people told us that the words had carried so much more meaning for them when sung. There were a few tears when we jointly said the "amen" on the last night, and we all felt very blessed by studying this beautiful prayer.

On Saturday 14th May, we threw a Pentecost Party, as an outreach event. It changed shape a couple of times over the planning weeks and eventually all the activities took place inside the Church with the exception of the amazing Steel Band, who played in the car park for almost four hours. Passers-by accepted cakes and blessings and the church was heaving with children and families, enjoying tea and cakes, face painting, crafts and activities, games and dancing and Deacon Jane's husband, Alan, entertained them on the guitar during the Steel Band's rest periods. A fantastic day was enjoyed by all—where will God lead us next, we wonder.



NEWS FROM SWANSCOMBE

Good Friday dawned crisp and bright, today we were taking part in a "Walk of Witness" in Swanscombe. After a short act of worship at our individual church's, we assembled outside our church at 10.30. We are part of Swanscombe Church's Fellowship and had agreed we would all get together and walk down the High Street following the cross. (Swanscombe Church's Fellowship is made up of Christ Apostolic Church, Redeemed Church of God, St. Peter & St. Paul and Swanscombe Methodist Church). There were about 60 people walking, we then went back to our church for a short act of worship. This was followed by lots of hot cross buns!

On Sunday May 8th Swanscombe Church's Fellowship decided after our morning acts of worship, to meet up in the park for a picnic. The weather was brilliant about 25c, after our picnic we played games, football, catch and baseball. Some of the children went in the parks play area. Some people just lazed about under the trees. This was the first time we had attempted anything like this and it went very well.

On June 13th, may be a few days earlier, we are having the decorators in. The main part of our church building is being decorated. This has not been done for quite a few years, now that the damp patches have been sorted out we are ready to go. This is estimated to take about two weeks, which is cutting it very fine as it is our church anniversary service on June 26th! We are only a very small church, but we feel we have been blessed to have the money to do such a major undertaking.

May God continue to work in Swanscombe and sometime he may let us into the plans he has for us. We wait, watch and pray.

HELPING THE HOMELESS

A programme helping homeless people find shelter during the winter months has ended.

Since December, Sanctuary, a Christian-based programme involving local volunteers from Gravesend Methodist Church, has been providing a range of support to rough sleepers.

Having closed its doors on April 1st, the team of 150 volunteers helped 85 different homeless people, preventing 657 nights sleeping rough.

The programme, which provides overnight care, meals support, an opportunity to shower and take clean clothes, provided nearly 1,600 hot meals.

A volunteer at the programme, Priscilla McBean said: “The thing that struck me most when arriving for my first overnight shift was that it was difficult to tell from appearance who were the guests and who were the volunteers. Sometimes it was just the language being spoken that was the give-away.”

Guests who were sheltered over the four months also received follow up work to help them access services to help them find housing or work.

A spokesperson from Sanctuary claimed it highlighted other issues in the area: “A number of social issues have been identified through this project which include the fact homelessness is sometimes a result of other underlying issues, for example mental health, and sometimes causes those affected to be stuck in a loop or worse still, taken advantage of.”

Mrs McBean spoke of her experience volunteering with Sanctuary.

She said: “It just reinforced to me that we are all just individuals, but some have been luckier in life than others.”

(Taken from a report in The Gravesend Reporter)

REFUGEE TALES

This July a group of travellers will be taking the path from Canterbury to Westminster. Along the way they will reflect on the long and dangerous journeys made by refugees as they flee war and persecution and seek a safe place to live.

We are grateful to be able to share with them by providing hospitality at two of our churches, Gravesend and Spital St in Dartford. After their day of travelling, we are invited to join them as they gather for evenings of storytelling and music.

On Tuesday July 5th they will be staying at Gravesend Methodist Church with an evening event at the Church at 7pm:

Host—Jonathan Freedland

The Support Worker's Tale—Josh Cohen

The Lovers Tale—Kamila Shamsie

Music—Haymanot Tesfa

On Wednesday July 6th they will be staying at Spital St Methodist Church. The venue for the evening event which will start at 7pm will soon be announced.

Host—Sameena Zehra

The Voluntary Returner's Talk—Caroline Bergvall

The Barrister's Tale—Rachel Holmes

Music—Mike Dr Blue, na-mara

There are other events during the week and more information can be found on their website refugeetales.org

We are thrilled to be part of this and encourage you to take the opportunity to go to the events and open yourself to the stories of refugees, asylum seekers and detainees.



ACCEPTING DIFFERENCE

As I'm sure many of you have seen in the media and on social media, April was Autism Awareness Month. It's not just a month of plugging awareness but also educating others and opening discussions. I myself was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 1995 so though I'd write a small piece on being "autistic" and having faith.

In a short and simple definition, Autism is a neurological difference meaning people perceive the world differently. This can involve senses and communication (in—and outgoing). It's a spectrum so no one person is the same as another and can go from "mild" to "severe". Autism is also a hidden disability: you cannot tell someone is autistic by sight alone. This can cause a plethora of difficulties and prejudgement from supposed friends, family members and the further community who do not understand or accept the way you perceive the world.

Having a faith and being autistic is another conundrum: those who are autistic can often be seen as lacking in empathy and unable to converse and maintain friendships (which I add is completely untrue. Empathy is often shown in many different ways and not always the way you expect. Not all autistic people are non-verbal and many have social circles including a relationship and/or friendships). However a relationship with God is different to a friendship or relationship. It is not draining, anxiety is much less of an issue and God does not cause me to overload from "too much information", including sensory or other information. I often refer to this feeling as being "overcooked" but the word "moment" and "meltdown" are also commonly used in this instance. God is different and greater than humans. He is also the only one who really understands and is always there.

Also God loves us how we are. Jesus hung around with Judea's undesirables in the eyes of a first century Jewish state. I never used to love myself and always wanted to be "normal".

It is frustrating and draining when you can only see what you can't do. Things that you see your peers do with ease while you just cannot cope like parties, meeting up at the weekend and music concerts. Through Jesus I have learnt all the things I can do and things I never thought I'd be able to do, I have done or will be doing. I studied French and German at university; studying in France and working in Germany (not without difficulty I add!) I met friends throughout Europe through a summer school I attended and have travelled to Austria, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, France and Germany. I now hope to study MA Autism Studies and become a student disability advisor. I am now also one of the volunteer youth workers a Youth Group and drop-in.

Coming to church for me can be difficult. I find church sometimes too busy with the noise, chatter, people and lack of space for me to escape to. I find this so frustrating as I want to go and want to grow. I now often wear earplugs and headphones to help cancel out volume and certain frequencies as it causes me pain. I sometimes feel this is not fair as I usually can micro manage input and church is one of the few places I need to physically block out noise. It makes me feel not included. But I remember there are people who need to wear noise-cancelling headphones more frequently than I do due to sensory sensitivity and Jesus loves me regardless if I wear noise-cancelling headphones or not.

Many autistic people do have faith: 1 in every 100 people identify as on the autistic spectrum therefore in every church congregation and community there is bound to be someone who identifies as autistic, diagnosed or undiagnosed. In spite of this I do not let Autism define me. I am Kryisia and am and have so much more to me than one label. I do not consider myself to have a disability as I believe this limits me and a good knowledge of myself means I know my own personal limits. However I do come across barriers to inclusion, feel frustrated that such barriers exist and feel disappointed when unfairly judged

(Autism is like your gender, it is just part of you not supplementary).

I'll end with a saying commonly shared in the autistic community:
"when you have met one person with Autism, you have met one person with Autism".

If you would like to find out more information about Autism, please go to:

<http://autism.org.uk>. <http://autism.org.uk/tmi>

Or email gmctreasurer100@gmail.com

Krysia Waldock

"Have faith in God"

Mark 11: 22

A MESSAGE FROM ANGEL:

"I have a baby's cot which I do not need anymore. If anyone is interested please contact me at the office on 07444 335245 or northkentmethodistcircuit@gmail.com for further information."

SPRING SYNOD ROUNDUP

The Spring 2016 Synod of the Methodist South-East District took place at Walthamstow School, Sevenoaks on Saturday 23rd April, when I was privileged to attend as a lay representative nominated by the North Kent Circuit.

Twice a year, ordained and lay people from around the District meet to hear reports on finance, governance, projects and all kinds of matters overseen by the District Council or groups which it has set up for the purpose. Generally these happen behind the scenes as far as most of us in the churches are concerned, but it is important that they receive regular scrutiny from members of the churches and circuits which make up the District. We also make time to consider matters referred for our discussion by Conference—we are a connexional church and this is a vital part of how we work. Synod is therefore a mixture of the routine—receiving reports (where possible circulated for reading in advance) and voting where necessary to agree action or confirm appointments. But the more exciting and engaging tasks are to welcome new initiatives and to get to grips with whatever thorny issue has been assigned to us in advance of discussion or report at Conference.

We were thrilled to hear the testimonies of three ministers from the District, Deacon Joy Everingham and Revs Felicity Al-Hassan and Paul Tabraham, who will be ordained at Conference in London this June. Their stories were inspiring, especially as all three described going through periods of uncertainty where they had been supported and affirmed in such a way that they were sure of God's call to ordained service. We prayed for them and wished them well on the District's behalf.

The main topic of discussion at this Synod was the controversial issue of Marriage and Relationships. Following wide consultation, the Methodist Conference in 2014 agreed that more time was needed for careful reflection before deciding whether to look

again at our understanding of marriage. Same-sex marriage is not the only consideration; there are wider issues in relation to human relationships in the modern world which may or may not lead the Church to reconsider its definition of marriage. Districts have also been asked to consider whether a statement on a Christian understanding of family life, the single person and marriage adopted by Conference in 1992 should be reviewed.

We heard a presentation outlining the scope of our discussion—not to reach a conclusion or take a vote on any outcome, but to explore the implications for individuals and for congregations if the Methodist Church were to revisit its time-honoured understanding of marriage as “one man, one woman, for life”. This it shares with most other Christian denominations and many would say it is based on biblical authority. However, we began in groups by exploring what we even understand by “biblical authority”. Our Church recognises a wide variety of expressions of this authority as outlined in the Conference statement, *A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path* (see www.methodist.org.uk).

It was clear that there was a variety of strongly held opinion even within our groups and one of the main challenges we face as a Church will be to hold together these deep differences if and when the Church decides to revisit and possibly review the traditional understanding of marriage and relationships. We live with change in society, but the Church is justifiably cautious and Methodism will take its time and seek to discern God’s will. We would expect no less.

Read more about this issue at
www.methodist.org.uk/talkingofmarriageandrelationships

Courageous in discerning their gifts

Confident in offering them

“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have become drunk, then the inferior. But you have kept the good wine until ...”

These are the words of the Director of the Feast after his first taste of a particularly fine liquid. He is not aware that it is water Jesus has turned to wine. Once he has recovered from his delight he makes his statement. You can't help wondering if his words reflect his view of life. The good gets dished up first and after that things can only get worse. Your body decays; things fall apart; the news gets more depressing. The good wine comes first and then the inferior. And yet as it says in *Educating Rita*, “There must be better songs to sing than this”.

Alternatively we can project the moment of good wine into the future. In some of my conversations I find myself saying, “If only we could get people to do A, then B would surely happen and eventually we would get to C;” C being the Promised Land, like *The Great Gatsby*. He believed that the future would culminate in an exciting climax. It was no matter that this had so far eluded us for “Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther ... And one fine morning —” But our fine words about tomorrow are just so much swimming against the tide, or as the closing words of the novel have it, “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” Surely there has to be more than projecting the moment of good wine into the future.

I think the clue is in the word I missed out. “You have kept the good wine until ...” The missing word is “Now”. Now is the moment of good wine. The word “Now” means “Just exactly now, at this very moment.” We miss out on our lives if we spend all our time gazing at the past with rose coloured spectacles and anticipating the future with rose coloured binoculars. Now, today, this moment is the time of good wine. We can only be alive in the present. The past is

gone, the future is just guessing.

I think there is much to appreciate now in the North Kent Circuit. My role includes supporting Candidates for ordained ministry and Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. I've not had to do anything to encourage this. By the grace of God it has had its momentum and has flourished on its own. I used to have some responsibility for Candidates around the whole of the South East District. This would usually mean meeting about three to five people each year. At the moment our Circuit alone has four people considering candidating for ministry in 2017; Bart Woodhouse, Emmanuel Scott, Doreen Koffie-Williams and Jason Cooke. At the last count there was one other person in the whole of the District. This follows John Colenutt candidating from us in 2015 and Ray Borrett and Jane Braund in 2014.

We have also almost been overwhelmed by the number offering to be Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. We have had a steady flow of people taking the plunge and giving their time and commitment to these valuable ministries. We are grateful to those who are already established in these roles who are willing to work alongside those in training. We are especially grateful to Monica Wilding who thought it would be a good idea to get our Circuit involved in the new course "Worship: Leading and Preaching" and very quickly found herself helping to run it not only for the Circuit but also for the District and the Region as well.

We can't necessarily read too much into the fact that a lot of people are offering themselves for different kinds of ministry in our Circuit; if you keep throwing a dice you are likely, at some point, to get three fours in a row. But it does feel as though we are creating an atmosphere in which people have the courage to discern what their gifts are and feel confident in offering those gifts.

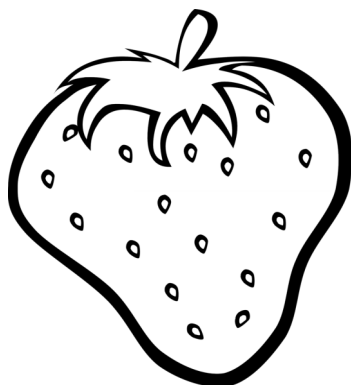
So, let's take a moment to open our awareness to the presence of God now, in this present moment. Now is the time when God is pouring out the good wine.

Tony Graff

NEWS FROM BEARSTED

Strawberry Tea on 18th June

Bearsted Methodist Church is holding a Strawberry Tea on Saturday 18th June, from 3.30pm to 5pm, in Jeanette Carlton's garden, 46 The Landway, Bearsted. We are hoping for good weather but if it is wet then the tea will be served at the church. Do come and join us.



200 years of Methodism in Bearsted

In 2018 we shall be celebrating the bi-centenary of Methodism in Bearsted. Local records tell us that in 1806 the Vicar of Holy Cross reported to the Archbishop of Canterbury; "There are now no Dissenters [in Bearsted]; there were some, but they are now gone." Clearly the dissenters who were Methodists were not gone for long! On Sunday 16th October 2016 we will hold a "Heritage Sunday". A commemorative service will be followed by lunch and the sharing of memories. Preparations are just beginning and include researching the history of Methodism in the village and drawing on people's memories. We are planning a project that will include asking people in the Church who have interesting information about Methodist activity in Bearsted to engage in a recorded conversation.

NEWS FROM HEXTABLE

We have hosted the local primary school again this year on a church visit to help them understand what church and religion is about. We give them a short presentation, answer a few questions they have (very interesting and testing!) then let them wander around and find features on their worksheets.

Easter is always a special time in the church with Good Friday and Easter day services. Churches Together hold an Open Air Witness service outside Asda on Good Friday and an Ecumenical service in the evening on Easter Day. We participate in both.

Our Boys' Brigade held their awards evening which included a performed item from each section around an Olympic theme. Very notable, was the older boys performing a synchronised swimming routine.

We celebrate our Church Anniversary as this goes to press and look forward to being entertained by Fiddle and Faff at the start of our weekend celebration. The church was built on its current site in 1896 and before that met in a smaller chapel in Swanley Village. We welcome back Rev Melvyn Cooke to take our morning service.

We are hosting the Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast where invitations will be sent out to local Councillors and Head Teachers to join us for prayers for our community. Saturday 18th June 9am.

In July our Girls' Brigade hold an evening to demonstrate the work they do and present awards to the girls. Monday 4th July 6.30pm.

This year our church away day is to Herne Bay and will end with a service at the local Methodist Church. We pray for fine weather.
Sunday 10th July

Sunday 31st July— 6pm Café Church.

Our regular weekly and monthly meetings can be found on www.hextablemethodist.org.uk—Church Groups.

NEWS FROM SUTTON AT HOME

At last! Some news from Sutton! It's been a busy few weeks... We have put up a prayer box outside the church and posted leaflets through doors in the village. We quickly had one prayer request and a comment from someone saying that they appreciate the opportunity to be able to ask for prayers. Also, if anyone is not sure where to get a pizza from, we've had a few of those leaflets in the box, so do feel free to contact us...

In April, we had a retreat day at the Hartlip Retreat Centre, which was a lovely day of fellowship and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. We looked at creeds through the ages and together, came up with a creed for Sutton. We had lunch together, a time of silence and finished off with a service. Thanks to Hartlip for providing such a peaceful space for people to meet in. Our last piece of news is that sadly, Tom and Ann Wade have moved away to live with their daughter in Plymouth; this is very much the best move for them, but we miss them. The Circuit kindly helped us with the purchase of *Singing the Faith* and the CDs that accompany the book and we are just getting used to playing them during our services.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Foundation training (for those who have not attended Safeguarding Training before) at The Brent on Thursday 21st July at 7.15 for 7.30 start.

Or St Luke's on Monday 25th July at 2.15 for 2.30 start.

Refresher training for those who attended training prior to July 2011 and anyone who would like an update at

The Brent on Thursday 21st July at 7.15 for 7.30 start

It is essential that you book your place with Sue Byard so that enough materials can be provided for all those attending. sue-byard@gmail.com 01622 735527

We pray for all those going away on holiday during the summer. We ask for safe travel. And for everyone, whether going away or staying home that there may be time to stop, and relax, and just be. Amen

Deadline for items for the Autumn Edition of Circuit News must be sent to the Circuit office by Friday 19th August. This edition will cover September, October and November if you have event dates.