



North Kent Methodist Circuit

grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN

你好

Ni Hao
Hello

inside...

MEDWAY CHINESE
METHODIST CHURCH (MCMC)

Issue Twenty One
Spring 2022

NKMC's fastest-growing congregation

This issue of *Grapevine* features our fastest-growing congregation, the Medway Chinese Methodist Church. MCMC began as a family fellowship group in the late 1990s, started by a group of people who had immigrated from Hong Kong before 1997. In 1998 the group became a church in its own right under the leadership of the Revd Yap and joined the North Kent Methodist Circuit. In 2015, the Revd Kan Yu became minister of the MCMC, and when she moved to another circuit in 2020, the Revd Paul Lau, a retired Anglican vicar, took her place.

Members of today's Chinese congregation have come originally from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia; some speak Cantonese while others speak Mandarin. They are a dispersed congregation living in several locations across North Kent. Everyone in the congregation is part of a small house or cell group. Much of their worship and fellowship is centred at Third Avenue Methodist Church, Gillingham, though one cell group has met at Union Street Methodist Church, Maidstone, for many years. During the pandemic, they have met online for worship and fellowship; a few of their online groups included people living in Hong Kong who have now moved to Kent and are able to join MCMC in person.

MCMC Chinese School

Ni hao! Hello! This is the greeting I get most Saturday mornings when I log on to the online Mandarin class with Aaron Xie of the MCMC Chinese School. For the next hour I am stretching my ears and my brain to decipher a different language and a different way of thinking. There are lots of laughs along the way

as we enjoy each other's attempts to understand what's going on... and try to make intelligent responses!

Back in 2018, when Kan Yu first suggested establishing a Chinese School to help the children of Chinese immigrants learn Chinese language and culture, I did what I could to support their efforts to secure funding for the fledgling effort. Not only would it provide opportunities for BBCs (British Born Chinese) to keep in touch with their linguistic and ethnic roots; the school also had the potential to strengthen family ties between the younger generations who often only knew English and their parents and grandparents who didn't. It could also provide more outreach links between the church and the Chinese community. The North Kent Circuit meeting also showed its support for this outreach into the growing Chinese community in the Medway and beyond.

As we began to work out the logistics, we realised that since many of the Chinese families were engaged with work in the restaurant industry, the 'school' needed to operate at the weekends, especially on Sunday. MCMC's worship services were already taking place at Third Avenue on Sunday afternoons, so Sunday mornings became the time for the Chinese school lessons. The Robert Napier School, just across the street from the Third Avenue Church, became the site for the Chinese classes. The Revd Kan Yu would meet with the parents about once a month to help them understand the challenges their children were facing in British culture.

We needed teachers and found volunteers for the Beginning,

Intermediate, and Advanced level classes which began in September 2019. The children began learning not only Chinese language but also some songs and dances for the Chinese New Year celebrations to be held in February 2020. Indeed, they learned their parts well and provided a delightful programme in the Third Avenue church hall for a large audience that included the Mayor and the Methodist District Chair.

When COVID was first discovered in mainland China a few weeks later, the whole work of MCMC was immediately affected as the world began to look at all Chinese with great suspicion. The school sessions went online soon after, so classes could continue. In the months that followed, some restructuring of the school also took place, with the volunteer teaching positions becoming paid positions and the previously paid admin positions going to volunteers. During that time, a change of ministers was also happening with the Revd Kan leaving for another appointment and the Revd Paul Lau coming to take her place.

It was also in those early months of COVID that the school decided to pilot a class of English-speaking adult students. Since I had been an avid supporter of the school in principle, I realised I also needed to be a practical supporter, so I signed up for the class along with a half-dozen others from the circuit. Our first few classes were challenging indeed as most of us had never learned Mandarin before and our teacher had never taught students who hadn't grown up with some Chinese

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The Congregation, Education, Immigration, and Integration

By Henry Chung

language at home. We decided to meet on Saturdays as neither the teacher nor we students were available on Sundays. And since we were still in the midst of the pandemic, we started our classes online.

At the end of its first school year, in August 2020, the school celebrated with a programme and gave out certificates to its first batch of students. I managed to record a two-minute message in Mandarin which was played for those gathered in person while I was leading a worship service elsewhere. I got my certificate, too!

Eighteen months later, the classes continue for the children on Sundays, though the school has lost one teacher, so there are two classes on Sunday mornings and two in the afternoon. My knowledge of Mandarin has progressed significantly. I've had to find apps on my phone to help with daily practice, and the members of our cohort have changed quite a bit, but we're making progress.

I am far from being able to 'preach' in Mandarin, let alone carry on a conversation, but I have enjoyed my pursuit and learned a lot about the world's most widely spoken language. I've also got a little better understanding about how a different culture thinks and expresses itself. Ni ne? (How about you?)

Bonni-Belle Pickard

Medway Chinese Methodist Church (MCMC)

The Medway Chinese Methodist Church was founded in 1998 by a group of Hong Kong immigrants who moved over to the United Kingdom during the 90s. It originally started as a family fellowship and, with God's guidance, joined the Methodist Church (UK) and became part of the North Kent Methodist Circuit. A variety of members with different backgrounds came from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia.

In 2020, the British Government announced the eligibility for BN(O) British National (Overseas) passport holders to reside in the UK. Since then, we started to plan and prepare for the arrival of those soon-to-be new immigrants by creating a focus group to help them settle down and integrate into the local community. We have now welcomed more than 30 new Hong Kong families as well as individuals, and our congregation has since grown from 40 brothers and sisters to over 70. The majority of the new HongKongers are still renting their homes while searching for their ideal location and property to purchase. It doesn't matter where they settle; our aim is to spread the Gospel, serve the Chinese community and integrate them into the local Chinese and the English community.

Medway Chinese School (MCS)

The MCS was established in 2019, a project of MCMC to help British Born Chinese (BBC) learn their mother tongue (Mandarin or Cantonese) as well as allow anyone who is interested

to learn the Chinese language and its culture. Classes are carried out at the adjacent Robert Napier School at Third Avenue providing a professional learning environment. There were three classes in the first couple of years and four classes in the current year. Due to the limited resources, all classes are being taught in Mandarin – from Pinyin (Chinese words written in English phonetics) and simple conversations as beginners, to learning simple Chinese characters in the intermediate to advanced levels. Due to the pandemic, in the second year all classes were carried out via Zoom, and the number of students dropped from 26 in the first year to 15 in the second year. With the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions, classes have returned to physical classrooms, and we now have 30 students. In addition to the classes for the youngsters, we also have an online adult class every Saturday morning during term time and there are 3 students. Two of these are English speakers, including our North Kent Circuit's Superintendent, Revd Dr Bonni-Belle Pickard. [continued ►](#)



Integrating the New, the Old, the East and the West

Picnic at Mote Park, 30 August 2021



**Mid-Autumn Festival Celebrations at Third Avenue,
19 September 2021**



**Mid-Autumn Festival Celebrations at Union
Street Methodist Church, 25 September 2021**



Personal Safety and Home Security Seminar, 10 November 2021
by Mr Bob Mahay, Community Liaison Officer, Medway District



Outreach workshops

“How to make a traditional English Christmas cake,”
27 November 2021



“Making Candles and Lipsticks,”
27 November 2021



“Sweet Honey” Cell Group

One of three cell groups to integrate the new Hong Kong families with local Chinese families and to support each other.



Fellowship songs led by one of our cell group leaders at our first gathering.



One of our gatherings at a sister's restaurant and celebrating a couple of birthdays.



Visit to the Rochester Castle and the Rochester Christmas market.



Badminton Group

Badminton Group was established in September 2021 to encourage anyone from the church and their friends to mingle together via a popular sport and enjoy fellowship together. We now have over 35 active participants from all ages. Groups have been meeting on Sunday evenings and Wednesday afternoons at the Medway Badminton Association in Gillingham.

North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan March - May 2022

		MARCH				APRIL				MAY					
		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	
		1st of Lent	2nd of Lent	3rd of Lent	4th of Lent	5th of Lent	Palm Sunday	Easter Day	2nd of Easter	3rd of Easter	4th of Easter	5th of Easter	6th of Easter	7th of Easter	
BEARSTED	10.30	LA	TROTT	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	BYARD	ZACHAR	READ	NEWELL	LA	WILDING	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	J POTTER <i>ca</i>	–	
BURHAM	10.30	READ	LA	KASONGO	LA	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	LA	LA	–	
CHINESE	13.30	P LAU	E LAU	M YEN	P LAU	P LAU	D LAI	P LAU	–	P LAU	E LAU	P LAU	HING BUN LOK	–	
DENE HOLM	11.00	LA	BOWERMAN	LA	LA	LA	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	BURCH	LA	LA	LA	LA	DOWNS	LA	
ECCLES	10.30	LA	WILDING	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	LA	LA	M HARRIS	LA	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	–	
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	SELMES	WATTON	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA <i>aa</i>	SELMES	SELMES	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	SELMES	SELMES <i>hc</i>	WADE	SELMES	LA	
GRAVESEND	11.00	G HARRIS	G GRAY	GRAFF <i>hc b</i>	WOODHOUSE	R VINCENT	LA	WOODHOUSE	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	DOWNS	COOKE <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	LA	
	18.30	GRAFF <i>hc</i>				GRAFF <i>hc</i>									
HARTLIP	18.30	M HARRIS	SELMES <i>hc</i>	WILLING	LA	SELMES	LA	SELMES <i>9.30 hc</i>	BOWERMAN	GALLAGHER	SELMES <i>hc</i>	MARKOVA	GALLAGHER	GERMAN	
HEXTABLE	10.30	ROWE	LE B-SCOTT <i>hc</i>	PACKHAM	BURCH	LA	LE B-SCOTT	LE B-SCOTT <i>hc</i>	LA	LA <i>ssa</i>	LE B-SCOTT <i>hc</i>	LA	WILDING	GRAY	
	18.30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
HOPE STREET	10.30	LA	LA	GALLAGHER	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	STUNELL	ZACHAR	LA	LA	LA	
KINGSWOOD	11.00	ANG	E VINCENT	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	
LARKFIELD	10.00	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	SHEPHERD	WILDING	WEST <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	TOLHURST	OATES	CARPENTER <i>hc</i>	LA	KASONGO	TOLHURST	OATES <i>us</i>	
	18.30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
NEWINGTON	9.30	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	WADE	M SMITH	TROTT	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	BOWERMAN	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	–	
ST ALBAN'S	10.00	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	TOLHURST	ANG	ANG	ANG	
ST DAVID'S	10.00	ANG	ANG	TOLHURST	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	
ST LUKE'S	10.30	BYARD	SELMES <i>hc</i>	READ	SELMES <i>aa</i>	TOLHURST	KASONGO	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	M HARRIS	SELMES <i>hc</i>	TROTT	YAMOAH	
ST WILLIAMS	10.00	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	PICKARD	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	ANG	
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WADE <i>b</i>	LA	STUNELL	TROTT	BROWN	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	TROTT	BROWN <i>acm</i>	LA	ZACHAR	
	16.00	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
SPITAL STREET	10.30	BURCH	COOKE <i>hc</i>	DOWNS	LA	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	GRAY	LA	LA	WEST <i>hc</i>	S SMITH	LA	LA	
PENINSULA STROOD	10.30	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	PICKARD	NEWELL	LA	WOODHOUSE	M HARRIS	LA	KASONGO	WOODHOUSE	LA	WEST <i>hc</i>	STUNELL	
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	LA	M HARRIS	LA	LA	LA	DOWNS	LA	LA	GRAY	LA	LA	LA	
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	SHEPHERD	LA	WEST <i>hc</i>	ZACHAR	OATES	NEWELL	OATES <i>hc</i>	WILDING	G HARRIS	LA	BYARD	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	
	18.30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
THE BRENT	10.30	KASONGO	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	BYARD	S SMITH	LA	COOKE	GRAFF <i>hc</i>	ROWE	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	BURCH	R VINCENT	
UNION STREET	10.30	WEST	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	PICKARD	READ	WILDING	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	PICKARD <i>b</i>	LA	PICKARD <i>acm</i>	G HARRIS	PICKARD	
ONLINE SERVICES	10.30	PICKARD	WOODHOUSE	GRAFF	ROWE	PICKARD	WOODHOUSE	SELMES	BURCH	WOODHOUSE	PICKARD	MYLES	ZACHAR	OATES	

aa All-age / *b* Baptism / *ca* Church Anniversary / *acm* Annual Church Meeting / *hc* Holy Communion / *cov* Covenant Service / *ssa* Sunday School Anniversary / *us* United Service
Please note: These services are conditional upon government guidance and are subject to change.

Local Preachers' Reaffirmation Service at St Lukes on Sunday, 22 May, at 6.30pm

This will be an in-person service, led by Rev Bonni-Belle Pickard with Rev Helen Hollands, Assistant District Chair.

Do you have a favourite hymn? If you do please let us know by emailing Bonni-Belle and we will feature some in the Summer issue.
For the Summer issue: Please send contributions as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk to arrive by 20 March 2022. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.