



North Kent Methodist Circuit

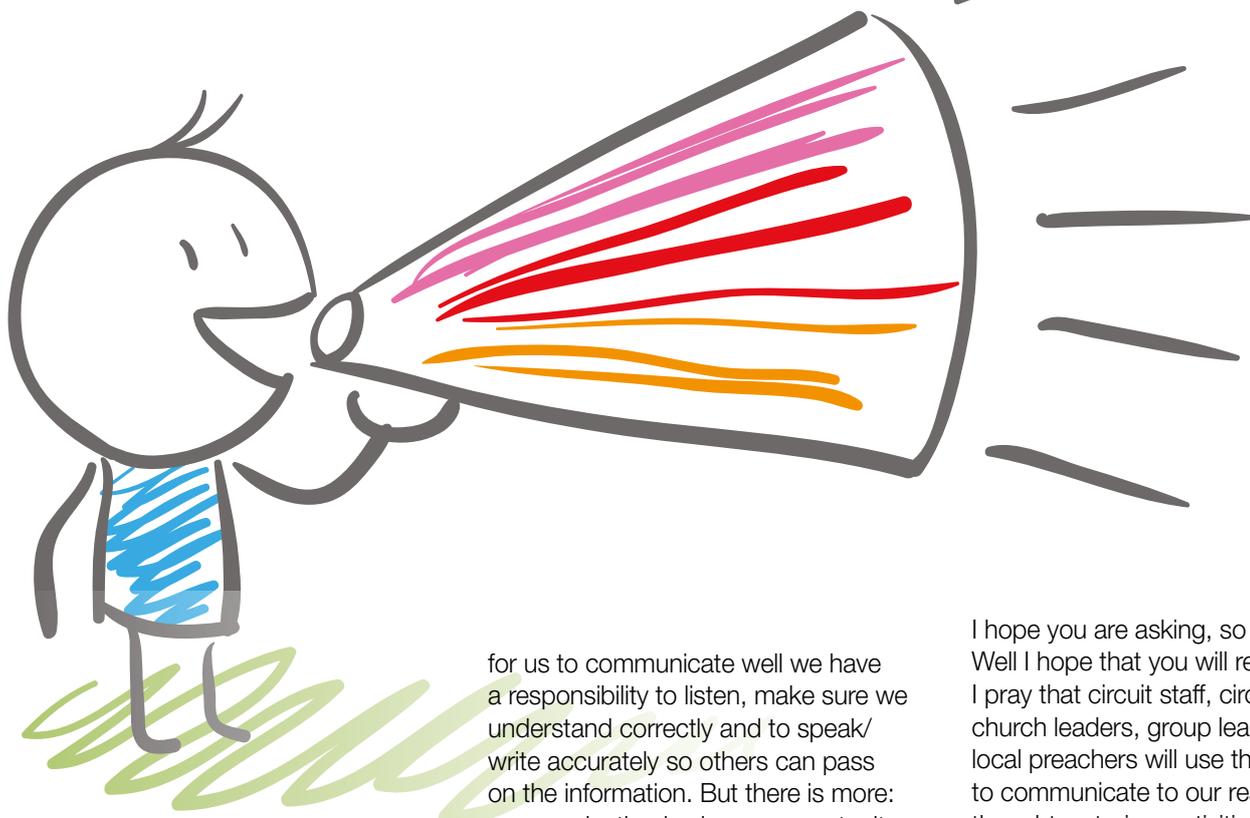
Circuit News and Preaching Plan

inside...

**A NEW BEGINNING
METHODIST MODERN
ART COLLECTION!
LET'S REINVENT
METHODISM**

Issue One
February 2017

A New Beginning...



As Circuit Stewards we try to listen and understand what people are saying to us, but feedback is often uncomfortable. One of the common threads I hear is that the "Circuit" does not communicate well or sometimes at all. So here in the first edition of our new Circuit quarterly magazine we are having a new beginning, a small response to the need for better communication. But first, I wonder what we really mean by communication. It's a big word with a wide meaning.

When I think of communication it brings to mind several analogies. For example, spaghetti with bolognese sauce. Some add grated Parmesan cheese to the spaghetti. But it's always a puzzle how we draw the threads of a tangle of spaghetti into a mouthful of food. Some cut it up and use a spoon to shovel the pieces into the mouth. Others wind it carefully around a fork and are left at the end with a mixture of sauce and meat on their plate. Channelling information from one mouth to another is complex, particularly when information is flowing in many directions.

As we think and pray about communications we are reminded that

for us to communicate well we have a responsibility to listen, make sure we understand correctly and to speak/write accurately so others can pass on the information. But there is more: communicating is also an opportunity to share one's inner and deeper thinking and so one of our prayers for this magazine is that you will contribute your thoughts, prayers, inspirations, news, experiences, humour and most of all your deeper inner heart-wrenching love of God and your love for your fellow women and men, young, old, or in the middle – wherever your story takes you.

Another way of looking at communication is like bridges and roundabouts and connections. At any time in the chain of communication we can be one of these. Think of people as roundabouts with many connections. Each of us is a source of information with contacts to other sources of information. To be able to communicate well to our network of friends, it isn't sufficient to wait for the information to be fed to us on a spoon, we need to go searching, so we are a constant source of new news – excuse the repetition for emphasis. Sometimes we need to be a bridge where the news can cross a major obstruction like a river. So we learn that each of us, members and congregations in our circuit, have a part to play in making the "Circuit" better at communicating.

I hope you are asking, so what? Well I hope that you will respond. I pray that circuit staff, circuit leaders, church leaders, group leaders and local preachers will use this magazine to communicate to our readers their thoughts, stories, activities, plans and dreams. I invite you our readers to do the same. Please pray for it daily with a passion and determination; we need your constant prayers.

We will report in each magazine how many contributions we received and how many were printed. Our special thanks to Gillian Collins as copy editor, Paul Skipp as layout editor, graphic designer and print buyer, Lynn for coordinating in the circuit office and Martin Smith for coordinating with the web site. We also thank Tony Brown for the design, layout and printing of the circuit preaching plan. Bless you all for your enthusiasm and giving so willingly and freely of your time.

And so we can together say that this is a new beginning, albeit a small one, to our plans to respond to your call for better communications from "Circuit". Please help us to make it ongoing and successful. There will be other strands to our plan which we will introduce in the coming months. So not the end but a beginning. Let's begin to get our spaghetti junction untangled.

Richard Vincent,
Circuit Steward for Equipping for Mission

Firework cakes and festive occasions at The Brent

The news we are bursting to share is that in November we had our very first Messy Church, and despite plenty of advertising, it was with trepidation that we awaited the arrival of ... children!

We had prepared a variety of craft activities on the theme of light, including Chinese lanterns, stained glass windows, firework cakes and a huge splatter painting. And the children and families came! We had almost 30 people present on the first occasion, and they all had a wonderful time and asked when the next one was.

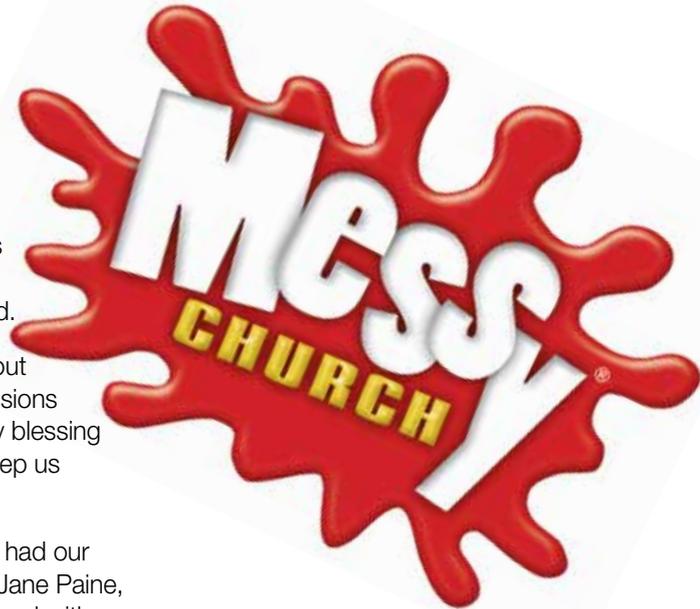
The second one on Saturday 10 December was on the theme of Christmas, and this time there were 42 children and adults present. If you have ever sat in a church with little children singing Little Donkey and

praying around the Christmas tree, you will understand the emotions that we experienced.

We feel that having stepped out in faith after months of discussions and deliberations, God is truly blessing our Messy Church. Please keep us in your prayers.

On Sunday 11 December we had our Carol Service led by Deacon Jane Paine, and once again we were blessed with the uplifting music of the Emerald Steel Pan Drums. The church was packed to capacity and it was a wonderful family celebration, followed by hot tea and mince pies.

On 17 December a group of us went to sing carols with the residents of Priority Mews Nursing Home. Later, there was



our Crib Service on Christmas Eve, followed of course by our Christmas celebration the next morning, when all the hard work was over and we could just praise God and joyously celebrate our Lord's birth.

May God bless you and your families in the year ahead.

EVANGELISM

Woolly Creations

Orpington Methodist Church, London

More than 800 angels have been knitted to spread good news and Christmas cheer in.

Members, friends and family of Orpington Methodist Church have joined hundreds of churches across the UK (including St Andrew's, Basingstoke and West Harton, South Shields) to take part in the Christmas Angel project, which involves knitting hundreds of little angels and leaving them around the local village, town or city for others to enjoy.

Following along a similarly cuddly theme,

Norton Methodist Church was one of many congregations to hide soft-toy sheep across its town, appealing for help in getting their lost flock back to church in time for their Christmas services.

And staying with the woolly theme, a few churches have been getting in the festive mood by knitting their own Christmas trees, like this one by Tilehurst Methodist Church, Reading.

Website: Christmas Angels
www.christmasangel.net



Tonbridge Road offers warmth and welcome to homeless people

December is a busy month in the life of most churches. Tonbridge Road is no different with Advent, Boys' Brigade/ Girls' Brigade open evening, a Nativity Service, a Girls' Brigade fund-raising tea, the Carol Service and Christmas itself.

The new year is a time for many to relax a little after a busy few weeks but there is little chance of that at Tonbridge Road. For 12 Sundays from the 8th January the church will be a venue for Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter when we welcome up to 15 rough-sleepers for a hot meal, social

contact and a bed for the night in warm surroundings. The shelter also helps them to find employment and permanent accommodation.

It is not just our guests who benefit. Our volunteers, who come from a variety of churches and none, have an opportunity to discover why some members of society become homeless. The effect has been to show that there is no stereotypical rough-sleeper. Some have been homeless for a long time whereas others have fallen on hard times due to a combination of circumstances.

Last year one of our former guests was a volunteer, having been found a job and a place to live.

An important lesson to be learned from the shelter is that "there but for the grace of God go I". Any of us could fall on hard times and it is due to the work of the shelter and similar schemes that some of the difficulties of winter can be relieved. In an ideal world there would be no homeless people in our towns and villages but until that happens long may the work of winter shelters continue.



Our thanks to **The Buzz!** for contributing to our Magazine

The Buzz aims to share good news from across the Connexion. The stories included illustrate just some of the different ways in which the Church is working out the four aspects of Our Calling: Worship, Learning & Caring, Service and Evangelism.

If you have any stories to share, why not get in touch?

God bless, Toby Fairclough Media Officer

For more good news stories every day, be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Come and see the Methodist Modern Art Collection!

◀ Christ's entry into Jerusalem
by Norman Adams

▼ The washing of the feet
by Ghislaine Howard



This collection owned by the Methodist Church UK is the world's largest collection of faith-related paintings by contemporary artists, and it's on display in its entirety at the Beaney Art Gallery in Canterbury during Spring 2017. The collection was begun in the 1960s by a couple of Methodists who were interested in contemporary art with Christian themes and wanted Methodists to have an opportunity to better understand how such artwork relates to one's faith. After they died, the collection was gifted to the British Methodist Church along with an endowment for purchasing further paintings to keep the collection up-to-date.

The collection now contains more than 40 works, including some by well-known artists such as Graham Sutherland, Eric Gill, Elisabeth Frink, William Roberts, and Patrick Hearn. Some depict scenes from Jesus' life and teaching; others develop

themes from scriptural texts. I have had the opportunity to see parts of the exhibition in previous years and found that encountering the paintings in their original format (ie, not in a reproduced format) is quite moving!

The exhibition in Canterbury will contain all the paintings of the collection and be housed in a professional art gallery – which doesn't often happen! Our circuit has booked a special viewing on **Saturday 1 April, at the Beaney Art Gallery**, 18 High Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2RA. We are hiring a coach which will come from Dartford, through Larkfield and Maidstone that morning (timings, venues, and costing to be announced), arriving at the gallery around 10.30. You are invited to bring along a packed lunch or purchase a sandwich locally. We will probably leave the gallery around 2.00 pm for the return coach trip. Contact Angel in the circuit office to book your place on the coach.

Those coming from the Sittingbourne area should contact Tony Brown for other transportation details. Find out more about the Methodist Modern Art Collection at www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/mmac

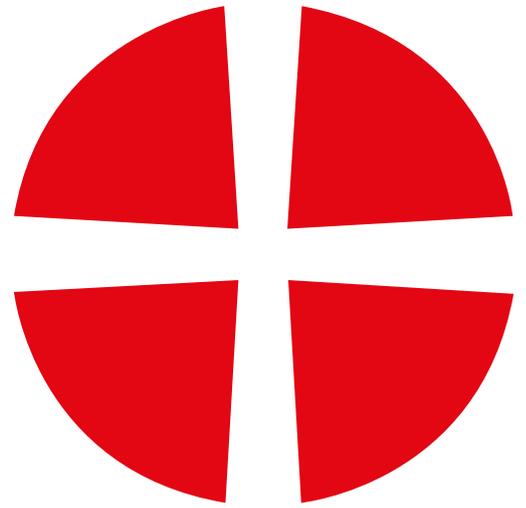
Bonni-Belle Pickard



▲ The Empty Tomb
© Richard Bavin

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Let's Reinvent Methodism



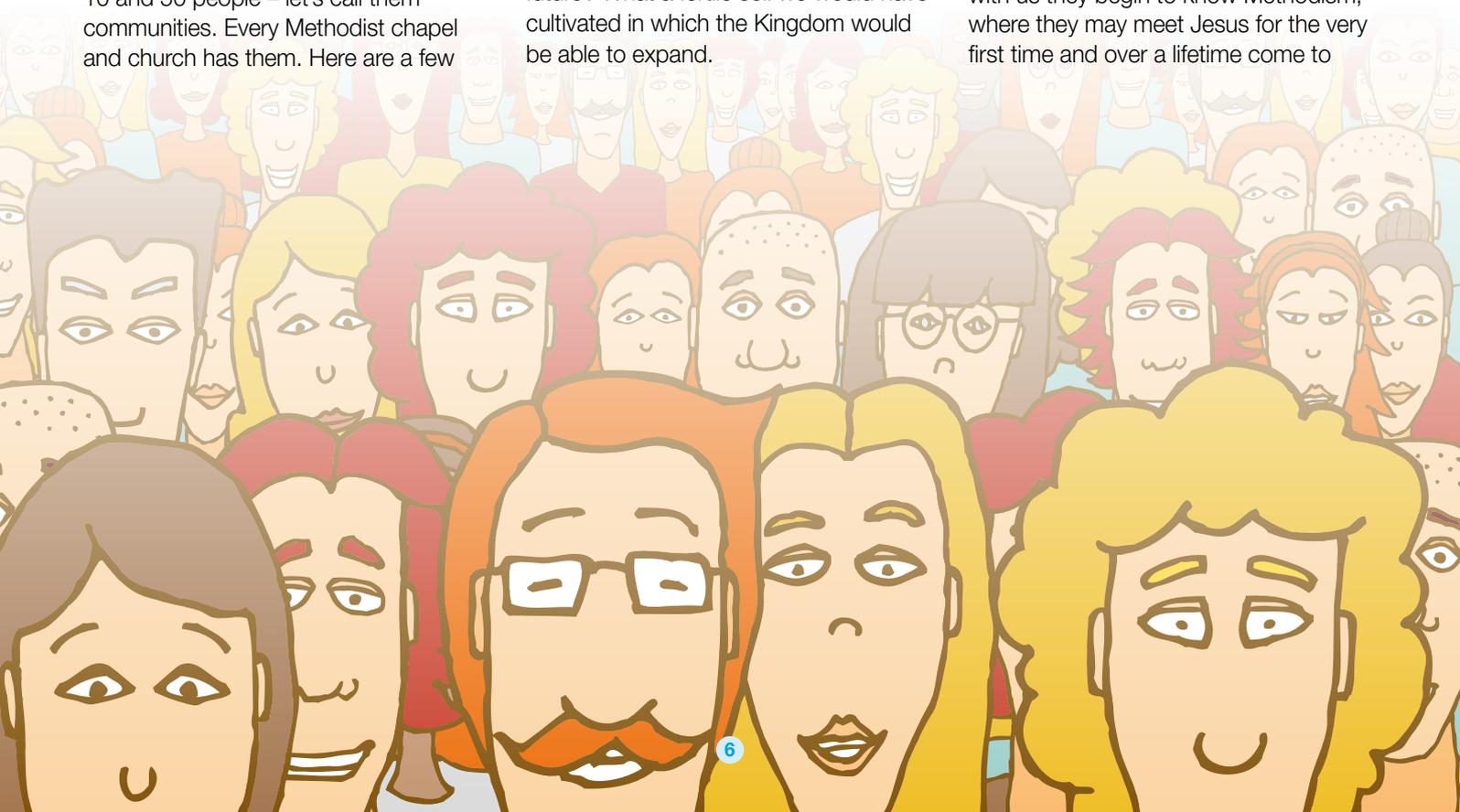
Why? We all know in our hearts that things are not right. The ageing profile of our congregations, our inability to afford the ministry we want (so we sell the family silver), a history of ill health and stress in our staff, falling incomes, an ageing and expensive property portfolio, a shortage of willing leaders and a feeling that the world we live in is turning away from the love of Jesus Christ in the Methodist tradition. Why?

But it's not just Methodism, is it? Even the successful evangelical model is asking whether they are just attracting "Already Christians" from other denominations. As they grow, they too find a glass ceiling through which they find it difficult to penetrate. They too are seeking a way of winning new souls for Christ. I believe that we Methodists already have the way but have drifted too far away from it and so we struggle. Our Methodist strengths are our structure (even though it was designed for a much larger community) and our network of member groups of between 10 and 50 people – let's call them communities. Every Methodist chapel and church has them. Here are a few

examples: women's fellowships, choirs, musicians, fellowship groups, messy church, drop-ins, kitchen and food provision – there are many more and you can list them in your chapel or church. But these community groups will have grown out of a love of fellow men and women, a desire to provide a service or facility needed by the wider community, and are built upon a foundation of our individual love of God.

It's in these groups that through example, through growing personal relationships and through a binding desire to serve the local community that non-Christians discover the Methodist way of being a disciple. So isn't the way forward to multiply these groups? Suppose over the next three years every group multiplied itself by three and each group grew to have 35 members, serving the community and with a leadership of disciples of Jesus. Would not Methodism take on a very different future? What a fertile soil we would have cultivated in which the Kingdom would be able to expand.

We need to free up our ministers to enable them to teach a new wave of Missional Leaders who can set up and multiply these groups. Who would ever have believed that God was calling us to multiply? It seems such an obvious solution and yet one where we have begun almost to sneer at our community groups. Huh, them, we say, they just meet up to socialise. It's time to prune and start again. But wait, are there shoots within your community? How can you attract new faces? Does it matter if they are Christian? Of course not, these are the very people we need to meet. Does it matter if they do not behave in the way we believe they should? Of course not, because we pray that through our example they will learn the Methodist Way. What if, sin of all sins, they DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH ON SUNDAYS? Do we get rid of them? Of course not, because through contact with us they begin to know Methodism, where they may meet Jesus for the very first time and over a lifetime come to



love him and want to be with him every minute of their lives, just as we do! If they want to contribute to our funds, should we accept their gifts? Of course we should – just as we give maybe one tenth of our disposable income to Methodism, so should they. Society should contribute to the upkeep of our buildings and to the Kingdom because living near to the Kingdom benefits the entire world. This we believe with all our hearts.

So we have some things to think about doing: restructuring our organisation and making it affordable in the cycle of two terms of a minister's appointment (10 years); changing the way we run our church councils and other church meetings so we can be supportive of our ministers and their call to ministry and not be a drain on their energy and enthusiasm; separate the cost of running our church buildings from our giving toward the assessment so we all understand the financial drain these buildings have on our finances. Since we have a responsibility to ensure the income we receive from our property is sufficient to pay the upkeep, we equally need to understand that the assessment is the cost of running and staffing Methodism and this is why we make our commitment to our tithe. If we cannot pay the assessment it means we cannot afford our minister. How can this be when the feedback I hear from our congregations is for more ministers, not fewer?

The good news is that these things are all simple to do. They just need our collective will to do them and for us to train and develop a new wave of these group leaders for our existing and new community groups. During the last five years we your leaders have been firefighting, dealing with crisis after crisis. We've been trying to see where the light is shining and to find small ways of moving towards that glorious light. We have been consulting with you all about the light and where you think it shines. That process continues, and we are beginning now to seek out the course towards the light. These are some of the things we are considering. We have a conviction that God is calling us to reinvent Methodism in our Circuit. Let us all pray, each and every day, for the guidance and vision to find the right course.

Richard Vincent,
Circuit Steward for Equipping for Mission.

Making links with College students and staff

I have been part of Mid-Kent College Chaplaincy in Medway since summer 2015 and wanted to share the work I am doing with the circuit.

Along with a colleague, I visit the college once a week for a couple of hours and go around the social zones, chatting to students and staff. We are still at the stage where we are getting chaplaincy known around the college and explaining to people what a chaplain is.

Our other main role is to organise events throughout the year. In the last year, we have run a reflection space. This was a scaffold that we set up in the main foyer of the college, offering different activities for the students and staff to reflect on. There were activities on friendship, forgiveness, helping

others, big questions and hopes and dreams. This was a really successful and wonderful event, and one of my highlights for 2016.

At the beginning of December we had a multi-faith event in the college. We invited representatives from Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Medway inter-faith association. It was a great event and gave us as a chaplaincy team, with some good contacts for future events.

Looking ahead to 2017, we are hosting another reflection/prayer space with the theme of respect, and we are looking forward to a visit from Roughshod Theatre Group.

Helen Young,
Gillingham Methodist Church Youth Worker

New appointments to our North Kent staff team

Chris Chare joined the Circuit in November as the Churches Support Administrator. Chris' position involves providing resources and assistance on finance and property matters for local churches. This position was created by the Circuit as a direct response to the expressed needs of several churches who were struggling with the systems and procedures required by the Methodist Church, Charity Commission, and new government regulations. Chris is recently retired from working with financial systems and is the treasurer of Newington Methodist Church.

Paddy Daniels is the new Interim Centre Manager at Gravesend Methodist Church, overseeing the running of the

Community Centre after the resignation of Simon Curry. Paddy is experienced in managing volunteer teams and trained in theology, which makes her especially ideal for this role. We will be looking for a permanent Centre Manager in the coming months.

Luzia Watt began work with Families and Outreach at the Union Street and Tonbridge Road Methodist Churches in February. She takes over (and expands) the role that Karen Willing did at Union Street until Christmas. Most in the circuit will know Luzia as the wife of Rev Gary Watt, but in her own right, Luzia is a trained teacher who especially enjoys working with young people and community outreach.

Some dates for your diary...



Thinking Day Service at Gillingham

To mark World Thinking Day in February, members of the Guiding Movement – Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, their leaders and members of Trefoil Guild – will take part in a service at Gillingham Methodist Church at 10.30am on **Sunday 26 February**. Led by Deacon Pru, the service will include a presentation on the origins of Guiding and the renewal of promises.

Lunchtime Meditations for Holy Week at Hartlip

There will again be four lunchtime meditations at Hartlip church during Holy Week, at 12 noon on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, **10–13 April**.

Roughshod Theatre Group visits Gillingham

The travelling theatre group Roughshod is coming to Gillingham for a week from **Sunday 14 – Sunday 21 May**. Youth

Worker Helen and Deacon Pru have put together a programme for the five-member company which will include work with local schools, prison, college and groups connected with the church. They will take part in a Circuit Service while the main ticketed event of the week will be at Gillingham Methodist Church on **Friday 19 May** at 7.00pm. Roughshod visited in 2015 and 2016 for an evening each time but Helen and Pru felt that their unique presentation of the gospel would benefit a larger audience.

Service to mark World Autism Month at Gillingham

Krysia Waldock and Deacon Pru have been working on a project to bring understanding of autism to the attention of church leaders, preachers and worship leaders. The first workshop

was held at Hartlip in November with encouraging responses from attendees. To mark World Autism Awareness Day, **Sunday 2 April**, the morning service at Union Street Methodist Church will be autism-friendly for those on the spectrum as well as being informative and worshipful.

For more information on any of these events, contact Deacon Pru Cahill.

LEARNING & CARING

Circuit Prayer Diary

(please keep this to use each month)

1st Rev. Bonni-Belle Pickard

2nd Rev. Gary Watt

3rd Rev. Tony Graff

4th Rev. Velma Campbell

5th Rev Noreen Daley Lee

6th Rev. Kan Yu

7th Deacon Pru Cahill

8th Deacon Jane Paine

9th Rev. Will Grady

10th Rev. Ken George and the Sheppey Prison Cluster

11th Ray Borrett (Student Presbyter)

12th Our Supernumerary Ministers

13th Our Lay Workers

14th Our Circuit Stewards

15th Our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

16th Hartlip Church and Retreat Centre

Members and congregations in:

17th Bearsted and Grove Green Churches

18th Burham and Eccles Churches

19th Dene Holm and Hextable Churches

20th Gravesend and St Luke's Churches

21st Gillingham and the Chinese Church

22nd Peninsula Stoke and Strood Churches

23rd Spital Street, Swanscombe and Sutton at Hone churches

24th Hope Street Church and the Hope Street Centre

25th Kingswood Church and Larkfield Church

26th Union Street and Tonbridge Road Churches

27th Newington and Sittingbourne Churches

28th The Brent Church and the Beacon Project

29th St Alban's, St. David's and St. Williams Churches

30th Rev. Lynda Cooke and all the Chaplaincy Team at Medway Hospital

31st Rev. John Hellyer and the District Staff

