



North Kent Methodist Circuit

grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



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RISKING THE SEED

Issue Nine
Spring 2019

Holy Risk

“Encouraging an atmosphere of risk which allows for learning through making mistakes” – we added this statement to our circuit mission strategy recently. It emerged from looking back at the strategies that have worked in the circuit – and those that have not. It spoke to our continual task of looking ahead to recognise new patterns of working and ‘being’ needed for the coming months and years.

In the last issue of *Grapevine*, we looked at ‘learning’, a concept closely related to ‘risk-taking’. As we participate with God working in our midst, we learn that God is continually taking risks with us – and encouraging us to do the same with our world, our churches, our ideas, our plans. We could call this Holy Risking. In the contemporary world, part of Holy Risking is doing the ‘risk assessments’. What might fail? What injuries might be caused? Where is the danger? How might the dangers/injuries/failure be mitigated if we proceed?

Sometimes it is riskier to do nothing than to do something. ‘Failure’ is often the only way we learn what will

work. And sometimes God’s view of ‘risk’ might be different from our own perspective; that’s a big part of what we mean when we say we’ll ‘pray about’ something!

Holy Risking is about catching God’s vision of what-can-be and holding on to that when all the signals seem bleak. We then ask hard questions of ourselves. Are we really doing God’s Will? Are we trying to force our will on to God’s agenda? Have we listened adequately to what God needs us to be doing (or not doing)?

I’m reminded of the Holy Risking of the missionary heroes of the previous eras who gave their all to God, sacrificing family, home, health and wealth to go where God called and spread the Gospel in word and deed.

In this issue of *Grapevine*, we’re reminded of historic risks that Methodism has taken, from the Wesleys in the 1700s to the Pioneer Ministers of the present millennium. People and congregations are still taking on the Holy Risk of following God’s call to different and sometimes difficult situations.

In the past few months in our circuit, we’ve taken some Holy Risks in making funding decisions for mission projects that required outside grants: securing funding for the Youth Pastor position shared by Third Avenue MC (Gillingham) and the Chinese congregation; securing funding for the Gravesend Methodist Church’s renovation project and Centre Manager position; selling and buying manse so that the Ebbsfleet project could continue. At one point in early December, it looked as if all these Holy Risk projects were in financial jeopardy with dismal knock-on effects for the circuit as a whole. We persevered, trusting that we as a circuit were following God’s will. Shortly before Christmas, we had news from rather unexpected sources that all these projects would receive the needed outside funding. Praise God!

We hope that this issue of *Grapevine* will inspire even more Holy Risking in our circuit.

Bonni-Belle



take
a chance
make
a change

Risk?

We are, after all, Methodists!

Where would we be if we didn't take risks? There are the small ones – will it rain and do I need a coat? Then there are the large ones – if we improve our premises, will we have a centre which God will use for the benefit of the community?

That is a question and a risk we had to grapple with at Gravesend before we embarked upon our C21st Project Phase One some four years ago. Why did we ever see it as a risk and go into the human default mode of "doubt"? God knew where we were going and provided the resources for us to create our Community Centre. Over three years after the builders left, our mission (which we thought was community-centred) has exploded and is unrecognisable compared with where we were before.

Our latest focus is on homeless people and in the last three years, with our church, non- church and other faith partners, we have literally served up thousands of meals; provided thousands of showers; prevented

thousands of sleeps on the street; given out thousands of items of clothing and washed so many thousand sets of clothes that we have had to install a semi-commercial laundry.

Every day it continues to grow. Just today, Monday 10 December, in addition to our daytime "Washing off the city colours" and "Tea and Toast" for our homeless guests; we hosted volunteers from the international financial organisation "World Pay"; sorted out hundreds of kilos of donations from the traveller community via ASDA; and were given a few minutes' notice that a full van load of clothes, sleeping bags and tents was about to arrive from Veterans for the Homeless UK; all this while a Mental Health course, Tai Chi and our Sisterhood Christmas Party were going on!

So what is the next risk coming our way? Having spent the last three years saving up and seeking grants for our C21st Project Phase Two (to transform the main road frontage of our premises) we are now nearing our target of over £500,000. We are now in dialogue with our architects with the hope that by Christmas 2019 we will be on the next stage of our journey. Risky? Not when God is in control.

Our strapline is "Your town centre church bringing God's love to the heart of the community". With God's help I hope we are worthy of that strapline.

Eric Davis
Gravesend Methodist Church
& Community Centre

Gravesend Methodist Church & Community Centre

C21st Project Phase 2 –
Proposed New entrance / Community Cafe



Risking the Seed

Over the past few years the Circuit and the wider Methodist Church have been encouraging churches and individuals to take faith-filled risks. The scheme which funds my role, Venture FX, has as its strapline two words, “Holy Risk”, and encourages and supports its Pioneers to live in that dangerous but life-giving space. We have been given permission to fail, to experiment, to prayerfully seek the Holy Spirit and respond without fear of rejection, to learn and grow in our missional confidence. Cultural and missional discovery only really happens in a space of freedom and permission giving, which is precisely what the Methodist Church has embodied and is encouraging through the Fresh Expressions movement and the wider Pioneer Pathway.

On this journey I am reminded of the parable of the sower. Seed was a precious commodity in first century Near Eastern communities and throwing it around with such abandonment would have been seen as sheer foolishness by Jesus’ first hearers. Nevertheless, the sower in Jesus’ parable throws the seed into places where he knows

it’s not going to grow, but it is still sent out. This reckless use of seed springs a surprise on those first listeners as a miracle happens. Yes, much seed is wasted, but where it takes root a supernatural harvest is produced, far beyond the normal expectations of the careful farmer. Here the grace of Jesus is spread far and wide, the Kingdom is expressed in both good and bad soil. The risk of rejection and misunderstanding is a cost worth paying in this parable, because this risk is the same means by which we see a miracle harvest. You can’t have the miracle of a hundred-fold increase by being careful with the seed – Kingdom increase can only exist in the place and practice of Holy Risk. If we want to see the miracle harvest we also need to faithfully take the risks and pay the cost.

I have recently lived through risk, mission, failure, death, and rebirth, as we lived and witnessed within the Bridge development in north Dartford, launched a wonderful missional community, built a space of welcome and witness in the form of a coffee shop, wrestled with the reality of this coming to an end, and moved camp to another community. This journey hasn’t been without its costs, questions, doubts, fears, and

of course, its life-changing Kingdom successes. Over these years we were able to share the love of Jesus and the truth of the Gospel with a wide spectrum of people, seeing people become Christians, several move towards a faith in Jesus, and others have their preconceptions of church, Jesus, and Christians profoundly challenged.

Our time on the Bridge was rich in missional experiences and opportunities, seeing the Holy Spirit at work in leading people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus, and we now take this legacy into the new community at Ebbsfleet. The Beacon Church has become the Ebbsfleet Community Church, with most of its members sensing the call to transition into this new context. We begin again, with 21 adults and children meeting in the kitchen of the new manse, with some hard-won learning and wisdom undergirding us, as we seek the Holy Spirit once again to build his church. It is on this new soil we now scatter the seed, as a church, a circuit, and a Kingdom people, to prayerfully bring in a miracle harvest, “a hundred times what was sown,” for his Kingdom and glory.

Bart Woodhouse

Taking Risks at Union Street



When John Wesley, having been turned away by some Anglican congregations, preached in the open fields, (a practice considered nothing short of indecent at the time), he showed himself to be quite a risk taker. As he approved lay preachers and later ordained presbyters, alarming even his brother Charles by how far he was moving away from his Anglican roots, John justified his actions as being necessary to enable him to save as many souls as he could. Whether challenging the slave trade or allowing women to be class leaders, John Wesley put his head above the parapet to achieve what he believed to be right.

Are we as prepared to embrace change and take risks in sharing our faith today? Often it seems easier to look back to how things used to be than to think outside the box about how they could be. However at Union Street, we have been trying some different strategies to engage, as Wesley did, with our local community.

Like many churches, we have been exploring new ways of welcoming families. Through a Messy Church session in each school holiday and a Messy breakfast once a month, we have met people who don't make it through our doors for a traditional service. Some of our members also run a weekly Youth drop-in after school. We have tackled the challenge of managing our expensive-to-maintain premises by inviting the Maidstone International Community Church to have their base here too; both congregations worship on a Sunday morning in different parts of the premises, making us much better stewards of our resources.

Now Bonni-Belle is leading us to take on other new challenges. Each month, she leads us in a Sunday "messy service" where merely passive attentiveness isn't really an option! From late December we are hosting the Winter Shelter one night each week, as well as providing a base for guests to register for the shelter each day. Additionally, we are exploring ways of engaging with social problems, through a monthly

"Faith and Society" shared lunch and discussion after a service. Already we have made ourselves better informed on food poverty, universal credit and homelessness, and we have ideas for lots more topics to come. We weren't sure whether anyone would turn up at first, but attendance has been good and different members have brought a great deal of insight and first-hand knowledge to the discussions.

We were also proud to be one of the communities opening up our premises during Inter-Faith week in November, when we welcomed a variety of visitors, of various faiths and none, who were keen to understand more about our faith and worship. Whether all these initiatives help our congregation to grow in numbers remains to be seen, but we hope John Wesley would be proud that we have the courage to try new ways of worship and engagement with the gospels for our 21st century context.

Laurel Townend

The Magician

A parable about God's grace

An elderly lady who had been faithful in her church sadly died. The service in her memory was held and in the fulness of time her husband wondered what to do in her memory which would be useful and lasting. He pondered long and hard and decided that a suitable answer was to provide a new set of double-handled, velvet collection bags to replace the old wooden plates which had been used for very many years. He consulted the powers that be and a decision was made about their colour and size. A date was found on which they could be dedicated and after their dedication they were put into use.

On the first occasion it seemed very strange – people could no longer see the notes and the coins. It was especially strange to a couple of young children in the congregation. The first sat at the front with his parents and

wondered quietly about when the rabbit would appear from the bag. The second, sitting a couple of rows back, who was not so circumspect in his comments, asked whether the money would come out twice as large.


This caused people around to smother laughter which spread around the building as word was passed. How easily children, seeing something amusing to them, can point adults towards pondering the love and grace of God. When he gives, it is in abundance and when we give to him, he has the power to increase the gift in its value and influence.

Who has ears, let them hear!

Vic Downes

North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan March - May 2019

		MARCH					APRIL				MAY			
		3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26
		<i>Sunday before Lent</i>	<i>1st of lent</i>	<i>2nd of Lent</i>	<i>3rd of lent</i>	<i>4th of Lent</i>	<i>5th of Lent</i>	<i>Palm Sunday</i>	<i>Easter Day</i>	<i>2nd of Easter</i>	<i>3rd of Easter</i>	<i>4th of Easter</i>	<i>5th of Easter</i>	<i>6th of Easter</i>
BEARSTED	10.30	LA	Pickard <i>hc</i>	Burch	Pickard	German	Sectional Service @ Union St	Pickard <i>hc</i>	Byard	Pickard	Darge	Graff <i>hc</i>	LA	Pickard
BURHAM	10.30	Trott	LA	Myles	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	Zachar	Willing	LA	Robb	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	G West	Trott	Gray	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>
CHINESE	1.30	K Yu <i>hc</i>	E Yu	K Yu	LA	K Yu	K Yu <i>hc</i>	Beh	K Yu <i>hc</i>	K Yu	LA	Lo/Yu <i>hc</i>	Beh	K Yu
DENE HOLM	11.00	McGregor	Graff <i>hc</i>	Daley-Lee	Packham	Force	Laity	Graff <i>hc</i>	Scott	LA	S Pooley	Laity	Watton	Lee
ECCLES	10.30	Newell	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	G West	Byard	E Vincent	Wade	Willing	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	Myles	LA	LA	Daley-Lee	Zachar
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	Selmes	Gallagher	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Selmes	LA	Selmes	Waldock	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Brown	Selmes	M Harris	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Selmes
GRAVESEND	11.00	LA	Downs	Graff <i>hc</i>	Graff	Pickard	Downs	Gray	Graff <i>hc</i>	McGregor	Scott	Daley-Lee	Graff <i>hc</i>	Downs
	18.30	Graff <i>hc</i>	X	X	X	X	Graff <i>hc</i>	X	X	X	Campbell <i>hc</i>	X	X	X
HARTLIP	18.30	M Smith	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Zachar	Collins	Graff	German	Selmes	Selmes 09.30am	Downs	Watton	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Gallagher	Davies
HEXTABLE	10.30	Campbell <i>pfs</i>	Rowland	LA	Campbell <i>hc</i>	Campbell	Gray <i>pfs</i>	Force	Campbell	Campbell <i>hc</i>	Burch <i>pfs/sa</i>	Packham	Campbell <i>hc</i>	Burch
	18.30	S Pooley	Church Lite 5pm	Campbell	Graff <i>hc</i>	Scott	LA	Campbell <i>hc</i>	us@ St. Paul's	Graff	LA	S Pooley	Graff	Campbell <i>hc</i>
HOPE STREET	10.30	LA	Prince <i>hc</i>	Morgan	LeMasonry	LA	Davies	LeMasonry	Morgan	Gallagher	Collins	Royal/ <i>hc</i>	German	Morgan
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA	Stunell	ang	Baptist	LA	LA	LA	ang	Baptist	LA	E Vincent	ang	Baptist
LARKFIELD	10.00	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	LA	Zachar <i>aa</i>	Shepherd	Daley-Lee <i>hc/ca</i>	M Harris	Myles	Lee	Newell	Daley-Lee <i>hc</i>	Byard	G West	Rowe
	18.30	X	X	pp	X	X	X	X	Easter Carols	X	X	X	X	X
NEWINGTON	9.30	Zachar <i>hc</i>	E Vincent	M Smith	LA	R Vincent	M Smith	Zachar	Prince <i>hc</i>	Collins	Bowerman	Zachar <i>hc</i>	Wade	M Smith
ST ALBAN'S	10.00	ang	ang	ang	Newell	ang	ang	Tolhurst	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang
ST DAVID'S	10.00	Tolhurst	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	Laity	ang	ang	Tolhurst	ang	ang
ST LUKE'S	10.30	G Harris	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Davies	Downs	Selmes <i>aa</i>	Gallagher	Selmes	Tolhurst <i>hc</i>	German	LA	Selmes <i>hc</i>	Byard	Brown
ST WILLIAMS	10.00	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	ang	Gray	ang	ang	ang
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	Wade	Zachar <i>hc</i>	Bowerman	Zachar	LA	Zachar	Brown	Zachar <i>hc</i>	M Harris	Zachar	Davies	Zachar	Collins
SPITAL STREET	10.30	Graff <i>hc</i>	A Pooley	Paine	Force	S Pooley	Graff <i>hc</i>	Burch	Paine	Graff	LA	Scott	S Smith	Hollands <i>hc</i>
STOKE	10.30	Robb	X	X	X	X	Stunell	X	X	X	Stunell	X	X	X
STROOD	10.30	Lee	K Yu <i>hc</i>	Laity	Robb	K Yu	Byard	LA	K Yu <i>hc</i>	Trott	Lee	K Yu <i>hc</i>	G Harris	K Yu <i>ca</i>
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	LA	R Vincent	Packham	S Smith	Graff <i>hc</i>	Rowland	Rowe	Packham	LA	A Pooley	LA	Packham	Graff <i>hc</i>
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	Byard	Myles <i>pfs</i>	K Yu <i>hc</i>	G Harris	Woodhouse	Sectional Service @ Union St	K Yu	G West <i>hc</i>	Shepherd	LA	Myles <i>pfs</i>	K Yu <i>hc</i>	Darge
	18.30	Pickard <i>hc 5pm</i>	X	X	X	X	Selmes <i>hc</i>	X	X	X	Tolhurst <i>hc</i>	X	X	X
EBBSFLEET	10.30	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	X	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley	Woodhouse S Pooley
THE BRENT	10.30	Paine <i>fs</i>	Campbell	Campbell <i>hc</i>	A Pooley	LA	Campbell & Paine <i>fs</i>	Campbell <i>hc</i>	R Vincent	Coates	Campbell <i>fs</i>	Force	Rowland	Campbell <i>hc</i>
UNION STREET	10.30	Pickard <i>hc</i>	M Harris	Pickard	Willing	LA	Pickard Sectional Service	Shepherd	Pickard <i>hc</i>	Zachar	Daone/G Harris <i>hc</i>	R Vincent	Pickard	Tolhurst

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	op Prayer and Praise	t Teaching	un United Nations
ang Anglican (CoE)	cs Carol Service	ecu Ecumenical Service	ht Hextable Team	lc Lessons & Carols	pfs Parade & Family	tp Themed Preaching	us United Service
as All Souls	ca Church Anniversary	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	

New Ventures at Hartlip

When Deacon Pru Cahill came to minister at Hartlip she worked hard to strengthen links between the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church, the school (an endowed Anglican school) and the village as a whole. Among the activities already in place included the fortnightly Hartlip Christian Fellowship where members of both churches and anyone else who wishes join for both spiritual and secular activities; this group continues.

Despite saying "I don't do children," Pru involved herself in the school and having taken the risk she found the work enjoyable as well as valuable.

On 11 November the Methodist congregation was invited to join with the parish church for worship in the church and the Act of Remembrance. It was a privilege to be part of the worship led jointly by Anglican and Methodist clergy. The service was reverent and well attended, with the choir provided by the Anglicans and the organist by Methodists. I was privileged to be invited to read.

The atmosphere as we moved out to the War Memorial was one of respect. We were joined by a few more people as we gathered outside. During the two minutes silence, as we remembered and read out the names of those who had given their lives, there was a collective sense of the debt we owed to those we remembered. We were led jointly by Robin Selmes and George Hulme. It was all the more special because we worked together. There were further activities later with both churches again opening their doors in welcome.

Christmas carols at the village hall were introduced on Christmas Eve. The Revd Robin Selmes continues to work to strengthen our links with the community.



For the next issue:

Please send contributions on 'Our Methodist Identity' as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to nkmc.magazine@gmail.com to arrive by 12 March 2019. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.