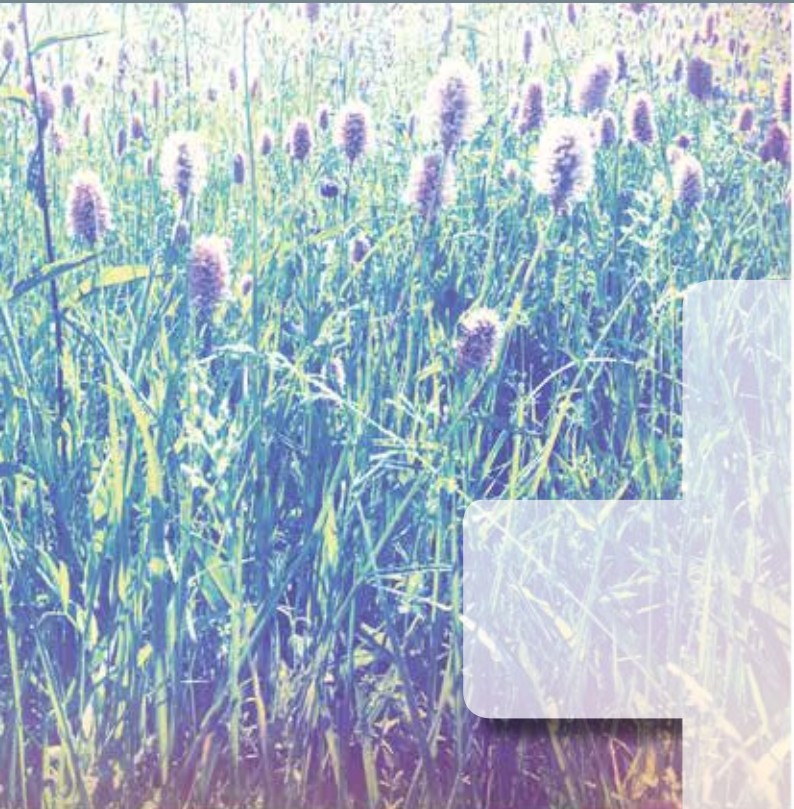




 North Kent Methodist Circuit

grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



inside...

SPRINGING INTO ACTION:
NEW PROJECTS IN OUR CHURCHES

Issue Thirteen
Spring 2020

Behold, I am making all things new!

Spring is the time of new shoots, buds bursting forth, warmer breezes and putting away the heaviness of winter. It's the season when we celebrate Easter and Jesus bursting forth from the tomb! Many of our churches have been experimenting with new ways of 'being church' for their own members and for those in the communities around them. Some are coming up with new ways to use their buildings in response to situations around them. This issue of Grapevine highlights some of those 'new things.' We'd like to hear from others about what's working in their patch of the North Kent Circuit.

Bonni-Belle



Could North Kent become an Eco-Circuit?

Several at Union Street, Maidstone have been thinking about practical ways to show we care for God's good earth. We learned about Eco-Church from the A Rocha website (ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/) and found a variety of resources to do just that. They include the Eco-Church award system which offers bronze, silver and gold 'awards' for congregations which can show just how 'eco-friendly' they are. We took the free online survey one Sunday after morning worship to find out what we would need to do to qualify. The five areas considered are: Buildings, Land, Worship, Community Involvement and Lifestyle. We got 'gold' in one area, 'silver' in another, 'bronze' in two areas, with only one area below the bronze level. Since then, we've

been brainstorming ways to get that last area up to bronze – which will mean we hope soon to have an overall Bronze Award status!

The challenge is now extended to the rest of the circuit churches: what level Eco-Church award could your congregation achieve? Don't worry that various circumstances might disqualify your church; you get points for what you're doing, not for what you can't do. You might already qualify, perhaps even for Silver or Gold! Give it a go! If all the churches in our circuit got at least to the bronze level, we could become an Eco-Circuit – the first in the District!

Bonni-Belle

Why I'm a Huddler

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Hebrews 10:24-25

When Methodism first started John Wesley encouraged the development of different kinds of small groups. These groups called classes and bands met regularly, the idea being that people were to be accountable to each other about how each was living the Christian life.

Today, these small groups are known in our circuit as **huddles** and have been found to be one of the most powerful ways for people to feel that they belong, to learn and to grow their faith. Here is a testimony from someone who attends such a meeting:

"I think I've been searching for a long time for a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God. I have always struggled with 'once a week' Christianity, where for the rest of the week I was plunged back into the often challenging and uncertain 'outside world'.

I tried taking on various roles within the church, but that just left me stressed. I tried staying away from church to work out my own salvation, but that was just isolating. I also tried book learning and theological courses, but I could almost feel God getting further away. I have always been one to question but, frustratingly, I wasn't finding any answers.

Then I went along to a service given by the team that went to Brazil with Gary Watt, and listened to accounts of large numbers of people encountering God, in services, through prayer and laying on of hands. I was in awe of how the power of the Holy Spirit changed them, often with physical manifestations. I realised just how hungry I was for such an experience in my life. I spoke to one of the team afterwards, was invited into a huddle, and my life changed completely!

In our huddle we talk over our week, pray together, laugh and cry, share Bible passages and testimonies, support and help each other to grow closer to God while constantly praying for the infilling of the Holy Spirit which has been such a revelation to me. I particularly love that I can say or feel anything without judgement, and I have come to really trust my fellow 'huddlers'.

I've experienced such growth, have discovered the great power of the Holy Spirit, and seen prayer answered. God is so much more powerful and loving than I ever knew, and I now feel so enriched by his constant presence in all aspects of my life!"

The above testimony is not unusual amongst 'huddlers'; each has a story of growing in their knowledge and love of God, which has gone on to transform their lives. So if reading this has kindled your interest in huddles, please speak to your minister.

Ali Christian & Alan Connor
Larkfield Methodist Church

Prayer as we grow spiritually

As I write this, it is not yet Christmas (just two weeks to go). You may be reading this around the beginning of Lent, a time when amongst other things we examine where we are spiritually and any possible changes we can make. Often this is a personal process but if we make it a joint exercise this can sometimes bear greater fruit. Meeting together for prayer, bible study, meditation or simply conversation over a cup of tea or coffee and cake – if you haven't given it up for Lent – may give us time to develop ideas into plans.

Individual churches have their own strengths and particular projects and forms of outreach:

the Boys and Girls Brigade at Larkfield, Night Shelters at Gravesend and Tonbridge Road,

Wiggles "stay and play" group at Sittingbourne, Take Time meditations at Hope Street and Spital Street are just a few of so many regular activities.

Various churches run coffee mornings, lunch clubs or tea and cake afternoons; some of our churches have their own news sheets or magazines; some of our number are involved with Street Pastors or Street Angels. These are just a minute taste of the things that go on in churches in our circuit beyond our Sunday services.

As we go through Lent and beyond, can we pray for all the many activities that happen in our churches during the week?

Could we also pray for those who plan and lead our worship on Sundays: clergy, local preachers and worship leaders?

Could we remember all those who help our church run smoothly for worship: our stewards and organists, those who welcome people at the door and all those who do many other tasks that often go unnoticed, except when they fail to happen?

So many different things happen in our churches. Let all these things happen constantly underpinned by prayer.

Margaret Bowerman

Returning the favour to our Local Preachers

Sunday after Sunday an amazing group of Local Preachers fill our pulpits across the circuit. This year we're having a special service on Aldersgate Sunday, 24 May 2020, at which our Local Preachers will renew their commitment to preaching. This will also be a great opportunity for our congregations to show their support and appreciation for this valuable work done on behalf of us all.

The service will be at 6.00pm at St Luke's Methodist Church, Rochester.
Come and let our Local Preachers know how much you care!

“Tea & Toast” at Gravesend

“Somewhere warm to go to out of the wet to have a cuppa and a bite to eat, get your washing done and have a shower. The volunteers are amazing – it’s like walking in and being greeted by your family, your Nan popping the kettle on, your Dad giving you a hand shake and asking how you are and your Mum taking your dirty washing off you and asking if you want a shower. Thank you to the lot of you for giving up your time. You show amazing kindness and show there are some good people in the world.” MH

Written by one of our daytime homeless guests, this describes how he feels about “Tea & Toast”.

So what is “Tea & Toast”? As the name suggests, it is where the homeless people of Gravesend can get a cuppa, a sandwich, toast or a toasted

sandwich, warm up and stay a while in the company of their homeless friends and our volunteers three mornings a week. Run in our community centre, it morphed from giving out a cuppa or two while guests were waiting for their shower, getting their clothes washed or waiting for new clothes to be provided. It leads to a relaxed atmosphere where other charities like Porchlight may get alongside our guests and help them with potential offers of accommodation, fill out forms and offer advice. Operated in the Christian atmosphere of our church (volunteers are church and non-church), it gives these individual people a “family” and hope for the future.

You may not have a shower or laundry facilities in your church, but do you have a heated room, a kettle and a few willing volunteers?

“I came here last March – I was homeless – but I am now living in a hostel and feel a lot safer and happier. People are always trying to help me in whatever way they can.” IB

Just to update readers: while our C21st building works are going on at the front of the church we are trying to run our community centre as usual. We face the challenge of having to lay out and take down the main hall for Sunday services each week but then “no pain, no gain.” The building works are scheduled to be complete in April, after which we will present a more inviting face to the main road into Gravesend, but that is a story for another time.

Eric Davis
Gravesend Methodist Church
& Community Centre

God beyond all languages

“We are truly grateful!” – a compliment from a parent who has been sending her child to **Medway Chinese School (MCS)** since September 2019. With the support of sponsors and help from **Medway Chinese Methodist Church (MCMC)**, the North Kent Circuit and other organisations, MCS has opened its door to offer Mandarin classes to children aged from five years onwards.

After a term of study in various teaching styles to suit their levels, 26 children come in with expectation and eagerness every Sunday morning during term time and most of them are now turning from shy to shine. Parents are thankful that their children are more confident in speaking their parents’ mother tongue at home. To the parents’ surprise, some children take the initiative to use the extra materials and learn Mandarin during the week. The monthly talk on understanding children and parenting also generates momentum. Parents find it helpful in enabling them to take on a holistic approach that will cultivate a harmonised family relationship and nurture their children’s growth.

The vision of Medway Chinese School is to be a mission project. By meeting the need of the Chinese community, church members will reach out to those who are yet to know Jesus. By God’s grace and his abundant blessings, a family of three whose son attends MCS were baptised on 1 December 2019! Praise the Lord!

MCMC seeks to use other tools such as the Alpha course and meals to share the love of God through this purposeful and exciting ministry. At present, MCS is gearing up for the Chinese New Year performances on 26 January 2020 at the annual Chinese New Year celebration in church and an Open Morning is planned for 1 March 2020 to welcome prospective parents.

Having said that, MCS still seeks donations to support its work in the years to come. If you are interested in supporting us, please contact me for more information.

We know that God is beyond all languages and at the end a great multitude from all nation, tribes, peoples and languages will stand before the throne and before the Lamb to cry out in a loud voice, saying: “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9–10)

Let’s come and adore the Lord God who brings us together as one to proclaim his shining presence among us in the New Year! Amen. **Revd Kan Yu**



North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan March - May 2020

		MARCH					APRIL				MAY				
		1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31
		<i>1st in Lent</i>	<i>2nd in Lent</i>	<i>3rd in Lent</i>	<i>4th in Lent</i>	<i>5th in 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>	<i>7th of Easter</i>	<i>Pentecost</i>
BEARSTED	10.30	NEWELL	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	STUNELL	PICKARD	Tonbridge Road <i>us</i>	BYARD	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	PICKARD	POTTER <i>ca</i>	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	LA	Sectional Service
BURHAM	10.30	— OATES <i>4pm</i>	MYLES	ROBB	LA	G WEST <i>hc</i>	PRICE	OATES	GERMAN	LA	OATES	BYARD	G HARRIS	OATES	TROTT
CHINESE	13.30	YU	NGUANG	E YU	YU	YU/LA <i>ys</i>	YU	SU/YU	YU	YU	YU	E YU	YU	YU	YU
DENE HOLM	11.00	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	ROWLAND	LA	GRAFF	LA	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	FORCE	BYARD	LA	E VINCENT	BOWERMAN	S POOLEY	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	GRAY
ECCLES	10.30	LA	G HARRIS	OATES	MYLES	ROBB	R VINCENT	TROTT	OATES/ CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	WALDOCK	WILLING	OATES/ WEST <i>hc</i>	MYLES	E VINCENT	G HARRIS
	16.00	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	OATES	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	SELMES	M HARRIS	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	SELMES	SELMES	TOLHURST	GALLAGHER	SELMES	SELMES	GERMAN	SELMES <i>hc</i>	PICKARD	SELMES
GRAVESEND	11.00	LA	DOWNES	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	BYARD	GRAFF	E VINCENT	ROBB	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	DOWNES <i>b</i>	MYLES	LEE	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	FORCE	GRAFF
	18.30	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	XXX	ENCOUNTER <i>4pm</i>	XXX	XXX	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	XXX	ENCOUNTER <i>4pm</i>	XXX	CAMPBELL	XXX	ENCOUNTER <i>4pm</i>	XXX	XXX
HARTLIP	18.30	BOWERMAN	SELMES <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	THORN	YU	MARKOVA	SELMES <i>09.30 hc</i>	GRAFF	BROWN	HEWITT	SELMES <i>hc</i>	GRAFF	DAVIES <i>10.30am</i>	THOMPSON
HEXTABLE	10.30	WATTON	FORCE	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	LA	CAMPBELL	ROWLAND	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	S POOLEY	CAMPBELL	PACKHAM <i>ssa</i>	GRAY	LA	M HARRIS	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>
	18.30	CAMPBELL	LA CHURCH <i>Lite</i>	GRAFF	GRAFF	SELMES	ZACHAR	LA	CAMPBELL	OATES	GRAFF	LA CHURCH <i>Lite</i>	LA	US @ St. Lukes	GRAFF
HOPE STREET	10.30	BROWN	PRINCE <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	LE MASONRY	COLLINS	GAMBELL	LE MASONRY	DAVIES	GERMAN	LA	DEAN <i>hc</i>	GALLAGHER	WADE	COLLINS
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA <i>Café</i>	BYARD	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	LA	LA <i>Café</i>	LA	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	LA <i>Café</i>	NEWELL	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	LA
LARKFIELD	10.00	OATES/ WEST <i>hc</i>	TROTT	E VINCENT	WILDING	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	OATES	GRAY	LA	OATES	G WEST <i>hc</i>	M HARRIS	E KASONGO	TOLHURST	WILDING
	18.30	XXX	WILDING <i>Café 4pm</i>	P&P	XXX	XXX	WILDING <i>Café 4pm</i>	XXX	P&P	XXX	XXX	<i>Café 4pm</i>	P&P	XXX	XXX
NEWINGTON	9.30	COLLINS	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	PRICE	DAVIES	BOWERMAN	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	PRINCE	LA	M SMITH	COLLINS	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	STUNELL	PRINCE	WALDOCK
ST ALBAN'S	10.00	US HC @ St David's	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN <i>b</i>	US HC	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	S POOLEY
ST DAVID'S	10.00	US & HC	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	US HC @ St Alban's	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN
ST LUKE'S	10.30	GALLAGHER	SELMES <i>hc</i>	R VINCENT	SELMES	BROWN	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	WILDING	STUNELL	G HARRIS	SELMES	DAVIES	LA <i>us</i>	GERMAN
ST WILLIAMS	10.00	US HC @ St David's	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	M HARRIS	US HC @ St Alban's	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	ANGLICAN
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	DAVIES	WOODHOUSE	ZACHAR	WADE	BROWN	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	GALLAGHER	WOODHOUSE	ZACHAR	M SMITH
	18.00	XXX	XXX	XXX	<i>Café</i>	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	<i>Café</i>	XXX	XXX	XXX	<i>Café</i>	XXX
SPITAL STREET	10.30	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	HARFLEET	GRAY	LA	S POOLEY	S SMITH	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	FORCE	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	ROWLAND	ROWE	A POOLEY	BURCH
STOKE	10.30	STUNELL	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	STUNELL	XXX	XXX	XXX	ROBB	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
STROOD	10.30	PRICE	YU	WALDOCK	YU	M HARRIS	LA	YU	COLLINS	YU	WATTON	YU	ROBB	R VINCENT	YU
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	PACKHAM	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	FORCE	A POOLEY	ROWE	PACKHAM	BOWERMAN	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	BURCH	LA	S SMITH	PRICE	PACKHAM
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	SHEPHERD	OATES	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	US	MYLES	G WEST <i>hc</i>	PRICE	SHEPHERD	R VINCENT	LA	OATES/ G WEST <i>hc</i>	BYARD	KASONGO
	18.30	ENCOUNTER <i>7pm</i>	GRAFF <i>hc 5pm</i>	XXX	XXX	XXX	ENCOUNTER	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	XXX	XXX	ENCOUNTER	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	XXX	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 S POOLEY	<i>us @</i> Gravesend	WOODHOUSE S POOLEY	XXX
THE BRENT	10.30	MATTHEWS	CAMPBELL	HARFLEET	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	COATES	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	HARFLEET	BURCH	GRAY	CAMPBELL <i>fs</i>	LA	MATTHEWS	CAMPBELL <i>hc</i>	COATES
UNION STREET	10.30	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	PICKARD	WILLING	PASSION PLAY <i>us</i>	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	MYLES	ZACHAR	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	TROTT	PICKARD	SHEPHERD	PICKARD/OATES Sec. Service © Bearsted

Plan dates for the June – August plan are due to the office by Wednesday 25th March

aa All-age	bb Boys Brigade	cl Church Lite	gs Gift Service	jca Junior Church Anniversary	om Overseas Missions	ss Sectional Service	tr Team Rector
ac Advent Carols	cf Cafe Church	cov Covenant Service	hf Harvest Festival	ls Lent Service	pp Prayer and Praise	t Teaching	un United Nations
ang Anglican (CofE)	cs Carol Service	ecu Ecumenical Service	ht Hextable Team	lc Lessons & Carols	pf Parade & Family	tp Themed Preaching	us United Service
as All Souls	ca Church 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	

Yarn...what?

Community Yarn Bombing is about creating something fun, unexpected and beautiful, whilst communicating friendliness in urban surroundings often perceived cold and depressing.

At **Larkfield and East Malling Methodist Church**, the Sycamore Knitting and Craft Group have a new yarn project each year at Larkfield and a new display of knitted and crocheted designs appears on the chain-link fence of the car park to brighten our corner at Larkfield traffic lights.

This spring we are making six panels entitled 'in the clouds'. Last spring/summer we had a panorama of colourful floral vistas including butterflies, birds and one cheeky rabbit bobtail. In 2017 our spring display was a Flower Sun Burst.

This is continuation of our yarn displays which we create for three special events of the year: a large poppy wreath for Remembrance, angels and stars (with lights) for Christmas and a cross and daffodils for Easter. Each year we have updated and added to these temporary displays.

We have had lovely comments from people as they pass by, especially when we are putting them up on the fence. The colourful effect is visible from the opposite corner and from the cars as they wait at the traffic lights.



Our other community craft event is the Nativity characters which are displayed in the 12 shop windows in Larkfield. Over the past six years or so we have knitted and crocheted various sets of characters: a set of nativity figures, large sheep, angels, miniature sheep, shepherds and donkeys. Next Christmas we hope to make camels (has anyone a pattern?). The local children search for the characters, record the names and bring their completed sheets to Messy Christingle. Shopkeepers welcome us each year as we enter, saying 'It's that time of the year again', and they enjoy thinking up unusual names for the characters.

Sylvia Ratcliff



For the next issue:

Please send contributions on 'What the Circuit does' as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk to arrive by 25 March 2020. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.

Did you see a Christmas Angel?

**Bearsted Methodist Church
'Christmas Angels', 2019**

First organised in 2014 by the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit and taken up by many churches across the country since then, the aim of Christmas Angels is to share God's love and to bless the community in public places and community spaces with a Christmas message.

As the organisers explain, "In the Christmas story, angels always come with a message to share so we wanted each Christmas Angel to do the same."

The idea is very simple: knit an angel, attach a label with a Christmas message and leave it in a place for others to find. In 2017 over 60,000 angels were knitted. In 2018 when they lost count of the number of angels knitted nationally, Bearsted Methodist Church knitted and placed over 250 angels around the village. This year we aimed to knit 1000 angels and invited the local community to help with production.

Last year, following a commissioning service, the angels were distributed in early December. We had no idea how they had been received until we were alerted to responses appearing on social media. We were amazed by the number of comments we received on the local Facebook Community page, all of which were positive. Examples included:

My daughter found this today on a walk to my friend's. How lovely! She has called it Angel Gabriel and is absolutely delighted with it. Thank you. X

There is good in the world! xxx

Beautiful thing to do. It's touched a lot of hearts.

Could some kind person get one to us please, we are in need. x

This year's angels were commissioned on 24 November prior to their distribution around the village at the beginning of December. We know people were looking forward to finding an angel and hope they were not disappointed. Whilst children especially love them, they are much appreciated by adults as well.

We hope they brought joy into a dark world this Christmas.

Sue Byard