

Circuit News and Preaching Plan

JESUS

DISCIPLING

WORSHIP

LEARNING
& CARING

EVANGELISM
& SERVICE

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ROBIN SELMES

What Is God's Mission for you and for us all?

I first realised that not everyone understands the word Mission in the same way when I was asked to speak at one of our very early meetings of the new circuit. At that time, I was the Circuit Steward with special responsibility for Equipping for Mission. I hadn't spoken more than 50 words before someone interrupted me and said, "I don't agree." The session developed into a discussion about what discipleship means, with all sorts of different viewpoints expressed. I left the meeting at the end feeling very confused and frustrated.

Since then I believe we Methodists in North Kent have been working towards a common point of view about what discipleship and mission mean. For me, discipleship and mission includes the whole "being in God's Kingdom" which is our relationship (love affair) with God, individually and as a community. Some people call this spirituality or worship; but it is not just our private affair, it is also about our relationships with each other. John Wesley discovered in the early days of Methodism that if followers of Jesus Christ, both new and mature, were not in close relationship with each other, then many fell away from behaving like followers of Jesus. These early Methodists created large, medium and small groups, which they called societies, classes and bands. This "connexion" of Methodists together was how the Holy Spirit was passed from one to another as the flames caught fire and took hold, causing an inferno of faith.

Evangelism and outreach are the "mission" part of our discipleship. Without our relationships with God and each other in place, mission has no purpose. While it's possible to do outreach without the first two, it will be empty. To quote Paul, "If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels,

but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor:13) Outreach emerges from our love of God and others.

Evangelism

And so we come to the dreaded word "evangelism". When we were working on the Circuit Mission Policy, the Revd Bonni-Belle Pickard and I had a long discussion about the meaning of Evangelism. She had childhood memories of some Evangelists beating the drum of evangelism before large crowds, preaching about repentance and salvation, but then gaining notoriety for sinful and exploitative lifestyles. This conflicted with my Oxford Dictionary understanding of Evangelism as "spreading the Christian Gospel by public preaching or personal witness." BB helped me to understand what she

was getting at when she said: "Richard, you can no more regain the meaning of the word "evangelism" than you can reclaim the original meaning of the word "gay." I immediately understood. Eventually we agreed that we both understood evangelism to mean "sharing our personal faith wherever and whenever we can." So Discipleship and Mission is for us:

- Worship
- Learning and Caring for each other
- Sharing our faith wherever and whenever we can

The theme of this fourth edition of our magazine is telling the story of some new and some older ways of doing mission across the Circuit. I hope you will be inspired.

Richard Vincent



Warm welcome in Belo Horizonte

During the summer, members of Tonbridge Road, Larkfield and Sittingbourne Methodist Churches accompanied Gary and Luzia Watt to Brazil.

The Invitation from Pastor Wesley of Belo Horizonte Methodist Church to help the church to honour its commitment to the functioning of the crèche was taken up by a few members of the churches here in 2010 when we went to witness a run down crèche struggling to survive.

Funds were raised (and continue to be raised) by our churches to help refurbishment of this crèche which currently caters for about 60 preschool children from six months to four years. Without the provision of this crèche by the Methodist Church the poor mothers in the area would have to stop work and therefore earn no income.

Refurbishment

This visit was an invitation to see for ourselves what our continuous fund raising activities had achieved: a complete refurbishment of the crèche which has moved from poor to outstanding on their OFSTED equivalent. The staff who are paid by the local government are happier with their nearly new environment not to mention the new sturdy good quality toys for the children to enjoy. The local church also contributes to the refurbishment.

We joined in the Brazilian church service at every opportunity. A very warm enthusiastic welcome with love greeted us every time. These are lively and moving services unlike any Methodist church in the UK.

We went to help but felt blessed indeed.

Nellie Adjaye



Methodist Women in Britain

For those of you who have not heard about MWiB I thought I would tell you about the movement which is part of the Methodist Church and all are welcome to be associated with it.

I quote from the MWiB website:

"We have a proud heritage stemming from the twin roots of Women's Work, founded in 1858 to support training and care for women missionaries, and Women's Fellowship, started in 1945 out of a concern to address social problems resulting from the war. These two movements merged in 1987 to form the Women's Network of the Methodist Church, with a clear place in the Methodist Connexional Team. Change came in 2008 resulting in the launch in 2011 of Methodist Women in Britain as an independent, self-financing organisation.

Our aim today is to connect women with an interest in creative spirituality and a passion for global social justice.

Methodist Women in Britain's main decision-making body is the Forum, which meets twice each year. Every district in the British Methodist Church has a representative on the Forum which meets along with the executive members, the Helen Kim Scholar and the Women's World Day of Prayer Methodist representative.

MWiB has a seat at the Methodist Conference and relates to many parts of the Connexional Team. However, MWiB does not have Connexional Team staffing, nor funding from the Connexional budget."

I am privileged to have been asked to represent the South East District as

their representative on the Forum. I am looking forward to the challenge and working with women from around the Connexion.

MWiB in the South East District meets two or three times a year to worship together, share workshops and listen to interesting speakers. If you would like to join in our meetings or know more of what goes on in the District, details will be shown on the Circuit website or please contact me at credwyn@hotmail.com.

Credwyn Tolhurst



God wants his Church back...

...and I don't just mean the buildings!

Let me explain. If you read the last edition of Circuit News you will know that several of us under the leadership of Gary and Luzia Watt spent some time with our brothers and sisters at The Central Methodist Church in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

The Holy Spirit is so active there that during a four-day mission at least 75 people gave their lives to Christ. My thought was that it was all well and good experiencing this, but what could I do when I returned home to encourage this level of God's activity in my church? Having received prayer for guidance, I didn't have to wait long for the answer.

On the Sunday following the revival, while still in Brazil, I was in church when some words came to mind:

"Why do you keep looking at things to do? You must pray, and keep praying, pray in the morning, pray at meal times, pray in the evening, keep praying and do not give up. If you do this you will see what I can do."

Pray for revival

As someone who is not used to hearing from God in this way, I was unsure whether this was his word or something I had made up in my imagination. As the compulsion grew to tell what I had heard to those in the church, I became more and more aware that it was from God. It was not until the next evening, after prayer from two of the

members of another church, that I was aware that I had this thought going through my head: *"Tell those in God's church to pray for revival."* This is not a message just for Methodism, but for the whole church!

These things were confirmed to me when three of our group were present when 16 – 18-year olds were ministering to each other through the Holy Spirit. There was a young lady sitting on the floor crying under the influence of the Spirit, and another obviously drunk in the Spirit. Those who know me know that I am not usually an emotional person. My thought was "God, if only this could happen in the UK." I then found myself with such a want for the Holy Spirit to be as active in the church at home, and found myself in tears.

From these and other experiences, I know one thing for certain. God is eager to bring his Church in this country back to him. He needs us, his Body on Earth, to be bold, not only in asking others to pray for revival, but also for us to turn away from the "what we want from Church" mentality and start praying to find out "what God wants from his Church." We must not be embarrassed to lift the name of Jesus high, and we, you and I, must be willing to go out from the confines of our church buildings to share the Good News with others.

Alan Connor, Larkfield Church

Scouts go on Jamboree

Maidstone West District Scouts went to Kent International Jamboree from 30 July to 5 August 2017, where I shared a tent with Jake, Robert, Jake, Archie, Max, Josh, Joe and Joseph.

Archie, Robert, Joseph and I are Maidstone Methodist Scouts and in total 15 Methodist Scouts went. We were in Inter-America sub camp, where there were around a thousand Scouts from Britain, Ireland, France and Mexico. In other sub camps there were Scouts from Poland, Africa, Germany, USA, Canada, Russia and the Caribbean among others.



In total about 8000 young people and leaders camped at Detling Show Ground. We did rock climbing, craft, canoeing, zipwire and a 100ft obstacle course. In the evening we had bumper cars, waltzers, and trampolines to play on. We had a day trip to Port Lympne zoo. We went on a safari ride on a lorry and saw black rhino, giraffe, deer, warthog, buffalo, antelope and many others.

Matthew Packer aged 11, Union Street

Circuit Learning Community

The Taster Weekend

As I write at the beginning of October we are well into invitations and plans for the Learning Community taster weekend. By the time you are reading this, the weekend will have been completed and we will be beginning our journey together. When we start something new it is always tricky for new things to break into the rhythms of people's lives. Learning Community is of course no different from anything else in

this matter. People are busy doing what they do and do not easily break their present and complex rhythms of life.

New Rhythms

Learning Community is about new life and new ways of living – for ourselves, for the church community we are a part of, and for the Kingdom that Jesus invites everyone to enter. The disciples had to break their rhythms when they became disciples, Paul broke his rhythms when the light shone on the road to Damascus. When we are called it is nearly always to something new and different. The weekend is to give people an opportunity to find out more about what they are being called to and to see if it is worth breaking their rhythms for something different. We will be learning about the deeper spiritual meaning for us of being true disciples; what it means

to share one's faith with others and how to do so without embarrassment, fear or offence. We will be thinking about what could be for our Methodist churches and communities, what is our hope for the future, our vision; what steps we can take as individuals and as communities to walk towards our vision with confidence.

Amazing Grace

Over the last two years I have been working with Simon Ford of Three Dimensional Ministries (3DM). During that time the Revd Gary Watt has been my mentor and guide and my heart has been transformed. It's been an amazing experience. I have walked in the Light and my heart has changed as a consequence. Now we begin the task of introducing others to the same experience and to join with us in the task

of bringing others and our communities to strengthen their relationship with God, to remind us of the love of Jesus pouring into our community life as the Church and to turn outwards and to take that love of Jesus into the communities of North Kent. I hope you have been called and are able to join us and you will know this already but if you haven't it's not too late – we are waiting for you patiently.

There will be a new page on the Circuit website where you can keep up to date with the progress we are making: www.nkmethodists.org.uk

Please follow it from time to time. We may even make it to Facebook and Twitter!

Richard Vincent

The changing faces of our Cross

Our Cross was found on the shore of the river Thames – it's two pieces of drift wood that Barry put together. Originally it was only used at Easter and was put away for the rest of the year. So many people have commented on our Cross, how much they like it, that it now stays out all year. The members of our Church like to look at it as it reminds them of what Jesus did for us, by becoming a mediator between us and God, through dying on the Cross.



Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the Cross and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne. Hebrews 12:2

Janet Errington, Swanscombe

Not everyone has heard of the One Programme or could tell you who or what an OPP is. Last year we at Gravesend Methodist Church were able to discover what both meant. To quote the Methodist Church web site, "The ONE Programme is about equipping, empowering, and encouraging young people in their discipleship, vocation and leadership." An OPP is someone who takes part in the programme – a young person employed for a year to take part in community and church projects and to attend conferences and training weekends.

Our OPP, Cameron, started in September last year to work with the homeless, to engage with young people and to work alongside the Chaplaincy at Bluewater. As the year progressed Cameron also worked with people with mental health issues. At first Cameron would wait for his instructions each week. By Christmas Cameron was arriving and getting on with anything that was needed without being asked. By the end of the year he could have run the project on his own! It was a privilege to work with Cameron throughout this year and to watch him grow in confidence. He was always cheerful and willing to do any of the tasks that were needed during the day. He sometimes faced personal challenges to do some of the tasks asked of him but Cameron conquered his fears and flourished as a result.



Growing in confidence

Cameron is naturally shy but he learnt to be an active rather than passive member of a team; to offer suggestions for how things may work better and to speak in public including at Methodist Synod! Early in the year Cameron and I were going through the aims of the programme and what he should achieve by the end of the year. Cameron was quite quiet but became very vocal at the thought that he should be able to lead a training session for volunteers. In his opinion that was perhaps a step too far! I am now really confident that Cameron could train anyone who volunteered for any of the activities at our community centre.

The training weekends offered by the programme help young people to work with others; to challenge suggestions offered by their peers but to accept team decisions and enable them to be carried out; to grow in confidence in day to day activities and to explore the direction of their spiritual life. We watched Cameron grow in all of these ways.

If you feel that your Church can offer an opportunity to a young person to join the One Programme then apply through the website.

Paddy Daniels

Ebbsfleet Garden City

Ebbsfleet Garden City (Swanscombe) within the North Kent Circuit is in the process of being built over the next ten years. The development will consist of 14,000 – 16,000 new homes spread across five villages as shown in the map and will eventually have 90,000 inhabitants, roughly the same population as Chichester. The development will have a hotel, cinema, leisure facilities, two primary schools and one education campus. It offers an opportunity for pioneer ministry and the possibility for a missional community to be developed, for example a church plant, coffee shop and more. Those coming to Ebbsfleet appear to be people moving out of London to start a family or young couples looking for larger homes and an easy commute to London. There will also be a mixture of social housing, apartments and homes for retired people.

Over the past months the Circuit has taken some key decisions regarding its missional response to Ebbsfleet Garden City. At the last Circuit Meeting we approved the purchase of a Methodist manse at Ebbsfleet Green, one of the villages that make up the Ebbsfleet area. The manse will house a missional worker, who will likely be me, Bart Woodhouse. I will begin the process of prayerfully laying some foundations in the new community and establishing relationships with residents and other stakeholders later next year. The manse

will cost £585k and meets most of the requirements of a functional family home and space to gather a small church group. This is an expensive area, which is set to become more expensive as the development progresses, so buying early will probably save some money in the long run. The manse is being paid for from the proceeds from the sale of Rainham Methodist Church and the sale of the manse at the Bridge (currently estimated to be worth £340-350k), enabling us to plough the valuable legacy of Rainham into the soil of this new missional work.

During these early stages of the project some creative thinking will need to be done to discern what long term strategy best fits our current presence and our strengths within both new and existing communities. This will involve the new missional community in developing relationships with other churches, most importantly with Swanscombe Methodist Church, who will all play a vital role in the missional work over the coming years. Other strategic questions will also need some thought over the next year or so: for instance, do we plant a new Methodist church or work as a class group linked to an existing congregation? Also, do we want a new church building, and if so where? Could we establish a coffee shop on site? Do we take on the management of one of the community centres...? Lots of questions to explore and pray into!



Sharing stories of the community

I am already having informal conversations with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) and North Kent College regarding a history project, inviting the people of Swanscombe to share stories of their community and its close relationship with Eastern Quarry. People played there as children, worked there as part of the workforce providing the raw materials for much of the building in London and beyond, and can tell the story of its decline and its new beginning. There are very real sensitivities around the relationship between the existing communities and the new development. The Methodists have been a part of Swanscombe since at least 1888 and will play a decisive

role in the new community too, giving us a unique opportunity to find fruitful places of connection where the different communities might, in some small way, value and identify with each other. Telling real stories and sharing a rich and vibrant history with those arriving in a place largely devoid of any history will be a small but positive contribution that we can play and help us connect with people in both the old and new contexts.

Please continue to pray for this venture and all those involved, including the established congregation at Swanscombe. Pray that the Lord will “pour the Spirit on us from on high, and the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be counted for a forest” (Isaiah 32:15).

Bart Woodhouse



A Parable about our lives for Jesus

The Gospels are full of the parables of Jesus. He took ordinary situations and told stories around them which would prod people into making their own judgment about their hidden meaning. He invariably ended by saying, “Those who have ears to hear, let them hear”. What would he have said about the garden at the house which had been empty for four years?

And he told them a parable about our lives for him, saying, ‘A man and his wife bought a house with a back garden. In the years before it had been neglected and become a wasteland. The weeds took over and the ground became hard and almost unworkable. Not only that but they looked wonderful, all pink and welcoming to the insects. As the weeds finished flowering, the seeds came and when the wind blew, the seeds flew in the wind and spread all over the garden and those of the neighbours.

Once settled into the house, the husband went to work in the garden each day. First he chopped off the weeds, then he began to dig, a little at the time. There were days when his wife felt able to help and she got out her fork and started to dig out the remains of the weeds which were still rooted firmly in the ground. As the husband dug, so he sifted the soil, taking out every part of the roots of the weeds, because many of them were such that they crept through the ground and if left, would sprout and grow again. All these pieces of root he gathered into bags and took to the tip.

In the spring, he raked the ground smooth and began to plant his seeds and plants which would provide food for the household and friends. As the weeds grew back, so he pulled them out or cut them off lest they take over the plot and damage or smother the vegetables he had planted. As the season developed

so the crops came off the ground in good measure and were a great blessing to all who used them.

At the end of the year, while the weather was bad he rested with his wife until in the new year, he was able to escape the winds and the rain, and began the job of digging the garden again. This time it was easier to clear the ground and make it ready to receive the seeds and plants. There was much less evidence of the weeds which had been such a problem the previous year. The work was easier, the garden easier to keep clean of the choking weeds.

There was more time to enjoy the garden and the company of friends and family.

“Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!”

Vic Downs



Recycling site



When we were in Caversham I was involved in the three churches of the section. There were two Methodist Churches and a Local Ecumenical Project. This latter was on Caversham Park Village and was served by the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist Churches. On the whole the three worked well together and there were some lovely, or even frightening experiences there. I remember on one Sunday morning, quite unexpectedly, the Bishop of Reading arrived and sat in the congregation! A bit daunting, but God was good.

The other two churches were quite different. One was very organised because many of the members had been involved in business and tried to run the church in the same way. The other was, and still is, quite laid back. It tried to be modern and sought to get things done and work out the finances later, because in those days they had money and to spare. This wasn't out of wealth, but out of generous giving.

It wasn't until we had left and gone to Staffordshire that we obtained our first digital camera, and were encouraging

the use of visual material on screen. I bought my own equipment and it caught on in one of the churches, at least! I was gathering photos which could be used as backgrounds to hymn words. I learned it didn't work after a while but had great fun trying to match words and pictures to aid understanding. One picture I used came from Caversham, following a return visit. I've included it with this piece.

It made me laugh, but it also hit me between the eyes. Is it only Caversham Park Church which is a recycling site? Isn't that the job of every church? Isn't the whole story of Easter one which speaks strongly of recycling lives? Jesus died on the cross to turn us, who were sinners, into new people who are saved, guided and directed by Jesus. His death has that implication for all of us. It has even more for those who don't yet know him. Our job is surely to bring as many as possible to the one who is in charge of this recycling centre that they might be made new and come to understand the meaning of life in all its fullness. Our job is to make them welcome.

Vic Downs

A Manse Steward!

What's that?

Imagine having a job that comes with accommodation. No need to worry about the maintenance and upkeep of the property. Routine items such as gas safety checks and any unforeseen problems are dealt with, so that you can get on with the vocation to which God has called you.

This is what we in the Methodist Church aim to provide for our presbyters and deacons. The role of looking after a manse is the responsibility of the Manse Steward.

When I became a Manse Steward last year and shared with a few of my closest Christian friends that I had undertaken that role, invariably I was asked "A Manse Steward! What's that?"

Well firstly I consider it a great privilege to look after a manse. I am taking on the responsibility of dealing with the house in order to allow the minister to focus on what God has called him or her to do. Once a year the steward does a manse visit and deals with any maintenance issues that arise. If anything arises between visits, the minister contacts the steward, who then makes arrangements for the problem to be fixed.

Building relationships

The Manse Steward is part of the Circuit Property Team and is supported and advised by the Revd Bonni-Belle Pickard and other members of the team as necessary. It is also a privilege to build up a relationship with the incumbent (official term for the person living there) who is not necessarily your own presbyter or deacon. Through being a Manse Steward, those I have got to know a little better are Bonni-Belle, Tony, Noreen and Velma.

Sadly at the moment we are short of Manse Stewards so there is a vacancy for a steward to look after one of our manses. Could you help with this?

The Circuit also rents out the Wayville Road manse in Dartford, as it is not required for a minister at present. The rental income provides much needed income for the Circuit. Although let out through an agent, we also need a volunteer to take on the role of Manse Steward to liaise with the agency.

Do you feel called to provide this support to our ministers and Circuit? It is very rewarding knowing that you are carrying out a vital role and I consider it an honour to serve in this way.

Fiona Crowhurst,
The Brent

How to handle later life

Gravesend Methodist Church has an author amongst its congregation. Marion Shoard has just had a book published, *How to Handle Later Life*, a very interesting and informative book covering many aspects of later life.

She highlighted some key tips for later life:

NICE: Make the most of NICE's guidelines relating to the treatment of many medical conditions, beneficial when working out what treatment to expect.

Retirement homes and villages: Not suitable for everyone, many are better off staying in their own homes.

Benefits: Many are unaware of benefits available to the elderly which are by no means all restricted to people of modest means.

Hospices: Wonderful for those looking for end of life care. Include "day hospices" – attending one day a week long before the person actually dies.



are many clubs and societies, also befriending schemes. Even if you cannot walk, you could still be a befriender, perhaps over the phone.

Transport and driving: Older people should not feel pressured to carry on driving. In an accident they are more likely to be seriously injured or die than a younger person. There is free bus travel, while equality laws have made travel easier with lifts, ramps, disabled toilets on trains and so on.

Dementia: Affects about one fifth of people in their mid-80s. Diagnosis

Assisted Dying: Those choosing to travel abroad leave numerous problems for loved ones. Not to be undertaken likely, the implications for wider society of supporting assisted dying need careful thought.

Social Contact: Loneliness often leads to depression and more contact should be available for the elderly. There

not always straightforward and has implications worth bearing in mind, in particular that it is the first stage to being assessed as lacking the mental ability to handle your own affairs. Make sure that the assessor takes into account any factors which might be confused with brain impairment, such as deafness or difficulty in speaking.

Marion's book is published by Amaranth Books, runs to 1160 pages, costs £22.99 and is available at bookshops and online and direct from the publisher's distributor, currently offering it at a special discount to include p&p of £22 – see www.centralbooks.com/how-to-handle-later-life.html.

Marion also talked about Care Homes, how they leave the elderly in chairs all day, instead of taking them out, even out in their gardens. She pointed out that being in the sunshine and fresh-air does the body good and is vital to mental wellbeing and urged that care home residents should have a legal right in principle to go outdoors for up to an hour a day.

Marion Shoard

Reflections on Synod 23 September 2017

This was my very first Synod, so it was full of new experiences. Corporate worship was extremely powerful - there is something honest and spiritual about singing with a simple piano accompaniment that touches the soul deeply.

Rev Kan Yu gave her reflections from Conference, speaking about the gift of connexialism, embracing one's frailty before God, and of a willingness to embrace vulnerability before God.

One of our Memorials to Conference concerning the complaints process was shared to Synod. Whilst it was not accepted in full, there was agreement to review some of the concerns in detail. Conference has also commended a draft ministerial code of conduct embracing an enhanced culture of accountability. Full details can be found on the Methodist Church of GB website, www.methodist.org.uk

Another move could lead to the presbyteral ministries of the Methodist Church and Church of England becoming interchangeable. Full discussion will be presented to Conference 2018 for debate and decision.

Gathering and scattering

The Revd John Hellyer spoke about building Church, focusing on a rhythm of gathering and scattering. This linked to the three workshops: Make a Difference Wherever You Are, Appreciating Church, and Discipling Presence. I chose to attend Make a Difference Wherever You Are, led by David Lawrence who spoke about the importance of mission beyond the confines of Church, of being aware of God's presence in the workplace, leisure activities and interactions with people throughout the week. Some suggest that the balance of gathering (events on Sunday or formal mission supported by the Church) and scattering (when Christians engage with others in their

daily life outside of the church) places too much focus on gathering and not enough on the resourcing of disciples taking church into the rest of the week and acting as Ambassadors for Jesus. Whilst latest statistics paint a picture of a declining membership, (<200,000 for the first time), we need to embrace the challenges of scattering in spreading the Gospel.

The Revd Bonni Belle Pickard was elected representative to Conference 2018, while Margaret Bowerman has been appointed Disability Adviser for the District with the brief of sourcing new material relevant to disabilities, to put people in touch with each other and to point people towards examples of good practice.

Finally the South East District has a new website www.methodistsoutheast.org/. Please visit the website for information of activities and dates for the coming year, plus much more!

Colin Waldock

Feet in both places

I had been through two years of pre-ordination training and several placements (in Preston, Newcastle and Leeds) with deacons but it was through a sermon at the ordination service of an Anglican friend in Blackburn that I had something of an epiphany.

In a four-part sermon the bishop explained that a deacon is to be found at the scriptures, at the table, at prayer, and at the door.

Aspects of the deacon's role in a liturgical act of worship informs the rest of their (my) work where not all (or even much) of it takes place within the walls of a church building. Of course the role of a deacon isn't different from the responsibility of all Christians – we are all called to these tasks. But the church sets some apart by ordination to model and represent this work.

So then...

Scripture: in a public place hasn't yet been from a platform in the high street but it has included broadcasting, telling Bible stories in other contexts, on retreat days and in preaching.

At the table: is probably the place where the symbolic act is most profound. Deacons don't preside at Holy Communion (except with authorisation and in very exceptional cases) but are commissioned to take bread and wine

from the communion table by extension to those not able to get to church. This is usually undertaken within a day or two of the original service of Communion while the bread is still fresh and ensures that those receiving feel part of the congregation. The role of the deacon has often been described as helping to make connections whether between church and community, God and God's people, and this is a powerful, tangible example of this.

At prayer: well there aren't many days when public or private prayer with others doesn't take place. It's a privilege to pray with members of our congregations but also with children at the after-school club I co-lead in Hartlip, with baptismal or funeral families. Prayer on the Air used to be a regular slot on my radio show – although I had to advise those listening from their cars not to close their eyes! Liturgically the deacon's role can be to lead the intercessions, bringing the needs of the gathered community before God, again making connections.

At the door: has sometimes been described as having one foot in the church and one in the neighbourhood. This description doesn't work though, because there are plenty of times when we need to have both feet in both places.

No two diaconal appointments are the same and neither are two deacons the same. All of us have to face situations as they are – even when they are not as we would like them to be.

Some of the work of a deacon often overlaps with that of a presbyter. I'm really happy that now there are two of us at Gillingham and Hartlip I can concentrate on my calling as deacon and the tasks originally set down in the Circuit's letter of understanding of 2013.

Deacon Pru Cahill



An interview with Robin Selmes

New Minister for our Circuit

Robin has taken charge of Gillingham, Hartlip and St Luke's Churches. It was an experience listening to his energy and enthusiasm.

My Family

Robin was married 19 years ago and has three young children, so moving the family from Brighton has been a big step for him. He met his wife in a night club, one of those moments when time stops and suddenly life is going in a different direction. But this change in direction is something Robin has had to become accustomed to.

The call to ministry

Robin was a Bank employee and the time had come for a job change. He was seeking a job with another company in the financial services industry. He had to contact them urgently to make arrangements to have a special entrance test for people suffering from Dyslexia. He was returning from an appointment and was looking for somewhere to stop the car, but no matter what Robin did he could not get the car into any parking slot that he passed. He felt that somehow the Lord was telling him that he wasn't to go for this job but instead to answer his call to become a Methodist minister.

Training for mission

During his last year at Birmingham University before he went into circuit ministry he was seconded to the Birmingham Mission. The minister to whom he was responsible sent him to research homelessness. When he made his report his minister asked him which was the most important opportunity and then said "well, get on with it then". Within weeks Robin had gathered together all the interested parties from all walks of life and the Birmingham Homeless Forum was formed. They sent teams on to the street, coming alongside the people and as they got to know the people living on the streets they were amazed to find there was a living community there that helped each other and got the children off the streets as quickly as they could. The teams were able to support the community and as the community came to trust the teams there were many examples of faith being shared – missional communities in action.

Circuit ministry

When he took up Church ministry Robin was very surprised to be sent to places where homelessness is not a big issue. He felt that he had all this training and nowhere to use it. So he turned to a different segment of society and back to his roots. Robin's father has been



a lifelong Methodist with a special interest in young people. He had been a leader of all the various young people's organisations and so Robin grew up in a loving Christian family and with a passion for young people and Jesus. So now in Bracknell and then Brighton, Robin threw himself into working with young people in schools by running holiday clubs as well as many other young people's activities while sharing his love of Jesus as and when the opportunity was provided.

The future – Christian action

I hope by now you will have the feeling that Robin is passionate about mission. It is, he says, what he is called to be. His attitude to mission can be summarised simply: find a need, meet the need, share your love with the people you meet. He brings this into his ministry when he does home visits, so don't be surprised if you belong to his churches when he turns up on your doorstep demanding a cup of tea.

Interviewed by Richard Vincent

Advent is coming at Kingswood!

Christmas must be coming because the shops are getting busy, Santa is arriving in many stores, you can't park in the shopping centres and Children in Need is back on the TV. All this before the season of Advent has actually started! So what is Advent all about?

According to Wikipedia, Advent is a season observed in many Western Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for

the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. The term is an anglicised version of the Latin word *adventus*, meaning 'coming'. For Christians, the season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ from two different perspectives. The season offers the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah and to be alert for his second coming.

Advent starts on the fourth Sunday before 25 December, which this year is

3 December. There are, of course, many different sorts of Advent calendar, with a window to open each day during Advent. I was particularly struck by The Real Advent Calendar which raises money for good causes – the chocolate is Fairtrade and the Christmas story is told through a 24 page activity book.

So apart from getting an Advent calendar, how do we prepare to celebrate Jesus' coming? Perhaps by finding some time and space to think

about God and pray to Jesus. This is all very well but the days leading up to Christmas are often the most hectic in our lives as we prepare for the big day.

Celebrate the season!

This year at Kingswood Church we are holding an Advent Play on 10 December (the Sunday we normally have our Nativity Play is Christmas Eve, so a little too near Christmas!)

We are also having our traditional Christingle Service on Sunday 17 December, which reminds us that Jesus came as the light of the world so that whoever follows him will never walk in

darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12). Our Christmas Day Family Service is where we invite the children to bring one of their presents and share with the congregation what they have received.

So, wherever you are this Advent and Christmas time, do take time out with the family to attend a local church service.

The greatest gift we can receive this Advent and Christmas time is the gift of Jesus who came to give us life, to speak into our broken world and bring light in our darkness.

May I wish you on behalf of Kingswood Church a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

Peter Roberts

Kingswood Church is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) supported by Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches.



Harvest at Hartlip

For nearly two hundred years, Methodists in Hartlip have been rejoicing in God's goodness at Harvest time. The chapel's beautiful rural setting is the perfect backdrop for traditional Harvest celebrations and this year was no exception.

On the morning of Saturday September 16th, a small group of volunteers met to decorate the chapel, ready for the service the following day. There was a wonderful aroma of fruit, flowers and vegetables along with plenty of laughter and lighthearted conversation. All of the produce had been donated by members of the congregation and their friends and families, some of it arriving fresh from nearby gardens and allotments. The completed display looked amazing!

The following evening, we were delighted to welcome our new minister, the Revd Robin Selmes, who led us in a joyful yet thought-provoking Harvest service. We enjoyed singing many of our favourite traditional Harvest hymns.



On Monday evening, Robin returned to lead a short Harvest service, followed by an auction of all the produce that had been on display in the church. As always, there was much hilarity accompanied by very generous bidding and the marvellous sum of £313 was raised. This money will be donated to a charity chosen by our members at the next Church Council meeting.

Worship by candlelight

In a world of constant and often unsettling change, the ethos of Hartlip

chapel retains an important and enduring link with village traditions of the past.

One of these is the annual Christmas Candlelight Carol service. For many, it has become the perfect start to the Christmas season. The Chapel decorations are always stunning and you can be assured of a warm welcome on December 10th at 6.30pm or indeed at any of our weekly Sunday evening services throughout the year

Heather Gallagher

What's happening with worship at your church?

We hope you've enjoyed hearing about various Mission projects in this issue of the Circuit News. It is indeed encouraging to hear how God is at work with so many different projects around the circuit – and the world!

For our next issue (March–May 2018) we want to focus on how **WORSHIP** is happening around the circuit. Here are some questions to consider, perhaps on your own or with a small group in your church, or at your church's worship planning meeting or church council:

- What does worship mean to you?

What styles of worship draw you closer to God?

- What types of *personal* worship do you engage with outside of Sunday services?
- Has your congregation experimented with different types of worship that might *attract and engage* people from outside your usual attenders? What has worked best? What hasn't worked?
- Has your congregation reviewed its worship practices in light of the Staffing Review, that is, recognising

that continuing worship for small numbers in many locations puts a strain on our ministerial resources?

We would love to hear from all our circuit churches on these and other worship concerns. Please send your contributions (400 words or fewer – good quality photos welcome, but please send separately, do not embed in the text) to the Circuit Office by Wednesday 13 December. Note that this issue will be coming out during Lent and in preparation for Easter.

Bonni-Belle Pickard