



North Kent Methodist Circuit

# grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



*inside...*

REACHING OUT INTO  
THE DARK TIMES

Issue Twelve  
Winter 2019/2020

# Reaching out in the dark times

**During the cold and dark of winter, our churches are always looking for creative ways to share the light of Christ with our communities. Christmas celebrations, Carol Services and Gift or Toy or Christingle Services, Christmas dinners and parties abound. Some churches host Watch Night or Covenant services on New Year's Eve. These are time-honoured traditions that remind us that God's presence is often most keenly felt in the midst of 'dark' times.**

Increasingly our churches are aware that many in our communities find the winter months especially challenging. This edition of Grapevine features several of the creative ways that congregations in our circuit are sharing the Good News of God in Christ with their communities in the winter months.

Bonni-Belle

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## A safe haven in winter

**At Tonbridge Road Methodist Church we have been welcoming guests under the winter shelter scheme since its inception about six years ago. We have a good number of regular volunteers both from church and also from the wider community and we enjoy working together to make our guests feel as welcome as possible. We have always provided a safe haven on a Sunday and have planned our services around this.**

Sunday is a difficult day for those on the streets – the daycare centre is not open, nor are libraries or other municipal buildings. Our guests are often very weary when they arrive at the church, especially as it is quite a walk uphill from the town centre. Some just want to lie on their bed and rest, others are happy to engage in a game of chess, Jenga or any of the games we have available.

We always offer a roast dinner prepared by our wonderful catering team with lovely desserts brought to us freshly made by Jane and her Mum and Dad.

We have been told by our guests that it is their favourite meal of the week!

We hope we provide a relaxed atmosphere where we can chat about anything and everything. We never pry into our guests' lives but will listen if they wish to share with us. The whole idea of the scheme is to help those in need access the services on offer, but we do sometimes see a guest for more than one year. Whilst it is good to see them it is sad that, for whatever reason, their circumstances have not changed.

The one thing our guests like is that they are treated as human beings – they are not invisible as they feel on the streets and their views are valued on the range of topics under discussion.

Several of us have been involved since the inception of the shelter and our lives have been enhanced and enriched by our taking part. Working as a team is great fun and I don't think any of us would miss it for the world!

Sheila Potipher



# *Do you remember... Methodist Guild Holidays?*

**As a girl and a young teenager I regularly went on Methodist Guild Holidays, at first accompanied by my Mum and then as a member of a small group of possibly responsible teenagers! I remember those holidays fondly and profoundly believe that the experiences I had there with Christians of all ages built the foundations of my early Christian beliefs. Those childhood memories have remained with me all my life and I believe the skills learnt on those holidays equipped me for local preaching, giving me the confidence to articulate my faith and to share testimony and fellowship with others.**

Methodist Guild Holidays subsequently became Christian Guild Holidays and since researching them I find that they now have only three holiday hotels left.

So when I went as a wedding guest to the Forest of Dean, I was reminded of a particularly memorable week I spent in that very area, probably in the summer of 1971. I was just 13 years old, at the beginning of what I recall as my rebellious time. I stayed at Lindors, a Methodist Guild Holiday Manor House just outside the village of St Briavels, Gloucestershire, and literally in the heart of deep countryside far from other habitations.

So I searched Google Maps to try to find Lindors, just to refresh my memories, but initially did not find it listed. We drove round and round the village of St Briavels going up and down tiny country lanes, until around one mile beyond the small village I came across what I knew in my heart was the correct location. Nestling at the bottom of the Wye Valley and shrouded with trees, the place was unmistakably the house of my adolescent memories. This was where I slept in a dormitory with other young girls, mixed socially with eye-catching young men and had wonderful long days of country walking, tennis matches, croquet on the lawn and other sporting fun.



Sadly, the house was not called Lindors any more, having been renamed Dean Valley Manor, as it was sold in August 2018 to a non-Christian company. It was still a hotel but with only a semblance of its Methodist history. Still intact were the stained glass windows depicting stories of Jesus, calling fisherman, healing the sick... The sitting room has retained its dark oak panelling and the elegant staircase still swept you upwards to the bedrooms above. Although the memories came flooding back, what I really felt was a deep sense of gratefulness that this stately house played such a large part in making me

the staunch and proud Methodist I have become. My prayer is that others too may have had their Christian beliefs founded and strengthened in such places. Hence my conviction that taking children and young people away to spend time with other Christians will instil an innate sense of wonderment in the kingdom of God which will last with them throughout their lives. It would be good to share stories of the times and places when you felt God speaking directly to you.

**Gill Gray**





# Posada returns to Strood

**A meeting in September 2016 saw several puzzled faces at Peninsular Methodist Church, Strood. 'Well, what is a Posada?' someone asked. Kan explained that it originated from an old Mexican tradition where, in the weeks before Christmas, young people dressed as Mary and Joseph travelled from house to house asking for a room for the night and telling people about the imminent arrival of Jesus. On Christmas Eve they would visit the local church to re-enact the Nativity and place figures of Mary and Joseph in a crib scene.**

Modern day Posada uses nativity figures of Mary and Joseph who travel from place to place. This gives each 'host' the chance to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, making room for Jesus and sharing with all who come to their home.

So the people of Strood set about creating their own Posada. Ann knitted beautiful figures of Mary, Joseph and the donkey, with the shepherds, lamb and wise men coming later. People

signed up to receive the Posada and the travelling began on 17 November 2016 (First Sunday of Advent) and was passed from family to family until Christmas Eve, when the Posada was welcomed back into the church.

Travelling with the Posada was a book to write down reflections and thoughts that surfaced when hosting the Posada. Reading the book is very thought provoking; here are some of the observations:

*Would I invite a strange homeless couple who knocked on my door in the middle of the night into my home? What a very difficult question to answer.*

*My children wanted to know who Mary and Joseph were. This made me think of people who need to know about Jesus.*

*Little Wren has enjoyed playing with Mary riding on the donkey, knocking at doors to find a place to stay, making a stable and putting cushions for the baby Jesus to be born. It has really brought the story to life for her.*

*The donkey needed some TLC when he arrived, hardly able to stand up to continue his journey. I can mend toys and hopefully I can help others in need to continue their journey.*

*We have been blessed by having the Posada here. As I gaze on the figures I think how amazing it is that Jesus came to be born in such lowly circumstances so that I can be saved. I worship and adore you, Lord Jesus.*

We hope to continue the journey of Joseph and Mary again this year for the third year and hope that new families may be able to find room for the weary couple to rest for the night and feel the blessing that comes with hosting our Saviour.

**Mary Eley**



# North Kent Circuit

## Preaching Plan December 2019 - February 2020

		DECEMBER					JANUARY					FEBRUARY				
		1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23		
		1st in Advent	2nd in Advent	3rd in Advent	4th in Advent	1st in Christmas	2nd in Christmas	1st in Ordinary Time	2nd in Ordinary Time	3rd in Ordinary Time	4th in Ordinary Time	5th in Ordinary Time	6th in Ordinary Time	Week before Lent		
BEARSTED	10.30	WEST	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	PICKARD	Union St ss	SHEPHERD	PICKARD <i>cov</i>	LA	PICKARD	GERMAN	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	BYARD	PICKARD		
BURHAM	10.30	— OATES 4pm	ROBB	— OATES 4pm	OATES/ TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	LA	BYARD	NEWELL	TROTT	MYLES	OATES/ WEST <i>cov</i>	WILDING	LA	OATES		
CHINESE	13.30	YU <i>hc</i>	YU	YU	E YU	BEH	LA	YU <i>cov</i>	E YU	YU HINCHCLIFFE	YU	MAO	YU	BEH		
DENE HOLM	11.00	PACKHAM	PRATER	LA	ROBB	XXX	BOWERMAN	GRAFF <i>cov</i>	ROWE	M HARRIS	BOULTWOOD	FORCE	LA	GRAFF <i>hc</i>		
ECCLES	10.30	NEWELL	LA	OATES	R VINCENT	MYLES	LA	OATES WEST <i>cov</i>	STUNELL	G HARRIS	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	LA	OATES	SHEPHERD		
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	SELMES	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	SELMES BOULTWOOD	WALDOCK	SELMES <i>cov</i>	ZACHAR	SELMES	SELMES	YU	M HARRIS	SELMES <i>hc</i>	SELMES		
	6.30	XXX	XXX	XXX	SELMES <i>cs</i>	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		
GRAVESEND	11.00	GRAFF	MARKOVA <i>ts</i>	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	GRAY	S POOLEY	GRAFF <i>cov</i>	M HARRIS	LA	GRAFF	DOWNS	G HARRIS	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	GALLAGHER		
	18.30	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	XXX	ENCOUNTER 4pm	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	US	XXX	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	XXX	ENCOUNTER 4pm	XXX		
HARTLIP	18.30	WILDING	SELMES <i>hc</i>	SELMES <i>cs</i>	Davis <i>am</i> <i>us@third ave</i>	BOWERMAN	SELMES <i>cov</i>	ZACHAR	PICKARD	SELMES	ZACHAR	SELMES <i>hc</i>	GALLAGHER	GRAFF		
HEXTABLE	10.30	FORCE <i>ts</i>	CAMPBELL <i>nat</i>	S SMITH	LA <i>cs</i>	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	PACKHAM <i>aa</i>	LA	ROWLAND	GRAY	CAMPBELL <i>aa</i>	CAMPBELL	ROWE	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>		
	18.30	LA 4.30pm	GRAFF Lite 5pm	LA 5pm	GRAFF	CAMPBELL	LA	GRAFF Lite 5pm	LA	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	LA	LA Lite 5pm	LA	KAHAN		
HOPE STREET	10.30	GERMAN	LE MASONRY <i>hc</i>	COLLINS	PRICE	LA	LE MASONRY	PRINCE <i>cov</i>	DAVIES	GALLAGHER	LE MASONRY	GAMBELL <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	LE MASONRY		
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA	LA	Baptist	Anglican <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	E VINCENT	Baptist	Anglican <i>hc</i>	LA	NEWELL	Baptist	Anglican <i>hc</i>		
LARKFIELD	10.00	OATES	BYARD	KASONGO <i>aa</i>	WILDING	LA	OATES WEST <i>cov</i>	MYLES	US/ECU <i>E Malling</i>	OATES WILLIAMS <i>us</i>	SHEPHERD	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	M HARRIS <i>aa</i>		
	18.30	XXX	Cafe Church	XXX	OATES <i>cs</i>	XXX	XXX	Cafe Church	<i>pp</i>	XXX	XXX	Cafe Church	<i>pp</i>	XXX		
NEWINGTON	9.30	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>cov</i>	BOWERMAN	E VINCENT	LA	WADE	M SMITH	COLLINS	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WADE	M SMITH	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>		
ST ALBAN'S	10.00	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican <i>aa</i>	Anglican	Anglican	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Ang <i>us/hc</i> @ St Williams	Anglican	WILLING	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican <i>aa</i>	TOLHURST	Anglican		
ST DAVID'S	10.00	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	Anglican	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Ang <i>us/hc</i> @ St Williams	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	BROWN	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican		
ST LUKE'S	10.30	GALLAGHER	SELMES <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	GERMAN	G HARRIS	LA	SELMES <i>cov</i>	BROWN	BYARD	PRICE	SELMES <i>hc</i>	DAVIES	STUNELL		
ST WILLIAMS	10.00	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	MYLES	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	Anglican <i>us/hc</i>	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>	Anglican	Anglican <i>hc</i>		
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	DAVIES	M SMITH	ZACHAR	PRINCE	ZACHAR <i>cov</i>	S SMITH	ZACHAR	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WADE	COLLINS	BROWN		
	18.00	XXX	XXX	ZACHAR <i>cs</i>	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	ZACHAR Cafe Church	XXX	XXX	XXX	ZACHAR Cafe Church		
SPITAL STREET	10.30	BURCH	HARFLEET	GRAY	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	GRAFF	LA	GRAY	BURCH	LA	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	ROWLAND	HARFLEET	FORCE		
STOKE	10.30	XXX	XXX	STUNELL	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	ROBB	XXX	XXX		
STROOD	10.30	COLLINS	YU <i>hc</i>	LA <i>gs</i>	YU <i>cs</i>	YU	PRICE	YU <i>cov</i>	TOLHURST	ROBB	STUNELL	YU <i>hc</i>	TROTT	G HARRIS		
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	CAMPBELL	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	ROWLAND	WATTON	FORCE	PACKHAM	GRAFF <i>cov</i>	XXX	LA	S POOLEY	PACKHAM	GRAY		
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	MYLES	OATES <i>ts/pfs</i>	WEST <i>hc</i>	LA <i>nat</i>	STUNELL	KASONGO	G HARRIS	OATES WEST <i>cov</i>	WATTON	SELMES	OATES <i>pfs</i>	WEST <i>hc</i>	LA		
	18.30	Encounter	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	XXX	OATES <i>cs</i>	XXX	Encounter	OATES PICKARD <i>hc</i>	XXX	XXX	Encounter	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	XXX	XXX		
EBBSFLEET	10.30	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	<i>us @</i> Gravesend	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	XXX	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	<i>us @</i> Gravesend	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	WOODHOUSE	<i>us @</i> Gravesend	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY		
THE BRENT	10.30	GILLMAN	MATTHEWS	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	CAMPBELL	HARFLEET	CAMPBELL <i>cov</i>	LA <i>fs</i>	COATES	CAMPBELL	MATTHEWS <i>fs</i>	LA	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	PACKHAM		
UNION STREET	10.30	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	PICKARD	M HARRIS	Sec Service @ Union St	PICKARD <i>cov</i>	R VINCENT	PICKARD	WALDOCK	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	MYLES	PICKARD	LA		

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	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	

# Slovakia, my homeland

## A little bit of history, culture... and Methodism.

I am Slovak. I live in the UK. What on Earth am I doing here? Not a lot, but I hope it has some purpose.

I feel that I want to share a little bit about Slovakia. Perhaps you will like it. If not, that's fine. But if so, we can all get together and see some places in this country and meet some people there as well.

Talking about history could be a long lesson and it gets boring, so let's make it short. We became an EU member in 2004 and had our "Brexit" in 1993 when the former Czechoslovakia split into two countries. We designed our language in 1780–1840, and we were evangelised in the eighth century, but it still goes on.

Culture? Learn a little bit please! I have met a couple of people in the UK over the years asking me whether we have TV, cars and even electricity! Slovakia has the largest car production per capita. Jaguar Land Rover just moved in as well.

But the truth is that not a lot of people have heard about Slovakia. In most cases they confuse it with Slovenia. No, this is not Slovenia, it's a different place. Yet we are part of a greater Slavic family together with some Balkan nations, Poles, Czech, Russians and Ukrainians. This means significant language similarities and we almost understand each other. If we managed to agree together we would be a massive empire, but nobody listens to me!

We have absorbed a lot from our neighbours the Germans and Hungarians also. Our food is good but most dishes do not comply with modern dietary requirements. It is not gluten or dairy free and if it contains meat it is very fatty. *Halušky, pirohy, langoše, strapa ky, šošovicová kaša, držková polievka, kremeše, veterniky...* Ice cream is totally

inspired by Balkan recipes. I mention this because it is a kind of ice cream you do not have in the UK. It is delicious, much cheaper and comes in lots of flavours.

Our folklore is great. It influences modern music as well and if you don't mind not understanding the lyrics, Google music bands like *Kandra ovci, Tublatanka, Hej Sokoly*. It has a lot of energy and the texts are very patriotic and express a lot of Slovak soul.

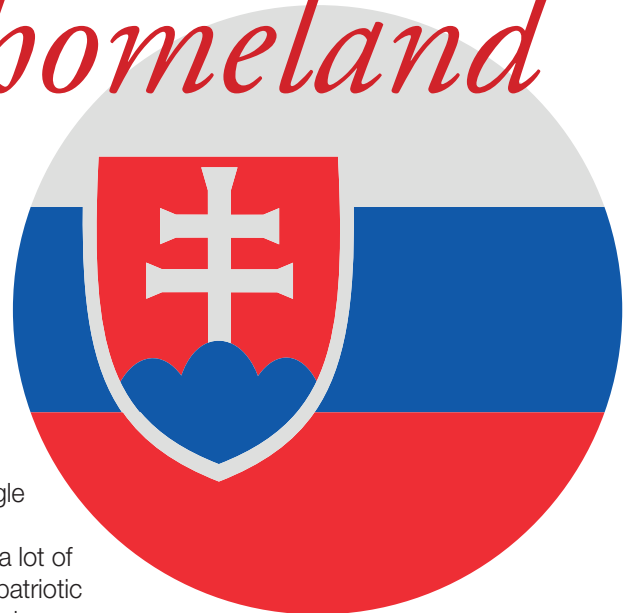
You may have heard about Slovaks in sport: Peter Sagan, winner from the Tour de France, Daniela Hantuchová in tennis, Martin Šrtel played in Liverpool. We also have champions in alpine skiing, canoeing, and Slovakia is 2012 world champion in ice hockey.

The Methodist church in Slovakia is a part of a wide family of churches. The main church is Roman Catholic, with the Greek orthodox, Orthodox, Lutheran and United reformed churches as well. Then there are churches like Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal which are small in numbers but great in passion for reaching the nation. Methodism came to Slovakia from Texas. There were Czech and Slovak immigrants who followed the call to bring their faith back to their homelands. The first mission in Bratislava, the capital, began in 1936. Not long before WWII some

of the first congregations were formed, but with the impending war a lot of people had to leave the country and only a remnant was left. After the war our country joined the Czech Republic and became communist. A period of oppression and persecution followed for the next 45 years. When the communist regime ceased there was an amazing two years of spiritual awakening. The Methodist Church planted a few more churches and we now have 11 places of worship and a membership of 500. Our superintendent is Stefan Rendos who visited Sittingbourne once.

Slovakia has beautiful places to visit, good food and friendly people to meet. I hope there will be a chance to go and see, make some friends and encourage each other in faith.

**Robert Zachar**



## *For the next issue:*

Please send contributions on '*Springing into action: new projects in our church*' as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to [bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk](mailto:bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk) to arrive by 11 December 2019.

If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.