



North Kent Methodist Circuit

grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN

inside...

SHARING GOD'S LOVE
WARM WELCOMES

Issue Twenty Five
Spring 2023

Sharing God's Love

At its heart, ministry is about connecting people with God and each other. This can take many forms and requires a variety of gifts. In this issue of Grapevine, we focus on a few of the ways ministry has been happening here in the North Kent Circuit over recent months. From the Warm Place offered at Larkfield's Sycamore Tree to Hope Street's Lighthouse Café, to Chinese language communion services offered in a restaurant; from marking the end of Brian Davies' long and imaginative service as a Local Preacher to marking the beginning/continuation of the Revd David Kichenside's pastoral leadership of the Holy Trinity LEP – all these are ways that the people of the North Kent Methodist Circuit have been responding to and sharing God's love.

Bonni-Belle



Wesley Day 2023

Each year, Methodists around the world celebrate the 'heart-warming' experiences of John and Charles Wesley around the 24th of May. Each year, our Preachers are also to have a service at which they reaffirm the vows they made at their accreditation. This year, our circuit is combining the two events into a one-day retreat for all the Preachers (both lay Local Preachers

and ordained Ministers) on Sunday, 21 May. On that Sunday, all our Preachers will be gathering at the Hartlip Retreat Centre for a day-long workshop/retreat which will end with a Reaffirmation Service in the afternoon. On 21 May, all other services on the Circuit Plan will be Local Arrangements, so that our Preachers can attend the retreat.

As you plan for Wesley Day in your church, please remember and give thanks for the work that the circuit's Preachers – both lay and ordained – do week after week for our congregations and for God's glory!

Do you know your Mandarin from your Cantonese?



Our Chinese congregation, under the new leadership of Lay Pastor, Oscar Siu, has been growing rapidly over recent months. Much of the growth is coming from the arrival of large numbers of Cantonese-speaking immigrants from Hong Kong who have come to the UK under the recent British Nationals (Overseas) programme, also known as BN(O). Some of these Hong Kongers were Christians in Hong Kong, including some from the Hong Kong Methodist Church, who bring a rich heritage of Methodist understanding. Other BN(O)s have had little interaction with Christianity, but they have been attracted by the UKHK Welcome Course that we featured in the last edition of Grapevine. Finding ways not only to welcome but to integrate the newcomers into the life of the Chinese congregation has been a good challenge. The whole of the congregation is divided into small groups for Bible study and prayer; a recent 'small group' gathering included over 20 persons!

Along with the growth of the Cantonese speaking contingent, those speaking Mandarin have also increased in number over recent months. Mandarin speakers come from mainland China as well as Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia.

While the Chinese congregation's Sunday worship services are usually held in Cantonese as that is the 'majority' language, there are efforts to offer a Sunday worship service in Mandarin once a month, as not all Mandarin speakers can understand Cantonese and vice versa. The long-standing Mandarin Bible Study group is growing as well; it is perhaps the only such group in Kent! The group meets weekly at a church member's restaurant in Chatham. Recently they've also incorporated a monthly mid-week worship service because some of their members have to work on Sundays.

This mid-week Mandarin group also asked to have a quarterly Communion service, which proved to be a challenge because our Lay Pastor doesn't have a 'dispensation' to preside over communion. After some discussion, I was persuaded to try presiding over Holy Communion in Mandarin. I suggested a simplified Communion liturgy that I had developed a few years ago; Oscar helpfully translated it into Mandarin. I practised my pronunciation with my Mandarin-speaking daughter-in-law, and suddenly I was standing in front of bread and wine and eager Chinese faces to share the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!



Since then, I've had a few more opportunities to share Communion with Chinese groups, including the Covenant Service on New Year's Day. At least one mid-week Cantonese group with several who can't get to Sunday services also requested Communion. Since I can't speak Cantonese (yet!), I did my parts in Mandarin (which has nearly the same script as Cantonese), and they responded in Cantonese. It's very comforting to know that God understands all our languages and dialects. And as we are made in God's image, it's up to us also to find ways to continually learn from and serve each other in ways that go beyond our original understandings.

Bonni-Belle

Brian Davies

29th January 1938 – 1st November 2022

An Appreciation by Derek Gallagher

Brian Davies was an exceptional Local Preacher and to me personally an exceptional friend. Alongside him for over 61 years of marriage was Brian's wife Joan, who sadly died just eight weeks before him. In so many contexts, I cannot speak of Brian today without also speaking of Joan – and perhaps no more so than when in recent times they cared and nursed each other at home during their respective illnesses. We all recognised over the years that each of them had their individual special gifts to offer to their family, the church and the wider community but also worked more powerfully at times when they worked together as a couple. Examples of this were shown in their joint pastoral work at Hartlip and Third Avenue, their kindness and caring for folk and their brilliant joint organisational skills and management of the SE Methodist Music and Arts Festivals over so many years. They were also known as great hosts at various Methodist Holiday Hotels where Brian came into his own as 'Mr Entertainer' while Joan worked quietly in the background. They both always loved being with people.

Brian was a true disciple with a deep Christian faith and loved his Lord. Attending Luton Road Methodist Church as a teenager, he'd become a member of a Mission Band at 16, sharing in leading worship. By 21 he had qualified as a Fully Accredited Methodist Local Preacher. Over the years he became a highly esteemed and outstanding preacher. Indeed, he didn't just preach locally but was often invited to preach in many parts of the country. Locally, he was renowned as a solid, unwavering, authoritative and dependable preacher. He mentioned recently that he had had the privilege of preaching for 63 years and said that *'My call to preach is as real today as it was when I was 16'*. Brian also had a reputation and special gift for taking funerals due to his quiet and sensitive approach, taking care to keep the



bereaved family involved all the way through. He kept diary notes and a year later, on the anniversary of the funeral, he would be on the phone to the family to see how they were doing – a true sign of his compassion for people.

Away from the preaching side, I and many others regarded Brian as 'Mr Methodist'. His knowledge of things Methodist was second to none. During his lifetime I counted that he had taken on 14 separate important lay jobs across every aspect of church life at a local, Circuit, District and Connexional level. Two examples stand out for me: one some years ago and one more recent.

One day in 1983, Brian was a member of the Connexional Candidates Committee at Church House in London when he voted for the acceptance and entry into the Methodist Ministry of a very young Graham Thompson. Rolling the clock forward, Brian was beside himself with pride when Graham, now his son-in-law, was appointed President of the Methodist Church from July 2022.

The second aspect is to acknowledge the 10 years after retirement when he served in a voluntary capacity at

Third Avenue as their Lay Pastoral Worker. There is no doubt that he had a compassionate heart for the people and their difficulties and challenges. It was in his actions as well as his words that he showed his true discipleship. There is another aspect attached to his discipleship and that is to recognise his sympathy and understanding for others in carrying out nearly 17 years as Chair of the Board of Visitors at Maidstone Prison. He always visited at lunchtime on Christmas Day to make sure the prisoners got a good lunch!

Brian's deep trust and faith in God never wavered – he was confident as to where his journey would finally take him and I'm sure it was that very faith that gave him the inner strength to face bravely his serious operations and treatment during the past two years.

I know it's a cliché, but Brian became like a real brother to me. I referred to him as 'My brother' whenever we parted. He always referred to me as 'My friend'. In A and E at Medway Hospital on the Saturday night before he died, we prayed together and said our farewells but not before he said to me in his typical Brian way 'You've got five minutes to get out of here' – this was him thinking still about me and not himself, knowing that I had to be in London for a crucial family conference the next morning.

All we can ask is that whether our lives are short or long we will have lived abundantly. Brian, you lived more than abundantly. *'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'*. Rest in peace, my brother.



Hello from the Revd David Kichenside

If you look at North Kent Methodist Circuit from Google Earth, almost in the middle you will find the cluster of churches that make up the Local Ecumenical Partnership of Holy Trinity South Chatham: St Alban's, St David's and St William's. However, despite this central location, our geography is somewhat ambiguous. We straddle two Local Authorities, three Town/Parish Councils, and there are areas of Blue Bell Hill, Lordswood and Walderslade that lie outside of the ecclesiastical parish. Confused? You're not alone!

In relation to other churches in Medway, we are something of an



group for young people, as well as supporting the previous Team Rector in her role. I have done much 'lingering with intent' in places you wouldn't usually find a Vicar, building relationships with people who have no inclination to attend church. This area of ministry excites me enormously.

In addition to parish duties, I have served as the Clerk to Deanery Chapter, worked as a Chaplain at Rochester Cathedral and led a few Creative Writing Spirituality Days in the Diocese.

My sense is that the work is only just beginning in South Chatham, and God has much more in store. For this reason, I was thrilled to accept the appointment to become the new Team Rector of Holy Trinity South Chatham and to have the opportunity to accompany the LEP in this exciting new chapter.

The soil is different in Medway. It doesn't necessarily make for good gardening. Like the rocky soil in Jesus' parable, it is flinty and unyielding. But with careful attention and patience, it is possible to see growth happening, often in a surprising and haphazard way. It is not always the plant you expect that comes to light, and what at first appears to be a bramble might end up flowering into a wild rose. Such is the way of the Holy Spirit. I look forward to seeing more of this type of growth in South Chatham and across North Kent as I serve as Team Rector.



odd duck. But what the LEP lacks in geographical identity, or even denominational identity (are we Methodist? are we Anglican?), we compensate for in spiritual identity. A 2015 survey revealed that most congregation members saw themselves as first and foremost followers of Christ: God's people in this particular place. Furthermore, since the COVID pandemic, boundaries between the three separate churches have become increasingly blurred. Having gathering together each week on a Sunday for

the past 18 months, it now feels as if we are no longer three but one, worshipping the God who is One, yet Three. (I feel a new strap line coming on!)

I joined the LEP as Team Vicar in 2014, having served my title as a Curate in Telford. Over the last eight years, I have grown to love the people of Blue Bell Hill, Lordswood and Walderslade. I have had the privilege of working closely with three of our county primary schools, running Messy and Sporty Church, leading a discipleship

The Revd David Kichenside will be licensed as Team Rector of Holy Trinity South Chatham by the Bishop of Tonbridge at St William's, Walderslade on Wednesday 8 February at 7pm.

Larkfield Warm Space



From left to right: Volunteers on our opening day, our Warm Space Christmas Tree and a volunteer having lunch.

It seems incredible that, at the time of writing, it is only two months since we first heard about the Warm Welcome Campaign, which encourages churches and other establishments to offer a warm and welcoming space for people who need to save on heating bills during this cost of living crisis. The Rev. Naomi had mentioned this initiative at the end of a Churches Together meeting, and suddenly the churches in Larkfield were being encouraged to set up a Warm Space, and we did. The Sycamore Tree building at our church was deemed the ideal place, and now we are just completing our fourth week.

It has been an amazing experience, and not one I would ever have wanted to miss. Firstly, because at the time of the Queen's Jubilee, members of our three Larkfield churches, Holy Trinity, Larkfield Community Church and we Methodists had so much enjoyed working together on a Known and Loved mission, that we were excited to be doing something together again. So we set a date for starting, Monday 21st November.

Secondly, because of our wonderful volunteers, those from the other churches and from the community, as well as people who have responded to social media advertising. Their friendliness has made the Warm Space such a pleasant place to be.

Thirdly, because of the guests. Every day we have been open, somebody has come who needed us to be

open. They have come for many different reasons - for help with internet problems, to charge up mobile phones, for companionship, for conversation, for coffee, for cake, and especially for flapjack, and for hot chocolate with marshmallows and cream, to read a newspaper, to do a jigsaw, and recently to have a car battery charged and other car problems sorted. And two men and a dog have come (separately) because they are homeless and need somewhere to be, and to be fed during the day, before heading off to a tent or car! And two boys turned up because their schools were closed due to snow, and they wanted to find out what a Warm Space was about. We expected people to come so that they could turn their heating off and come somewhere warm, and that has happened, but to a limited extent. I think that's because of the weather. When we opened it was still mild and people hardly needed their heating, then the temperature dropped and dropped, but so did the snow, and nobody wanted to come out in such icy weather, except the intrepid volunteers who still turned up, as did our homeless friend and a few others who wanted a nice free cup of coffee.

Fourthly, because it's all free. We are so thankful for the grants that have been applied for from all three churches and other organisations, which are beginning to arrive. We are thankful to the lady who donated lots of new and nearly new toys to sell at

our Christmas Tree Festival so we were able to raise, with other donations, nearly £140; for the generosity of Tesco and especially Morrisons, who have donated cleaning materials, food, drinks, soup, and chocolates(!); for the volunteers who have brought bread and milk and newspapers. For people's amazing generosity, that enables this all to be free, we are hugely grateful.

And reason number five, because God has been clearly at work in all this - in the way the planning has fallen into shape, the number of volunteers who have come, and all the stories of individuals, whether shared or kept secret. A couple of weeks ago, we were discussing how to reach more people. We said we needed a large banner on the fence on the corner, but couldn't afford it. Then the next day a lady contacted the Rev. Naomi, saying, "You need a banner, I will pay for it!" Truly God was at work at that time, and at many times over the last two months.

We still potentially have three months to go, and we still have the right people to find. The banner on the fence helps. After Christmas we plan to do a leaflet drop around some areas of Larkfield. We have no idea how much this project is going to cost. We have no budget. But we go forward in faith, as we know God is at work in our Warm Space in Larkfield.

Monica Wilding, December 2022

The Lighthouse Coffee Shop



**at The Church
in Hope Street,
Sheerness**

The Lighthouse Coffee Shop is a mission outreach project run by The Church in Hope Street and provides a warm and friendly environment for residents of Swale. It is more than just a coffee shop for our customers; for some it is a vital safe haven, where they can buy affordable food and hot drinks and be part of our community in the heart of Sheerness. It allows people to meet up and have a chat and a cuppa with friends and also to make new friends. We have quite a few regulars that we see most days. We try to keep our costs down and are the cheapest in town. Recently, we've received grants from local supermarkets that enable us to provide meals through the Making Tummies Happier programme.

The Lighthouse Coffee Shop also provides work experience and volunteer opportunities, which helps



build confidence for local people and allows them to learn new skills and get 'work ready'. Some of our volunteers have additional needs; coming to help out in the coffee shop really boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

The Lighthouse Coffee Shop works closely with the Hope Street Centre which is also based on the Church premises. We would warmly welcome anyone from the circuit who would like to come and see what we're doing - or just pop in for a cuppa!

Bronze Award for Bearsted

Bearsted Methodist Church has achieved the Bronze Award from Eco Church. This is an online survey about how we, as individuals and a church, are caring for God's earth in different areas of our life and work. The award covers five areas of church life: worship and teaching; management of church buildings; community and global involvement and lifestyle. There are three levels of award: bronze, silver and gold, and having reached the standard for the Bronze award, Bearsted Methodists are currently working towards the Silver award.

Although at first glance the website looks daunting, as one works through it, it becomes clearer how much work

has already been done in the course of normal maintenance and careful stewardship. In the buildings section, for instance, it covers insulation and light bulbs. As far as worship and teaching is concerned, the survey covers how often the church celebrates God's creation in hymns and songs and how often it prays for environmental issues. The whole survey can be found on the Eco Church website.

We have started a Traidcraft stall and begun recycling blister packs that cannot be put into ordinary recycling, both as additional, small ways of caring for God's earth.

Look at the Eco Church website. <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/how-eco-church-works> You might be surprised to see how close you already are to applying for a Bronze award.

Ann Hopwood



North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan March – May 2023

		MARCH				APRIL					MAY				
		5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	
		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	Pentecost	
BEARSTED	10.30	BYARD	ZACHAR <i>hc/acm</i>	WALDOCK	LA	SHEPHERD	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	BYARD	US @ HOPE ST	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	CA <i>tbc</i>	LA	WEST	
BURHAM	10.30	– US 4pm	VINCENT	LA	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA	SHEPHERD	LA	LA	LA	G HARRIS	LA	LA	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	
CHINESE	13.30	JI <i>hc</i>	SIU	E LAU	SIU	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	SIU	E LAU	SIU	LA	E LAU <i>hc</i>	SIU	A LEE	SIU	
DENE HOLM	11.00	LA	ROWE	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	ROBB	LA	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	PICKARD <i>LP accred</i>	ROWE	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	
ECCLES	10.30	NEWELL	LA	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA	G HARRIS	LA	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA	TOLHURST	LA	KASONGO	LA	G HARRIS	
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	WOODHOUSE	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA SUNDAY SQUADS <i>aa</i>	SELMES	M HARRIS	SELMES <i>hc</i>	TOLHURST	LA	SELMES	SELMES	WATTON	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	
GRAVESEND	11.00	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	(EXPLORERS ANNIV) LA	HARFLEET	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	GRAY	ROWE	BURCH	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	HOLLANDS	LA	MYLES	
HARTLIP	18.30	BOWERMAN	SELMES <i>hc</i>	PICKARD	LA	GERMAN	SELMES 9.30am	LA	GALLAGHER	SELMES	GERMAN	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	BOWERMAN	
HEXTABLE	10.30	MATTHEWS	LBSScott <i>hc</i>	WOODHOUSE	ROWE	HARFLEET	LBSScott <i>hc</i>	KASONGO	MATTHEWS	WOODHOUSE	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LBSScott <i>hc/ss ann</i>	LA	LA	
HOPE STREET	10.30	COYNE	LE MASONRY <i>hc</i>	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	LE MASONRY	ELLIS	BOWERMAN	LE MASONRY/ ZACHAR <i>us</i>	LA	LA	LA	THOMPSON	
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA	WEST (M)	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN	LA	LA	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN	LA	LA	VINCENT (M)	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN	
LARKFIELD	10.00	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA WILDING <i>cc</i>	TOLHURST	WILDING	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA WILDING <i>cc</i>	MYLES	WILDING	PRITCHARD <i>us 10am</i>	CARPENTER <i>hc</i>	LA WILDING <i>cc</i>	LA	BYARD	
NEWINGTON	9.30	M SMITH	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WATTON	WADE	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	US @ HOPE ST	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	US @ ST MARYS	
ST. LUKE'S	10.30	SELMES <i>hc</i>	TROTT	SELMES <i>aa</i>	GALLAGHER	SELMES	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	LA	SELMES	M HARRIS	MARKOVA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	
HOLY TRINITY	10.00	ST DAVID'S <i>hc</i>	ST WILLIAM'S	ST ALBAN'S	ST DAVID'S <i>West (M)</i>	ST WILLIAM'S <i>hc</i>	ST ALBAN'S <i>hc</i>	ST DAVID'S	ST WILLIAM'S <i>hc</i>	ST ALBAN'S	ST DAVID'S <i>hc</i>	GALLAGHER	LA	ST DAVID'S	
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	WATTON	LA	MYLES	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA <i>aa</i>	WADE	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	US @ HOPE ST	WOODHOUSE	LA	LA	MARKOVA	
SPITAL STREET	10.30	GRAY	HARFLEET	BURCH	DOWNS	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	GRAY	LA	S SMITH	LA	BURCH	
STOKE	18.30	–	–	ROBB	–	–	–	WOODHOUSE	–	–	–	–	–	–	
PENINSULA STROOD	10.30	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	M HARRIS	SIU	WOODHOUSE	TROTT	LA	WATTON	WOODHOUSE	WEST <i>hc</i>	TROTT	WOODHOUSE	LA	ROBB	
SWANSCOMBE	10.45	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	TERRETT <i>aa/hc</i>	LA	KASONGO	LA	DOWNS	TERRETT <i>aa</i>	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	GRAY	
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	WEST	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	JONES	NEWELL	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	BYARD	JONES	SHEPHERD	WEST	PRITCHARD <i>hc</i>	LA	M SMITH	
THE BRENT	10.30	BURCH	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	GRAY	MATTHEWS	LA/ COATES	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	S SMITH	LA	DOWNS	LA/ COATES	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	HARFLEET	
UNION STREET	10.30	LA	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	G HARRIS	PICKARD	MARKOVA	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	LA	PICKARD	NEWELL	PRITCHARD	PICKARD <i>hc/acm</i>	LA	PICKARD	
ONLINE SERVICES	10.30	PICKARD	WOODHOUSE	SIU	SELMES	PICKARD	GRAY	WOODHOUSE	SELMES	SIU	PICKARD	WOODHOUSE	LBSScott	–	

aa All-age / *acm* Annual Church Meeting / *cc* Café Church / *hc* Holy Communion / *ss ann* Sunday School Anniversary / *us* United Service

Please note: These services are conditional upon government guidance and are subject to change.

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 2023. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.