



North Kent Methodist Circuit

Circuit News and Preaching Plan



inside...

**IN PRAISE OF VOLUNTEERS
WITH PRAYER AND
BACON BUTTIES
TOGETHER TO SERVE
IT'S GOODBYE FROM THEM**

Issue Three
August 2017

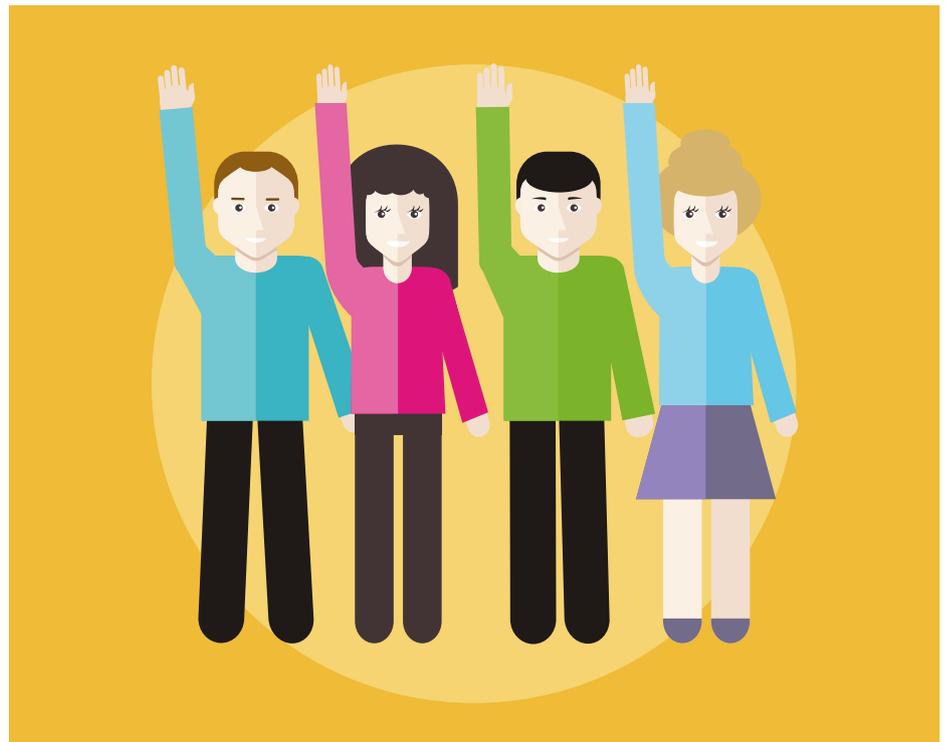
In Praise of Volunteers

How is God calling you to be involved with the Kingdom work of your church and beyond? So often we think that the only ones doing 'real' Kingdom work are the ministers and the Local Preachers, but God has many more jobs to be done – both in and outside the church! And they don't all include standing up front and talking...

Our recent Circuit Staffing Review focussed primarily on our Ministers and Lay Workers – what they do, what we need them to do, how much they cost, and how much we can afford. While that review was important, it also made us very aware again of all the volunteers we have in our churches! Without those volunteers and the thousands of hours of unpaid service they give, our churches would not be able to survive.

And while the work of God's Kingdom is not confined to what goes on in our churches, that's one place to start in the task of spreading God's Kingdom throughout all our communities. In this issue, we're focussing on the vast network of volunteers in our circuit churches. We won't be able to include every single role that every volunteer does, but we hope to give a taste of some of the Unsung Heroes in our midst. And maybe you'll be inspired to use some of your hidden talents as well!

The magazine held in your hands is very much the product of many volunteers – from Richard Vincent who oversees the process to the writers who make their



contributions; from Gillian Collins who uses her editorial skills to get the writers' copy into a usable format to Paul Skipp whose layout skills make the magazine look fresh and interesting. We do pay for a professional printer, but the distribution of the magazines is done by Chris Chare in his 'off-hours'. And the Plan, which includes the schedule of services provided by our ministers and our large band of volunteer Local Preachers is readied for print by Tony Brown's volunteer efforts... And then the local church Stewards and Pastoral Visitors distribute the copies far and wide... On and on the volunteer process goes – just with this magazine!

We hope you'll enjoy reading about some of the volunteers in our circuit. Perhaps for a future magazine, we'll focus on the volunteering that our church people do in their communities. If you've got an idea for a story, let us know. And if you've got an idea for how God needs you to use your gifts and talents, then – what are you waiting for? Get involved! Go volunteer!

Bonni-Belle

OUTREACH & MISSION

The foundation for our work in outreach and mission is in building a Discipling Culture and developing Missional Leaders. This is underwater business – lots of effort without visible reward. Like an iceberg, what we see above the water is just the tip of what is below the surface.

We have been testing our ability in Huddles during the last two years in order to understand what this means and what we need to learn in order to provide the weight for the iceberg to emerge from the water. At the recent Circuit celebration at the Brent 100 disciples gathered together to share and to worship. What a celebration it was! Worship is again the visible sign of our

loving relationship with God through Jesus. Everything we do has to be founded on our love of God which is our response to his love for us. Jesus only had 12 disciples, so what can we do in North Kent with him leading, guiding and encouraging us?

continued on page 5

Transforming lives in dangerous places



This summer a group of 14 people from the North Kent Circuit are going on a mission trip to Belo Horizonte in the South East of Brazil. We will be sharing in the mission of The Central Methodist Church Belo Horizonte and working with a good friend, the pastor of the church, Pastor Wesley.

The mission includes arranging a market and bazaar where we will sell some of the second hand clothes that we take for children in the local shanty towns. Proceeds from the sale go towards the upkeep of a local crèche run by the church (more about this later). We also go out in the streets in the evening taking soup and rolls to homeless people living in the city centre. There is a mix of homeless people in Belo Horizonte including whole families living on the street and street children. We visit churches in local shanty towns (poor communities) where we worship, testify and pray with the church members and give out basic food packs to the poorest people living in that community. We are going to a town called Santos Dumont, near Belo Horizonte, to share in mission and outreach with 400 Brazilian Methodists, offering to local people the gospel message, food, medical care, dentists and prayer.

We will also visit the crèche run by the Methodist Church in Belo Horizonte called Crèche Isabel Veiga Pinto. The crèche supports the needs of 75 nursery children, 20 babies and 40 pre-schoolers each day. The children come from four neighbouring favelas (shanty towns) where people live in desperate poverty. Due to the financial crisis in Brazil the crèche has struggled to keep the doors open. The government helps with food (partially) and pays for 15 staff, however maintenance of the building and all the equipment for the crèche is paid for by the Methodist Church in Belo Horizonte.

Since 2010 members of our churches at Tonbridge Road, Larkfield, and now Sittingbourne and Hope Street have raised around £2000 a year which has enabled the crèche to stay open. Without this help the crèche would have closed and many children would have been put at risk and exposed to the streets, abuse and drugs. The kids are mainly from single parent families and live in extreme poverty with a parent or parents having problems with drugs and alcohol. For the majority of the children the crèche is the only place where they will experience care and affection and normally receive their only meal of the day. The crèche also showers the

children and washes their clothes and looks after every need of the children who go there. Without the crèche these kids would not have any meal, just milk, bread and rice which leads to malnutrition and shortens their life span. Without the crèche many of the children would grow up to be addicts, commit crimes and end up in prison or most likely be dead by the time they are 18. This is a vital service to the community and it is incredible that we can be a part in transforming the lives of so many children.

As we go to dangerous places we ask you to pray for the team and that God will be with us and keep us safe.

Blessings, Gary and Luzia Watt

Nellie Adjaye / Dorcas Annan / Alan Connor / Sarah Petch / Margaret, Emily and Becky Darge / Samuel, Doreen and Christian Williams

<https://www.facebook.com/MethodistaCentralBH/?f=180059695376933>



Our walk with Jesus

Many question the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden but I read it not as a beginning but as a destination with only our selfishness blocking the way. The Bible is full of new beginnings and journeys. The walk with Jesus on the road to Emmaus is an example. What journey are we making as Methodist disciples in North Kent, where are we travelling to and which road will we take?

Vision for Methodists for 2025

In the circuit vision that we as a group of Methodists in North Kent have adopted, there are three crucial headings under which we capture our Covenant relationship with God and our Kingdom challenges for the next eight years at least. The vision goes beyond asking will we still be here eight years from now. Instead it focuses on what can be. The three headings are drawn from the Methodist Church's "Our Calling" which until this year were printed on our Membership Cards. So it's not just our vision but the calling for all Methodists.

Worship

In this context we don't mean, "just on Sundays" but in the whole of our lives; our relationship with God as individuals and as congregations and communities. Our lives are how we worship in the deepest sense of the word; never being apart from him, always being in his presence, knowing he is there with us at each step of the way. Jesus rested in his relationship with the Father, so he too made a new covenant with us. If we remain in him our discipleship will

bear much fruit. Here is the core to our vision. Being in covenant relationship with God through Jesus and being learners of him, doing the things he would do and saying the things he would say and listening with his ears is all there is.

Learning and Caring

Being community is absolute. As the people called Methodists, we are the Methodist community. Methodism calls us to fellowship, to loving each other, caring for each other and enjoying each other's friendship. A couple of questions for each of us: how do I put this into practice? Do I love my Christian friends? Am I a participant in fellowship or am I a wallflower?

Outreach and Mission

If we do not get the first two right then winning souls for Jesus is going to be like pushing water uphill. If we are strong in worship and learning and caring then we are going to be a people in whom the Holy Spirit is audible and visible. In a hurting world, where integrity and social justice are at a low ebb, while violence and an attitude of "the end justifies the means" prevail, the Holy Spirit will make himself heard and the world will be seeking him. We just have to learn how to share what we believe.

So what?

The "so what" is just this. What are you going to do, individually, as a community or a congregation or as community leaders to bring the news of the Kingdom to your area?

Richard Vincent

Encounter Worldwide – a short-term overseas mission programme

Encounter Worldwide is the short-term overseas mission programme that places self-funding volunteers to work in partnership with Methodist churches, communities and organisations around the world for a period of 3–12 months. The aim is for volunteers to explore faith, share skills and enrich mission for both the overseas and volunteer's church communities.

Unlike the Mission Partner programme for three years or more, Encounter Worldwide is an opportunity for shorter term mission. Volunteers experience the Methodist faith through the lens of another culture, challenging their personal faith and opening their eyes to God's mission in a new light.

Volunteers will take a journey: deciding if this is the right call for them; applying; being matched to a host; fundraising; preparing and training. They will undertake the placement, be supported in their return home and take the experience they have had to continue mission within the Methodist Church locally, regionally and nationally.

If you would like further details or want to discuss directly I would be extremely happy to arrange a phone call at a time convenient to you or alternatively visit an interested District to share more on the programme. Any feedback and thoughts on the development of this programme would be very gratefully received. A series of resources is being developed to support the programme.

Further information can be accessed through the website at www.methodist.org.uk/encounterworldwide or by contacting me on goodenr@methodistchurch.org.uk

Many thanks, Rachel Gooden,
Programme Support Officer

Mission & Advocacy Cluster
The Connexional Team

My day at the Palace



On 1st June 2017 I was honoured to be invited to be a steward at a garden party hosted by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. I was asked because I had recently obtained my Queen's Badge through my work in the Boys' Brigade at Hextable Methodist Church (4th Bromley BB).

The day started with a train journey to Victoria, then trying to find the other members who were also stewarding. We were told to meet outside Pret a Manger, only to find that there were three branches in and around the station! Once we had all reached our meeting point we walked to Buckingham Palace, where we were checked in before being taken to a meeting room for a lunch of sandwiches and tea.

We were each assigned duties before being taken to the garden. The Queen then came out to greet the volunteers,

moving down the line asking everyone where they had come from. After speaking with the Queen, we moved off to our assigned duties. My duty was at the Garden Gate, collecting the tickets from those who required disabled access to the party.

Our final duty of the day was to form a Guard of Honour in the hallway as people left the party. This was tiring on my legs, as we had to stay while the majority of the guests left – there were 8,500 people invited!

Overall, my day at Buckingham Palace is an experience that I'm never going to forget, and I'm honoured that I was chosen as one of eleven Boys' Brigade members from London District to assist the Girls' Brigade in being stewards for this occasion.

Andrew Cross

OUTREACH & MISSION

continued from page 2

Missional Leadership

Missional Leadership (Class Leadership or Team Leader) is crucial in our walk with Jesus. We need to be a people who are openly prepared to talk about their relationship with God in Jesus so we can all learn better how to share faith. In our vision, learning this skill is seen as vital to being able to bring transformation to our lives, the lives of the people we meet and to the communities with which we engage.

Often people have said to me that they are frustrated because they don't feel able to help with Mission. How often do we say wistfully that of course we have lost the younger generations? But what can we do – something must be done.

Heart Attack

Well, the time has come. We are ready to start to share with followers of Jesus the way to become disciples who can win hearts for Jesus. You see, it's in matters of the heart that we need to work. John Wesley said about his moment that he felt his heart strangely warmed. We are in the heart-warming part of the body. Our minds are already engaged but it's our hearts which govern our thoughts, feelings and actions.

Altar Call

Some of us remember how the Billy Graham crusades always included an Altar Call when the famous line "Come on down!" took on new meaning. It was a defining moment for many people as they made the public decision to follow Jesus and learn to become disciples – to allow Jesus to take over their hearts and guide them to do and say the things that Jesus would say and do if he were them. Well then, please ask him in your prayers if he is calling you now to help us with Outreach and Mission. We are seeking to meet with anyone who wants to help us in this essential part of our work. Please contact me as Circuit Steward – Equipping for Mission.

Richard Vincent



Through the night with prayer and bacon butties

There was an unusual sight on the streets of Gravesend recently. A slightly awkward crumpled looking man could be seen wearing over his normal clothes a yellow high visibility vest. He wandered rather aimlessly through the town holding occasional conversations with people and picking up the odd can that lay discarded on the ground.

If you had looked closely at him you would have noticed between the warm hat and scarf some familiar features. For it was me, spending a bit of time observing the fantastic work of the volunteer Street Pastors who provide a presence on the streets of many of our towns, giving help to those who need it and seeking to create a calming atmosphere should any tension arise.

A huddle for prayer

They met together at our Methodist Church which is their base and began the evening with worship. Some remained at the base through the evening; their role was to offer the work of the night to God. Then, those who

were to go out formed a huddle for prayer before taking to the streets. As they went about talking with people and where possible helping them I could sense them holding those they met before God. They also asked if people wanted to be prayed for by the churches of the town in their Sunday services. Many gratefully took up the invitation and shared their concerns and their needs. One man spoke of his attempted suicide. A woman spoke of her friend who had taken his own life and of her own occasional suicidal thoughts. The whole evening was surrounded by and filled with prayer.

My evening with the Street Pastors was not fast and furious. We gently went from place to place. You were however never sure what you would meet. It was nearly Halloween and there was talk about the possibility of confronting those who at the time were dressing up as scary clowns just in order to frighten people; in the event, we didn't see anyone playing this game. We were guided at one moment to a place where there had been an assault – by the time we arrived the Police had been, no arrests had been made. My sense is that sometimes there can be trouble.

offensive weapons, drugs and fire arms they have recovered. When things do flare up the Street Pastors are simply there quietly offering their presence, their help and their prayers. Those I was with were skilled at striking up conversations with people and sensitive in listening to their problems and worries. One man stopped me to thank me for the help that he had received a few weeks before. A woman said to the group "Do you believe in God?" She could see that in the work of the Street Pastors there was a glimpse of God's love in action.

I spent two hours on the streets, which took us to midnight. We went back to the base where bacon and sausage butties had been prepared to get everyone through the hours to 2am. I'm a bit of a weakling – I didn't stop for the second half. I went home to bed, but I had the butty before going home anyway.

The night had been soaked in prayer and borne along by the Holy Spirit. The work of the Street Pastors is truly appreciated and valued by the people who fill our town centres on a Friday and Saturday night. The presence of God is real in what they do. I returned home with a new gratitude to them for volunteering and responding to God's call.

Tony Graff



A glimpse of God's love

The report which the Street Pastors make of their evening's work makes sobering reading. Among other things they record how many knives,

The Small Church with the Big Heart

I would like to let you know what we have been up to at Swanscombe Methodist Church over the past few months.

In January, we had our Fun & Fellowship evening with a faith tea. It was a fun evening with quizzes, puzzles, games and a sketch with Noah trying to give his wife an umbrella! We started our Twenty Minute Church service in January, which has been very positive and an ecumenical occasion, with three churches represented and some non-church goers. This is now a regular event held on the first Tuesday of the month.

For our Lent course, we joined with the Parish Church of Swanscombe and looked at what it would be like to be in the "crowd", which provoked some unusual responses. On Good Friday, we joined together with Swanscombe Churches Fellowship (Christ Apostolic Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Swanscombe Methodist Church, and St Peter & St Paul) for a walk of witness in Swanscombe, then a short service together followed by lots of hot cross buns.

In April, we had a Songs of Praise service with Swanscombe Churches Fellowship, sang some brilliant songs and nearly lifted the roof off!

Our Coffee Mornings held on the second Saturday in the month are still our main community outreach and are well attended. Tony is often seen in the kitchen doing the drying up.

Saving and supporting

Buckets are now the order of the day, as the roof over the school room is leaking! We now have

a new project trying to raise urgent funds to get it repaired. We had saved enough to repair the ceiling and decorate the interior school room, but now that will have to wait.

We have started up a hardship fund for any friends of the church in need. This also helps the local food banks – we are supporting St Mary Greenhithe Food Pantry, Swanscombe Lunch Club and Hive Hope Food Bank, held at the Rainbow centre.

We are also supporting the White Chapel Mission by collecting clothes, toiletries, and food and by knitting blankets. So far this year the ladies have knitted 18 blankets. The picture shows one knitted by Pauline and put together by Joan.

We ask for your prayers for our new outreach mission, our Twenty Minute Church Service and for our roof project.

Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. Philippians 4:6

Janet Errington



President of the Methodist Conference visiting North Kent Circuit



The Revd Loraine Mellor will be visiting the North Kent Circuit on 21st October 2017. She will be spending the day with the circuit and will take part in a tour of Ebbsfleet and the new housing emerging there and also having lunch at Gravesend Methodist Church. We hope to finish the day at the No3 Coffee House run by the Circuit Church plant called the Beacon Church. More details will come your way soon.

The Methodist Conference has elected the Revd Loraine N Mellor as President and Jill Baker as Vice-President. Both started their year of office when the Representative Session of the Methodist Conference met in Birmingham on 24 June 2017. They succeed the current President and Vice-President, the Revd Dr Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard.

Loraine has been a presbyter since 1995 and is Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District. A member of the Church's Strategy and Resources Committee, she is coordinator of the Larger than Circuit group which is considering how the Church can best reflect the missional needs of today's Church.

"I want to encourage and enable the Church to put God back on the agenda in our communities and enthuse people to share the Good News. The Church has reached a tipping point, the time has come for us to take some risks in our mission and in our discipleship in order to help us grow," said Loraine.

www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/news-releases/the-revd-loraine-n-mellor-and-jill-baker-elected-as-methodist-president-and-vice-president-for-201718

Gary Watt

Musings of a retiring Circuit Steward

It seems a long time ago that I was first asked to consider being a Circuit Steward. It was not a job I had ever thought about or felt called to do. I remember responding that if I can see how it benefits our call to be disciples of Jesus then I would have no option but to accept. And so I became Circuit Steward, soon to be working with Superintendent Minister the Revd Melvin Cooke with special responsibility for "Equipping for Mission" in a new enlarged Circuit.

What we all learned all too quickly was that this "Circuit" made of four old circuits joining together did not exist. So our role was actually to reinvent circuit in a new form. There was not a model to follow and we did not even have too much experience of what a Circuit Steward should do.

So in six years what have I learned? Most importantly that circuit is actually a community. Circuit Stewards together with ministers and all staff try to discern the will of God for us here in North Kent by exchanging ideas with church leaders, members and the Circuit Meeting, of sharing our own prayers, dreams and ways of being Methodist Christians and bringing together those prayers into our life as Methodists and churches. Bu we also listen to the wider Connexion in the form of the District Synod and Methodist Conference, trying to ensure that in all we do, we live within and as part of the loving people called Methodists.

Slow and steady progress

I believe that as we come towards the new connexional year starting in September we are in a stronger and better place than we have ever been. We have the best team of staff we have



their members and their adherents joined together as one community.

God is calling you

Lastly, where are we on "Equipping for Mission"? Well, we have some ideas coming together which will I believe facilitate our sharing faith with our communities in a more effective way than we have been able to in the past. Look out for the new team in the coming months. I will continue to work with them and support them in every way I can, as long as I can and as long as it continues to be God's will for me.

So for the future, really consider if our Lord is calling you, even if it's in a direction in which you do not wish to travel. I truly believe God is working on our Circuit right now. He knows us and loves us and he is always showing us new opportunities. Always there will be crises and problems which divert us momentarily from God's plan. But together we keep our eyes on the prize and our trust in him who we serve. Thank you for all the support you have given me over the years and I pray that every day you know God's love for you.

Richard Vincent

had in my six years who are buying in to God's plan for us. We lay people still have to understand how we give our ministers the freedom and support they need to help us on our journey of discipleship. Staff need to think through how they can best serve our Lord in times when resources are minimal and the scale of what they are being asked to do seems overwhelming. They need our love and support continually. How often over the six years have I seen examples of Methodists who have been so passionate that they are right that they have forgotten the greatest commandment? I commend to you the love of God, unconditional, undeserving, immeasurable and timeless. So too should we love our ministers and staff.

We have a vision. The Circuit Vision is one of the most important things we have done together and will bind us together in the coming years. I pray daily that I will find it on the doors of every one of our churches, that every church leadership is asking the question about what can we do to bring this vision to reality in our Church. You see, circuit is just the churches, their leaders,



Helping the Homeless

On 18th December 2016 and 14th April 2017 (Good Friday) ten members of the Hextable Methodist Church Boys' Brigade (4th Bromley BB) went to Whitechapel Mission to cook and serve breakfast to some of the local homeless and rootless people. This meant an early start of 5am, so it's remarkable that everyone got there, considering the group was mainly teenagers.

Arriving about 6am, we were thrown straight into serving teas and coffees to the homeless people and starting to cook the food ready to start serving breakfast at 8am. Being my first experience of Whitechapel as an over 18 year old, I was allowed to cook, which though daunting, meant I could stay warm in the kitchen on a cold day. I was mainly in charge of frying eggs, which I had never done before because I



personally prefer scrambled eggs. It was a challenge to ensure there were enough eggs ready for the centre's clients, but rewarding to hear their appreciation of something that we had prepared.

A humbling experience

With everyone working together throughout the morning, we successfully managed to cook and serve a full English breakfast of sausage, bacon, fried eggs, baked beans, tomatoes, mushrooms, hash browns and toast, as well as cereals and porridge to over 200 people, before having to clean up the kitchen, dining area and toilets. Many of us found the entire experience exhausting but satisfying and deeply humbling as we were allowed to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

Matthew 25:35 speaks of meeting other people's basic needs including giving them something to eat and



drink, welcoming those who are often rejected in society and clothing them if necessary. For those who went and experienced the Whitechapel Mission "Breakfast Challenge" it was a real lesson in what it means to "be church" rather than just be part of a church.

Andrew Cross, Hextable Boys' Brigade



"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,

I was a stranger and you invited me in"

Matthew 25:35

Dartford Churches Work Together to Serve

**“...for I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was
a stranger and you welcomed me” Matthew 25**



Picture the scene. It's a cold Wednesday evening in January and it's likely to get colder still. It may well rain or even snow. Most people in Dartford are hurrying home to a nice hot meal and a cosy bed. But what if you're homeless? What if you haven't got a secure place to stay or any food to eat? Come through the doors of Spital Street Methodist Church and I'll show you.

At around 7 pm a group of people file in through the doors of the church into the light and warmth of the café area. Friendly faces welcome them and ask how their week has been. Newcomers are made extra welcome and shown the ropes. After signing in, the guests go to the sleeping area to find their sleeping bag and air mattress labelled with their name. They can leave their belongings by the bed and get a hot drink and a biscuit, read, chat or watch a film. At 8 pm everyone goes upstairs to the hall where tables have been set ready for a tasty meal. Helpings are generous and there are usually plenty of seconds. And then there's pudding!

Some guests are tired and so have a wash and settle down to sleep straight

after dinner. Others want to stay up, chat, read or play Trivial Pursuit or chess. By 11 pm the evening volunteers have been replaced by the night crew and the guests are all settling down to sleep. The night shift volunteers can catch up on work or reading and sleep on a rota basis so that two people are alert at any time.

At around 5 am some of the guests need to be up and out ready for work but most sleep through till 7 am by which time the night shift have gone and the breakfast team have arrived. After a light breakfast, the guests go on their way rested and fed and better able to face the day ahead knowing that every night until the end of March they can look forward to the same evening routine.

Spital Street is only one of seven churches in Dartford who host the Dartford Churches Winter Shelter. The Brent Methodist Church is another and the rest cover a variety of theological and ethnic backgrounds but we all share in the conviction that, while we have homeless people in Dartford, the churches have a role to play in alleviating that suffering. The volunteers come from churches across Dartford and from organisations such as Dartford Lions and the Labour Party.

With so many churches involved, each church only hosts the shelter once a week and the guests soon learn how to find the different venues. The volunteers get to know one another and enjoy meeting people, both guests and volunteers, who they wouldn't otherwise meet. Before long you stop seeing people as "homeless" and start to see them as people each with

their own talents, abilities and needs. You recognise who wants seconds of pudding, who's worried about their Mum and who's brilliant at Trivial Pursuit even in a foreign language! You might even have had a conversation about faith with a guest or another volunteer. Most volunteers love the work and some have been extremely faithful in their service.

While we have a lot of volunteers we always need more especially on the night shifts (great for insomniacs!) and breakfast shifts (ideal for early birds!). These are hardest to fill on weeknights as people need to get up for work in the morning. Several of our volunteers have taken planned time off in order to sleep after working the shelter the night before. We also would welcome help with laundry and cooking and we love to show visitors round. We start looking for help from September ready for the following January.

Hard-working volunteers make the Dartford Churches Winter shelter a safe and welcoming place for some of the most vulnerable people in the coldest months of the year.

If you'd like to know more please contact Deacon Jane Paine 01322 277205.

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13



It's Goodbye from them and Goodbye from me

When the circuit was formed and the structure of three Co-Superintendents was proposed, each of them was to have a Circuit Steward helping them. The Revd Gary Watt had Richard Vincent for Mission, the Revd Tony Graff had Monica Wilding for Pastoral and Local Preachers and the Revd Clifford Newman had me for Governance and Finance. At the end of August all three of us retire as Circuit Stewards after six years of service.

Richard, who has a Methodist family background, is a member at Union Street Church and a Local Preacher and was part of the Maidstone Circuit before we joined together. During his time with Gary, they have pioneered a number of initiatives to encourage new disciples and new groups. There have been Life Shapes, Missional Communities, Huddles and newest 3Dm workshops. He always leads people each year on the Walk to Emmaus programme as part of his personal outreach. These have all helped to create new followers of Christ and new leaders and projects. Working with Simon (who has left us) they established a very successful project at Gravesend which is flourishing. Though Richard will no longer be part of the Leadership team, I'm sure the work of making disciples will continue.

Monica again can trace her Methodist roots through Ramsgate and back to Strood and was also part of the old

Maidstone circuit at Larkfield Church. Herself a Local Preacher, she has done enormous work with the Circuit's rising number of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. The task of taking on the pilot programme for the new Local Preachers' course has consumed many hours of mentoring, marking and talking as well as chasing course members to meet their deadlines. The reward has been to see Local Preachers being accredited each year and some moving further into ordained ministry. A number of Worship Leaders, including me, have passed through courses led by Monica during her time as Circuit Steward. Stationing has also been one of Monica's responsibilities, taking up many hours of writing documents of many types, contacting people and arranging visits. I can't be the only person who has received an email written in the early hours of the morning! Lastly her work in pastoral care of our ministers, staff and other has been invaluable. Though Monica has already stood down as a

Circuit Steward, she plans to carry on with the Local Preacher courses.

The other Circuit Steward retiring at the end of August is Linda Brown from Sittingbourne Church. Linda was originally a steward without portfolio, but after a while she picked up the difficult job of property. Linda and Tony Brown have dealt with the purchase of Gary Watt's manse followed by the sale of the Albany Road manse and then the sale and clearance of Rainham Chapel. What takes up two lines of paper here, took many hours of work and facing problems with getting solicitors, councils and Methodist Finance HQ in Manchester to meet deadlines. They have also done magnificent work in preparing the manse for Robin Selmes and his family to move into shortly.

Lastly myself. I don't have a Methodist background, having only begun as a Sunday school boy at Larkfield in the 1950s. My family came from Rochester and my grandmother was a verger at the Cathedral. My wife and I with our twin sons returned to Larkfield Church in the early 1980s. Clifford asked me to join him and I looked after property and finance as the Treasurer. In finance and governance the early years of the Circuit were difficult but hopefully things are now on an even keel. Though my time as a Circuit Steward is up at the end of August, you haven't let me escape, as I'm staying on as Treasurer for another year.

Alan Wood



