



 North Kent Methodist Circuit

grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



inside...

A LIFETIME OF LEARNING
STANDING ON HOLY GROUND

Issue Eight
November 2018

A lifetime of learning

“I’ve lived so long, and I’m only in Kindergarten.” That was the mournful report of our eldest son many years ago. A few weeks back some children were relating which year of school they were in: third, sixth, eighth. I reflected that I’m currently in my 26th year as a student! I feel a little sad that soon I’ll have a ‘terminal’ degree – which sounds like a terminal disease. But I won’t stop learning, for as soon as we stop learning, we tend to stop growing – and really living – and so, perhaps to stop learning is to die.

John Wesley was a strong proponent of life-long learning. His mother, Susanna Wesley, was herself a very well-educated woman of her time and diligently taught each of her ten children who lived past their infancy. They learned Latin, Greek and Classical studies such as Rhetoric, Mathematics and Poetry. They learned to read from the Bible and to pray from daily family devotions. John and his brothers continued their education at Oxford and John became a Fellow of Lincoln College. Even after he left academia to concentrate fully on raising up the Methodist societies, he insisted on his preachers and lay members taking every opportunity to increase their own learning. It’s no accident that he developed the Methodist Book Room which published tracts and volumes to distribute widely for the education of Methodists throughout the land. At the recent Oxford Institute (a gathering of Methodist scholars from around the world every five years), we were reminded that it is essential for Methodists to continue to avail themselves of every opportunity to keep learning!

Learning, of course, is not all about academia. Learning is also about reflecting on the experiences of our

living and recognising when and how those experiences have or need to change us. It’s also about listening to the experiences of others and extracting the bits that can teach us. It’s about developing our senses so that we are fully aware of God in our midst and where God might be leading us next.

This issue focusses on the Learning that has taken place across the congregations of our circuit in recent months. We hope it will inspire you to keep learning as well!

Bonni-Belle Pickard

A name change

When the North Kent Circuit was established some seven years ago, the ‘Circuit News’ became one of the ways to communicate with each other. Until last year, it was an occasional A5 publication photocopied and distributed to the churches. When upgraded to a full magazine format, it carried on the ‘Circuit News’ title, but increasingly we were aware that it rarely contained ‘news’ because of the considerable time delay in preparation, publication, and distribution.

The editorial/publication team gave this some thought. Our main aim is to provide communication across the circuit that will inform and hopefully inspire our churches to be even more effective in their local communities. It builds on the ‘connexional’ aspect of Methodism that reminds us we’re stronger together. We decided to seek another title that would reflect that ‘connecting’ of the circuit as well as the primarily agricultural focus of North Kent – and perhaps even the ‘sacramental’ part of being Methodists. “Grapevine” was suggested, and that’s what we’ve settled on as the new title. ‘Taste and see’ the ‘new wine’ that’s inside this issue!



A Ministry of Flowers

At Hartlip Chapel and Retreat Centre we believe that flowers have a special ministry of their own. We are particularly blessed to have, in our congregation, some very talented flower growers and arrangers. This year our gardens, lovingly tended by Andy and Glenis Davison, have been a mass of vibrant colour and perfume and there have often been appreciative comments recorded in the visitors' book.

We have learned that the gardens have become an extension of the Retreat Centre, in effect a sacred space where people have found much needed peace, tranquility, solace, sunshine and shade.

Inside the Chapel, throughout the year, our congregation has been able to admire some stunning floral displays. We have learned that flowers can lift the spirits and provide a fragrant focus for

prayerful contemplation. Moreover, they are there to remind us of the wonder and beauty of creation.

So, let the flowers speak for themselves...

Heather Gallagher



A New Minister in the Circuit: Robert Zachar

New churches, new schools, living in a British Methodist manse, CPD, DBS, school uniforms, and multi-cultural Britain – these are all challenges to which the Zachar family have been adjusting over the past several weeks since they moved to Sittingbourne. Perhaps by now you have met Robert, his wife Rachel and their four children: Rebecca, Daniel, Katarina, and Emilia. Originally the family came from Slovakia, though for the past five years they lived in Horncastle in Lincolnshire, where Rachel was born. Now they are settling well in Sittingbourne.

Robert and the children were all born in Slovakia. He became a Christian a quarter of a century ago when what was then Czechoslovakia threw off its communist government. It was a heady time when people were eager to hear about the religions that had been suppressed during the communist years. Robert went to a Methodist seminary



for his ministerial studies, then became a probationer in the Central Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1995. He continued as a minister in several areas of Slovakia, eventually becoming a district superintendent.

As Robert and Rachel's marriage was cross-cultural, they had always assumed that at some point they would live in England so that their children would understand both ways of life. The decision to move came in 2013,

when Emilia was just a baby. The family moved to Horncastle where Robert served as a local preacher but worked outside of the church for those five years. Robert's parents and siblings still live in Slovakia, so the family goes back to visit several times each year.

Here in the North Kent Circuit, Robert has pastoral charge of the Sittingbourne and Newington congregations. He enjoys working with people and hearing their stories. He is especially interested in learning more about English culture and spirituality. Being in a multi-faith culture is a new experience, and he says finding the right words to use to describe (and not offend) different types of people is a big challenge!

Robert is especially impressed with the 'amazing energy' of the older people in his congregations who are working enthusiastically in all aspects of church life. We are grateful to have his listening heart and gentle wisdom in our midst.



What churches need to learn about autism

Krysia Waldoock is an autistic PhD researcher at the Tizard Centre, University of Kent exploring autism and faith communities. Here are some of her thoughts on what we in the churches need to learn about autism.

Autistic people can be spiritual

There is a myth that autistic people do not have feelings or cannot be spiritual. This is a gross misunderstanding, as autistic people are human! Because autistic people, regardless of their support needs, can wish to join a church and worship, it is vital this myth is laid to rest.

Autistic people reflect another part of God's creation and are just as loved by God

Remember Galatians 3:22: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." This means we are all eligible for Jesus' love. Also remember God made humans in his own image – as recorded in Genesis; therefore we are all, including autistic people, made in God's image. This actually goes much further than 'just autistic people'.

Barriers we might and do put up, making church and church life more challenging for autistic people

I define autism as: 'a neurological difference meaning the individual

perceives the world differently, including senses and communication'. Processing the world differently can mean we meet barriers, for example sensory input (e.g noise levels) and different communication needs. Our attitudes towards others forms a part of how we come together as a faith community, how we worship and how we show God's love.

Engaging with autistic people is part of our mission and responsibility

If we say 'all are welcome' in our signage, then we need to ensure we follow through. Some of the best people to guide us in our inclusive practice are those who experience the world differently. Referring to the title above, this means church groups need to enter into dialogue with autistic people.

Also, please *want* to include us. Engage with us not to satisfy an 'equality and diversity' tickbox, but to actually listen to what we have to say. We are told to 'love one another' – listening and reflecting on what barriers we put up is part of loving one another.

If you would like more information about Krysia's work, please email her at kew48@kent.ac.uk and/or follow her on Twitter at [@krysiawally](https://twitter.com/krysiawally)



Are you a Talker or a Thinker?

I believe that I am constantly learning through my role as a Youth Pastor. One of the main things that I'm currently learning is the different types of learning and teaching styles there are, and how as humans we respond to things differently depending on our lives and personality.

I myself know what engages me and which activities I find interesting and helpful whilst learning, so naturally I find it easy to relate to young people who have a similar process. I am a talker – I think best aloud. I also enjoy writing and find the process of journaling really helpful. But not all my young people are like me; they are all completely different. Some are talkers, but some are thinkers. Some can happily answer questions on the spot, whilst others need time to contemplate. Some like lots of different activities, some like to sit, some need to be doing something with their hands to help them concentrate. I am learning how to work with young people, who have a learning style that I am not used to.

There is an added challenge when all these different learning preferences are present in one group, and as a leader you have to do a variety of things to try and engage everyone.

As I get to know my young people more, I am recognising in them what sort of persons they are and how best they learn. I don't always get it right, but with God's love and patience, I am slowly learning new skills. I hope to be able to continue supporting and guiding these amazing young people I have the privilege of working with.

Helen Young
Youth pastor (Third Avenue Church & Community and The Chinese Church)

Safeguarding: a responsibility for us all



Safeguarding children, young people and more vulnerable adults as we interact with each other has been part of our church life for some time now, and those undertaking roles and offices are required to undergo regular training and updating. But it is also something all of us need to be aware of as part of our discipleship.

What have we learned?

About people's approach to Safeguarding

That people appointed to a church role or official position are often unaware of their responsibility to undertake safeguarding training.

That there is still a view that safeguarding training is not a priority and that it's not really that important because "that sort of thing" would not happen in our church.

There is confusion about the difference between the requirement to have a DBS check and safeguarding training.

There is an expectation that safeguarding training will be provided in every church (well at least in 'my church') and a reluctance to travel any distance to attend training.

From the training programme

Many people have attended safeguarding training and although some have attended reluctantly almost all of the feedback has been positive. Those who have already been trained in other places for work or voluntary roles have often said that the Methodist training programme is much better and more useful.

We have learned that the training gives people a good awareness of the issues involved in making our churches safe for all who come to them and an understanding of when to be concerned about a situation and what to do about their concerns.

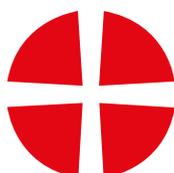
From the Methodist Church Past Cases Review

Very significant insights have come out of the Past Cases Review.

- People who have abused or are likely to abuse come to churches where they are welcomed and few questions are asked.
- Abuse does happen in churches and it can happen in your church.
- Abusers can be very manipulative.
- Abusers can be ordained or lay people and are often deeply trusted.
- People in churches don't believe that abuse could happen in their church.

We have learned that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in the church and we all need to have an awareness of potential issues and how to respond to them.

Sue Byard



Important warning:

A couple of churches in the Circuit have reported people coming to church and telling very convincing stories of need. They have asked for financial assistance to help them over the next few days until they receive money they are expecting. On at least one occasion a small group targeted a vulnerable person and took them to a cash machine to withdraw a significant amount of money for them. They have not been seen again and the money has not been repaid. The police have been informed.

Please be aware that all churches have a fund (usually called the Benevolent Fund) which can be used to help in genuine cases of need. Your church stewards, church treasurer and minister will know how to access this money.

I know it is difficult to refuse to help someone but we need to be aware that there are people who will look to exploit others willingness to help and to be cautious about how we respond. Please do not give anyone who approaches you any money yourself. Please be vigilant and if you have concerns share them with your church stewards or minister or the Circuit Safeguarding officer.

Standing on Holy Ground

The members of Hartlip Chapel were faced with a dilemma in the 1990s, for there were those who saw the Chapel as a redundant building and dead in the water. But a church is not always what it seems to be. Its design, character and location might point to a different or unique aspect of mission.

We learned to trust God, to put our faith in him and to develop our vision. God was faithful to us and 18 years since its opening, hundreds of visitors from all walks of life, different denominations and other faiths have experienced the calm, safety and spirituality of our Retreat Centre.

From the first moments of opening Hartlip as a Retreat Centre, we recognised the deep spiritual significance of the place. Almost on day one, a visiting Catholic Deacon stopped me at the entrance to the church, put his hand in my shoulder and said, “We are standing on Holy Ground”. That moment has never left me and has regularly reminded me that Hartlip is indeed a very special place.

We felt, from the outset, that it might be wise to follow the ancient rule of Saint Benedict in relation to the welcome and hospitality of visitors. Thus, we offered Hartlip as a gift to the community and no charges were set. Heather and I took on the role of coordinating the visits and acting as ‘Guestmasters’.

From the start we learned that we were not simply keyholders, but were there to welcome visitors, provide hospitality and refreshments on arrival and to give as much time as it takes to settle them



into the Centre. We also learned that this is not always easy! Welcoming large groups can be fairly stressful, trying to encourage safe parking whilst answering questions and explaining the general housekeeping and safety rules. In contrast, welcoming individuals can sometimes result in being on hand to pray with them and even provide spiritual direction.

Over the years we have also learned that the pattern of visits has changed. Until recently, fairly large groups were the norm. Sadly, and we think that this may be a reflection of modern life, the larger group visits are fewer in number.

Organisers tell us how difficult it is to bring large groups of people together because of their varying daily pressures and responsibilities.

Interestingly, however, and perhaps for those very same reasons, the number of individuals seeking silence, escape and prayer time has increased in recent times.

Finally, we have learned that the best way to discover how God is moving in this place called Hartlip is to reflect on the words left in our visitors’ book over the years.

As a congregation, we have fulfilled our promise to pray before and after each visit and again during our annual Retreat Sunday in October. Every visit is listed and read out in the form of a prayer during the evening service.

Ultimately, we have learned to pray for the silence, the peace, the visions, the worries, the healing, the answers and God’s blessing on all those who visit our Centre. Here are some of their reactions:

“A place where God meets with his people and his people meet with him”

“Thank you for this beautiful spiritual oasis amongst this world of spiritual desert”

“So peaceful I could eat it!”

“A wonderful day, many answers to prayers. Time to let go and a time to listen. Thank you so much. And the sun shone, and the Son shone!”

Derek Gallagher
Joint Co-ordinator, Hartlip Retreat Centre

Praying for Wisdom

“If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to you.”
James 1:5

Seven years ago, feeling completely

inadequate as a new Circuit Steward in our new circuit, I prayed for wisdom. What happened?

Firstly, I went to Warrington for a course called Connected Worship. I learnt

about the importance of story and testimony, and observing God at work in everyday life. And I experienced the wonderful New Song Café Church!

continued on page 8

North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan December 2018 - February 2019

	DECEMBER					JANUARY				FEBRUARY				
	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	
	1st in Advent	2nd in Advent	3rd in Advent	4th Advent	1st of Christmas	The Epiphany	1st in Ordinary	2nd in Ordinary	3rd in Ordinary	4th in Ordinary	5th in Ordinary	6th in Ordinary	7th in Ordinary	
BEARSTED	10.30	Byard	Pickard hc	G Harris	Pickard	us @ Union Street	LA	Pickard hc/cov	Markova	Pickard	Campbell	Daley-Lee hc	Lee	Pickard
BURHAM	10.30	Gray	Markova	Newell	Daley-Lee hc	X	M Harris	Wilding	S Pooley	Tolhurst hc	Byard	LA	German	Daley-Lee hc
CHINESE	1.30	Yu hc	Yu	Beh	Yu cs	LA	Beh	Yu hc/cov	Mao	Yu	Yu hc	Yu/Hellyer	Yu	Beh
DENE HOLM	11.00	Rowland	Scott	LA cs	Graff hc	S Pooley	Grady hc/cov	Force	Graff	Robb	Prater	M Harris	G West hc	A Pooley
ECCLES	10.30	Watton	G West	Daley-Lee	Byard	Willing	Waldock	R Vincent	Daley-Lee hc/cov	LA	G Harris	Darge	Daley-Lee	E Vincent
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	Selmes	LA	Selmes hc	Stunell	M Harris	Selmes hc/cov	Gallagher	Selmes	Selmes	German	Selmes hc	Selmes p	Watton
GRAVESEND	11.00	Downs	Graff	Graff hc	S Smith	Robb	Graff hc/cov	Downs	LA	Graff	Downs	Graff hc	Myles	Scott
	6.30	Campbell hc	X	Graff 4pm	X	X	X	X	us @ CPC	X	Graff hc	X	X	X
HARTLIP	6.30	Selmes hc	Selmes cs	us @ Gillingham 10.30	Markova	German	LA	Selmes hc/cov	Watton	Graff	Bowerman	Selmes hc	Davies	Gallagher
HEXTABLE	10.30	Campbell pfs/ts	Packham nat	LA	LA cs	Campbell hc	Force aa	Burch	Rowland	Campbell hc	Gray pfs	Campbell hc	S Pooley	Paine
	6.30	LA	Graff hc	Packham 6pm chr	LA	LA ca	Graff	Graff hc	Burch Church Lite	Scott	Campbell hc	Rowe	Burch Church Lite	Graff
HOPE STREET	10.30	Gallagher	Morgan hc	LeMasonry	Prince hc	Morgan	Bowerman	LeMasonry hc	Davies	Morgan	Long	Dean hc	LeMasonry	Collins
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA ca	LA nat	Corbyn ang/hc	Baptist	ang hc	LA ca	E Vincent	Corbyn ang/hc	Baptist	LA ca	Newell	Corbyn ang/hc	Baptist
LARKFIELD	10.00	Daley-Lee hc	Myles	LA nat	Selmes	Daley-Lee	LA	Daley-Lee hc/cov	Newell	Lee	Daley-Lee hc	Pickard	Byard	Wilding
NEWINGTON	9.30	Zachar hc/cov	Collins	Brown	Zachar/M.Smith	LA	Wade	Zachar hc	M Smith	Darge	Zachar hc	Prince	M Smith	S Pooley
ST ALBAN'S	10.00	ang hc	ang aa	ang	ang	ang	Tolhurst hc	us/cov @ St. David's	ang	Grady	ang hc	ang aa	ang	ang
ST DAVID'S	10.00	ang hc	ang	Tolhurst hc	ang	ang	ang hc	us/cov @ St. David's	ang hc	ang	ang hc	Grady	ang hc	ang
ST LUKE'S	10.30	Wilding	Selmes hc	Willing	R Vincent	Trott	Davies	Selmes hc/cov	German	Paine	Selmes hc	Brown	Gallagher	Selmes
ST WILLIAMS	10.00	Grady	ang hc	ang	ang hc	ang	ang	us/cov @ St. David's	ang	ang hc	ang	ang hc	ang	Tolhurst hc
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	LA	Zachar	Zachar hc	Davies	Brown	Zachar hc/cov	Collins	Zachar	Zachar	Wade	Zachar	Zachar hc	Campbell
SPITAL STREET	10.30	Graff aa	Paine	Campbell	Gray	Graff hc	A Pooley	Packham	Paine	LA	Graff hc	Paine	Rowland	Force
STOKE	10.30	Willing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Stunell	X	X	X
STROOD	10.30	Davies	Yu	Stunell	Yu	Collins	Daley-Lee	Yu hc/cov	Willing	Trott	LA	Tolhurst hc	Robb	Rowe
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	M Harris	Force	LA cs	Packham	LA	Gray	Graff hc/cov	G West	Downs	Wilding	Burch	Packham	Graff hc
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	Shepherd	Daley-Lee fs	Yu hc	LA nat	us @ Union Street	Myles	G West fs	Yu hc/cov	LA	Shepherd	LA pfs	Yu hc	R Vincent
	6.30	Graff hc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	TBA	X	X	X
EBBSFLEET	10.30	Woodhouse	Woodhouse	us @ Eastgate	Woodhouse	X	Woodhouse	Woodhouse	us @ Eastgate	Woodhouse	Woodhouse	Woodhouse	us @ Eastgate	Woodhouse
THE BRENT	10.30	LA fs	Campbell hc	Burch	Scott	Lee	Paine fs	Byard	Campbell hc/cov	A Pooley	Paine	S Smith	Campbell hc	Coates
UNION STREET	10.30	Pickard hc	G Harris	Pickard Messy Ch	E Vincent	LA	Pickard hc/cov	Shepherd	Pickard Messy Ch	Myles	Pickard hc	Markova	Pickard Messy Ch	Waldock

aa All-age	bb Boys Brigade	cl Church Lite	gs Gift Service	jca Junior Church Anniversary	om Overseas Missions	ss Sectional Service	tr Team Rector
ac Advent Carols	cf Cafe Church	cov Covenant Service	hf Harvest Festival	ls Lent Service	pp Prayer and Praise	t Teaching	un United Nations
ang Anglican (CoFE)	cs Carol Service	ecu Ecumenical Service	ht Hextable Team	lc Lessons & Carols	pf Parade & Family	tp Themed Preaching	us United Service
as All Souls	ca Church Anniversaries	ehc Extended Communion	hc Holy Communion	LA Local Arrangement	p Parade	(t) Transport Required	ys Youth Service
b Baptism	cir Circuit Service	fs Family Service	hm Home Missions	nat Nativity	ps Praise Service	ts Toy service	

What's it like to be a Worship Leader?

Frightening, frustrating, brilliant, hard work, rewarding – all of these and much more. Many, many years ago I gave a talk in a service. Afterwards I vowed that I would never take part in another service! It was horrendous, so nerve-racking that I never wanted to take part in a service again. But you should never say never to God.

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Romans 11:29

About 12 years ago I felt the call to attend a Worship Leading course. This was held at The Brent Church and one of the mentors was Graham Rowland – sorry, but I can't remember who the others were. It took place over approximately six to eight weeks, with no course work involved. It was hands-on and learning what was required of a Worship Leader.

Although I was now an accredited Worship Leader, I still was not very involved in services. I started leading a few prayers now and again. But God had other ideas.

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart."
Psalm 27:14

With God's help and a lot of prayer I can now lead a full service. It still can be a lot of hard work, but very rewarding. Sometimes I struggle to use the lectionary reading, but with a few more prayers God will guide me, not always towards what I thought I would talk about. Sometimes I have started on a service only to be told to do something else. I still get nervous before a service and I have to be at church early to make sure everything is ready even when I'm not leading the service. I like to be able to help the Minister or Local Preacher, and to offer my services in whatever capacity so that the service will run smoothly and give glory to God.

"Give to the Lord the glory due to his name." 1 Chronicles 16:29

God has plans for all of us. We often don't know what these are and sometimes we have to wait a long time for these plans to be revealed to us.

"Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good; his love is eternal."
1 Chronicles 16: 34.

**Janet Errington
Worship Leader at
Swanscombe Church**



For the next issue:

Please send contributions as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to nkmc.magazine@gmail.com to arrive by *Wednesday 12 December 2018*. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.

Praying for Wisdom

continued from page 6

Next I attended a course for preachers at Central Hall, Westminster. There I learnt the importance of telling one's faith story, simply – in the time it takes for a match to burn!

Later I found myself at a Methodist Faith and Order Conference. Little did I know that this was a gathering of the biggest brains in Methodism! I learned that God values me, even me, just as I am!

About the same time, I was at a meeting to discuss the possibility of being involved in the pilot scheme for *Worship: Leading and Preaching*. In that company of dog collars and theology degrees, I was feeling somewhat inadequate about becoming a course tutor, declaring "But I'm not a theologian!" Firmly I was put into my place: "You think about God, don't you! So, you are a theologian!"

Watching a film, *Evan Almighty*, I was struck by a quotation from "God": If someone prays for patience, you think God gives them patience? Or does he give them the opportunity to be patient?

And I realised – when I asked for wisdom, God answered by giving me opportunities to learn wisdom.

So I took on the pilot scheme and had the privilege of leading seven students from around the South East District through to accreditation as Local Preachers. Now a few years on, I keep discovering new and wonderful things in the course, insights about how God is always at work in the Church; how the gospel is for all, with no exclusion; how we are all unique, with our unique gift, and experiences. Above all, I learned how we need to tell the story – his story and our story – time and again, in different ways, in different places.

I'll refrain from advising: "Be careful what you pray for!" Rather: pray boldly, and ask and you will receive. Keep praying, trust God. As God calls you, so God will equip you.

So think about trying W:L&P. It's a demanding but really worthwhile course. Speak to me, if you want to know more.

Monica Wilding