



North Kent Methodist Circuit

Grapewine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



inside...

AN ALPHA ADVENTURE
SERENDIPITY OR WHAT?
ST. LUKE'S CHURCH CENTRE

Issue Thirty Seven
Spring 2026

Put your money where your mouth is!



There are arguments about what subject Jesus taught about more than any other. Why not settle in with the gospels and several cups of tea to see if you can work it out for yourself? Many suggest that Jesus taught about money more than any other topic. Whether or not that's true, he certainly never shied away from mentioning it. How we use our money is a helpful (and often

challenging) indication of where our priorities lie.

Two of our stories in this edition of Grapevine refer to exciting work that has been made possible by grants given by the circuit: the refurbishment at St Luke's, and the forthcoming church weekend away at Larkfield. The circuit has recently agreed a new policy for giving grants to churches in order to further the churches' mission and outreach; so that our resources as a circuit are used not just to 'keep

the show on the road,' but to obey Jesus' commandment to 'make new disciples.' If your church would like to apply for some of this funding, please speak to your minister or Circuit Meeting Rep for details.

We hope you will enjoy this issue, and the opportunity to connect with the lives and ministries of friends across the circuit.

Every blessing, Rev Naomi

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on." | Mark 12:41-44

An Alpha Adventure at Larkfield & East Malling Methodist Church

Many of you will have heard about the 'Quiet Revival' currently taking place in this country. In recent years, the number of people attending church regularly has actually grown, from 8% in 2018 to 12% now. Most of this growth is made up of younger adults, and particularly young men.

At Larkfield, back in April at our General Church Meeting, we recognised exciting signs of this growth happening all around us. We noticed that a large number of people who connected with the church through activities including Breakfast Church, Messy Church, the Welcome Hub, Brigades and the Toddler Group were starting to ask questions about God, and seeking to take the next step on their journey of faith. Some had requested baptisms, or to become members. We wanted to give

everyone involved in the life of the church the chance to explore the 'big questions' about life and faith. We also wanted to find ways to get to know each other better, so that however an individual connects with the church, they still see themselves as part of one big 'church family'.

We decided to pursue these aims in two ways: by running an Alpha Course, and by organising a church weekend away, and intentionally inviting people from all areas of the life of the church to take part.

The Alpha Course ran in September and October 2025. Larkfield had run plenty of Alpha Courses in the past, but this one was a little different. After consulting with those we hoped might attend, we decided to hold it on Sunday lunchtimes (when most

people were available). We ran three streams simultaneously – after we all ate our main meal together, we divided into an adult stream, a youth stream for 11-18s, and a children's stream, with toys and craft activities led by DBS-checked volunteers. This meant that parents and carers could engage fully in the adult Alpha, knowing that their children were having a great time in the hall.

This was no small undertaking! We had an incredible group of 30 volunteers who prayed, planned, welcomed, cooked, served, washed up, set up, cleared away, led Alpha sessions, facilitated discussions, and ran the children's activities. On any given Sunday, there were up to 18 guests in the adult stream, 11 in the youth stream, and 8 children. (Of course, many of our volunteers enjoyed the discussions as much as the guests!) ►►►



Over the two months that Alpha ran, there was a buzz at Larkfield & East Malling Methodist Church. Some Sundays were incredibly busy – particularly if there was also Breakfast Church or Café Church in addition to the 10am service. On one Sunday, 93 people came through our doors – an enormous number for Larkfield. All of us felt the Holy Spirit at work, infusing everything we did.

We may never fully know the fruits of what took place over those six sessions, but we have heard some wonderful testimonials.

One guest said:

It was so lovely to be surrounded by a community every Sunday and to hear about experiences of faith and how it has helped them. I particularly liked learning about God's plan and how it might not feel like things are going your way at times, but that things happen for a reason. Learning about this and chatting with other people on the course gave me a sense of peace and made me see how having faith, and approaching things with an open heart, will help me with many of my big questions.

Another said:

Alpha has provided examples of faith in action, shown the impact it can have and the strength that can come from God. The sharing of people's journey to, and in, faith was hugely comforting.

Above all, Alpha has shown us it's normal to have doubts about your faith, to question why bad things happen and to wonder what comes next.

The presence of a community, a family, that exists in this church is apparent. A huge thank you for the amazing food and for welcoming us all so warmly.

We are now looking forward to our church weekend away at the end of January – and we are thrilled that 39 people have so far booked to attend, from every part of the life of the church. We are especially grateful for grant funding from the circuit and district that has enabled us to offer this weekend on a 'pay as you can' basis, making it accessible to anyone. Thank you!

Rev Naomi and the Alpha team at Larkfield



St Luke's Methodist Church Centre



Over the last 10 years, St Luke's church has undertaken a programme of major refurbishment of its premises, starting with the main worship area then moving to one of our halls and passageway downstairs.

With the help of the circuit giving the church a grant of £13,000.00 we have just completed the latest phase of improvements being of the Wesley Hall.

This room was the original church building, being built in 1951 with

painted brickwork and very poor insulation. We obtained quotes from two local contractors to refurbish this room completely.

The walls have been insulated, plaster boarded, skimmed with plaster and painted. The ceiling has been lowered and new LED lighting installed and the ceiling insulated. New radiators installed together with new covers and new flooring.

The total cost of the contract was £30,000.00. This was paid for by a

bequest, fundraising and the grant from the circuit for which St Luke's is extremely grateful.

The groups that are using this hall have all said how nice and warm it now is and how modern it feels. While the work was being carried out we have received several bookings based on the refurbishment.

We give thanks to God for his provision and guidance during this project.

Ian Smith



Serendipity or what – an exceptional timeline The background, the connection

In September 1935, my parents Frank and Mary married in London and moved later that month to Sheerness where they joined Broadway (Wesleyan) Methodist Church. My two sisters, Rosemary (who eventually became its Sunday School Superintendent) and Pauline were born in 1937 and 1944, respectively. I was christened at Broadway in 1949. In August 1969, Heather and I were married at Broadway and we left Sheppey together to pursue our respective careers in teaching and the police service – but our hearts never left Sheerness and the Broadway Methodist Church. So as consequence, we often returned to visit friends and family at what could be described as our spiritual home.

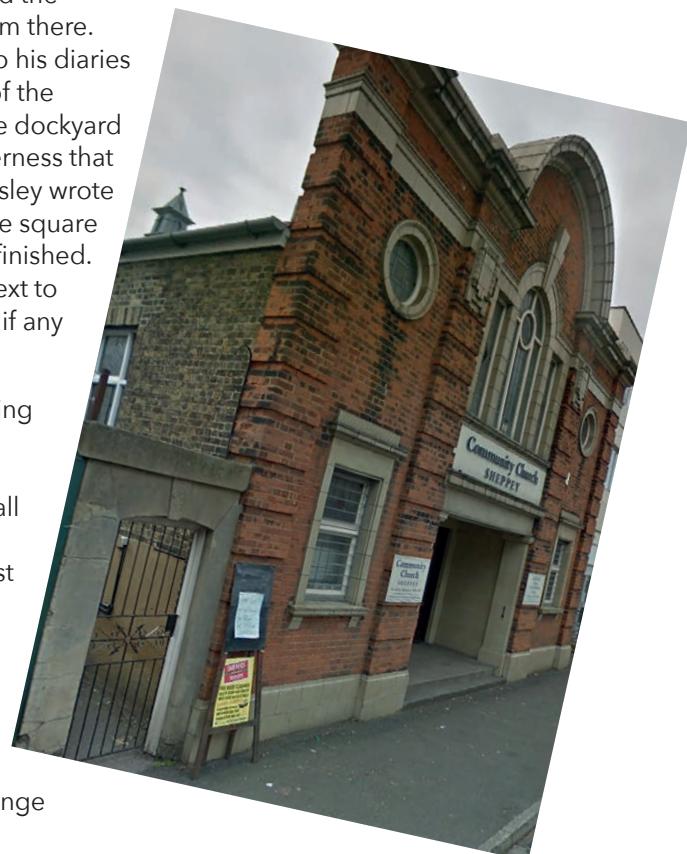
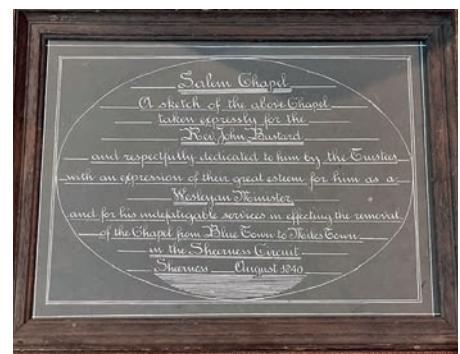
However, by 2010 the congregation of Broadway Church had decided to form an alliance and an LEP (Local Ecumenical Partnership) with the friends at the United Reformed Church in Hope Street, Sheerness. Prior to the move, Stephen Morgan, the Senior Steward and a Local Preacher at Broadway, invited Heather and I to choose some mementos from the church to remind us of happy days and connection at Broadway over many of our early years growing up in Sheerness. I was already in possession of two unique and very interesting church Newsletters from 1884 but we decided to choose two chairs from the Choir Stalls to remind Heather and I of sitting together in the choir when we were teenagers!

In 2011, following in my father's footsteps, I started training as a local preacher and since that time, I have visited the Church at Hope Street to take services and have therefore kept my connection with the former Broadway church members, including Stephen and his wife Heather.

Meanwhile, post 2010, the former Broadway church was taken over by The Community Church Sheppey. Sometime in 2022, by pure chance, Heather and I found ourselves sitting next to Marie Piper, a member of The Community Church, whilst watching a choral concert in Sittingbourne. Through chatting about our former days in Sheerness, we established a connection and common ground. She explained that several items of property belonging to the former Broadway Methodist Church had just been discovered. On her behalf, I contacted Stephen Morgan and the items were collected and taken to Hope Street.

Then, just a couple of months ago, I found myself reading the Winter 2025 Grapevine and I discovered an intriguing article written by Bonni-Belle concerning John Wesley's early visits to Sheerness and the establishment of Methodism there. In particular, she referred to his diaries and the report by Wesley of the building of a chapel (by the dockyard workers) in an area of Sheerness that is known as Blue Town. Wesley wrote 'that by these means a large square house was soon elegantly finished. It is the neatest building, next to the new chapel in London, if any in the south of England.'

A day or so later after reading the article, I received a call again from Marie Piper to announce that another small cache of artefacts from the former Broadway Methodist Church had been found. So, in the first week of November, Stephen and I met with Marie at the Community Church where she showed us her discoveries. It was very strange



to be back in the church where I had spent such an important period of my life.

The discoveries were as follows:

- a footstool made from the wood of the pulpit used by Wesley in his visit to Sheerness on 3rd of October 1786 and 3rd of December 1788
- an oil painting of a certain Salem Chapel and a description of when it was moved from Blue Town to Mile Town (an old name for an early sector of Sheerness) in 1840.
- some very rare metallic photo/printing plates of the said Salem Chapel and another building (which I suspect later became the Broadway Church).

Imagine the joy and surprise that we felt that morning discovering a physical link with the first Methodist church founded on Sheppey! The oil painting may not be valuable in a monetary sense but it is priceless in terms of its provenance. With that, I put on my detective hat and, along with Stephen, we went in search of evidence of that first Methodist Church (using, for example, old newspapers, John Wesley's Diaries, early Ordnance Survey Maps, and local history websites). I went back to the aforesaid 1884 newsletters and discovered this reference: 'Salem Church, the interest of which is now submitted to the visitors and residents of Sheerness on Sea, has been built for nearly 100 years. It originally stood in West Street, Blue Town, immediately facing the Pier, and was then known as 'The White Chapel'. In the year 1839, under the pastorate of the Reverend John Bustard, the sacred edifice was removed from Blue Town to the site on which it now stands and enlarged to its present dimensions.' Unfortunately, the site where "it now stands" was frustratingly not mentioned!

Stephen and I set to work to discover the new site. To our astonishment, we eventually found that of all places, the re-siting of the newly renamed 'Salem



Chapel', was in fact, in HOPE STREET some 800 yards West of where the current LEP is situated!!

Today, the site where the Salem Chapel stood is covered by flats. It is not clear when the chapel was closed or demolished. However, in the back of my mind I have a picture of the similar building situated there when I was a small lad. Sadly, I sense that by this time (1959/1960), it had become a secondhand warehouse where I used to buy my 78rpm records for my wind-up gramophone!

But what is clear is that the Hope Street Salem Chapel closed its doors in the late 1920s and the congregation relocated itself around 1929 to what had been a Methodist Day and Sunday School building in the Broadway Sheerness and which, subsequently, became the Broadway Methodist Church (now The Community Church).

So there we are, we have come full circle with the current Methodist members located back in a church in Hope Street nearly a hundred years after they left...

A small heritage group, chaired by Bonni-Belle has now been set up at Hope Street to preserve and decide the future of the new collective evidence of the foundations of (Wesleyan) Methodism in Sheerness.

Meanwhile, our thanks go to Marie Piper of The Community Church for her vigilant and tenacious persistence in bringing and saving those precious artefacts, so that our story can be told and treasured in the years to come.

Overall, what are we to think? Does this story amount to an amazing series of serendipitous incidents or as Bonni-Belle simply suggested to me recently "No, Derek, 'God incidents'!"

Derek Gallagher



North Kent Circuit

Preaching Plan March – May 2026

		MARCH					APRIL				MAY				
		1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31
		2nd in Lent	3rd in Lent	4th in Lent Mothers Day	5th in Lent	Palm Sunday	Easter Day							Pentecost	
BEARSTED	10.30	WEST	READ	WILDING	ZACHAR hc acm	US @ SMC	PICKARD	SKIPP	ZACHAR hc	LA	WEST	ZACHAR	BYARD & Hudson-Wilkin	US @ Newington	LA
CHINESE	13.30	CHAN	SELMES hc	CHAN	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	KAN YU	CHAN hc	WATTON	CHAN	TSUI	CHAN hc	LAU	CHAN	SZETO	D. CHU
DENE HOLM	11.00	PATERSON	LA	BURCH	TERRETT hc	LA	G GRAY	LA	DOWNS	TERRETT hc	LA	BURCH	LA	TERRETT hc	ROWE
ECCLES	10.30	SHEPHERD	LA	OATES hc	LA	WILDING	NEWELL	LA	OATES hc	WEST	LA	SHEPHERD	READ	OATES hc	LA
GRAVESEND	11.00	TERRETT hc	DOWNS	TERRETT	LA	PICKARD	TERRETT hc aa	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	S SMITH	TERRETT hc	DOWNS	LA	G GRAY	BURCH
HARTLIP	18.30	SELMES hc	LA	GERMAN	LA	CHAN	10.30 am St Michaels us hc	M SMITH	SELMES	GERMAN	M HARRIS	SELMES hc	LA	GERMAN	SELMES- ECUMENICAL
HEXTABLE	10.30	BURCH	9am LA bc 10.30 am OATES hc	PICKARD	DOWNS	S SMITH	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA 9am bc	BURCH	PATTERSON	LA	9am LA bc 10.30 am OATES hc	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	PATERSON	LA
HOLY TRINITY	10.00	ROBB	ANGLICAN @ St Albans hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Davids	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc	ANGLICAN @ St Albans	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Davids hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc	ANGLICAN @ St Albans hc	ANGLICAN Hancocks&Bishop hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc	ANGLICAN @ St. Davids	ANGLICAN @ St. Williams hc
HOPE STREET	10.30	LA	GALLAGHER	ZACHAR hc	LE MASONRY hc	LE MASONRY	LE MASONRY	LA	LE MASONRY hc	ZACHAR hc	GALLAGHER	LA aa	ZACHAR	LE MASONRY	M SMITH
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA cc	MYLES Methodist	LA aa	ANGLICAN hc	LA	LA	MYLES Methodist	BAPTIST am	ANGLICAN hc	LA cc	MYLES Methodist	BAPTIST am	ANGLICAN hc	ANGLICAN jbs
LARKFIELD	10.00	9am LA bc 10.30 OATES hc	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	SHEPHERD	NEWELL	OATES hc	9am bc 10.30am LA	SHEPHERD	LA ps1	OATES ps2 hc	9am LA bc 10.30 NEWELL ps3	WILDING ps4	PICKARD	LA	OATES hc us with Anglican
	15.00	Café Larkfield	WILDING Rawlins Burham	OATES/ RAWLINS Burham				WILDING Larkfield	OATES/ RAWLINS Burham			WILDING Larkfield	OATES/ RAWLINS Burham		
NEWINGTON	9.30	ADOFO	ZACHAR hc	M SMITH	US @ St. Mary's	US @ SMC	LA	ZACHAR hc	GALLAGHER	US @ St. Mary's	PICKARD	ADOFO	SKIPP	ZACHAR us	ADOFO
PENINSULA STROOD	10.30	KICHEN SIDE	Trott	WILLING aa	LA	SELMES hc	LA	WILLING aa	STUNELL	SELMES hc	Trott	LA aa	R GREY	SELMES hc	WATTON
ST. LUKE'S	10.00	M HARRIS	LA	SELMES aa	LA	Trott	SELMES 9.30am hc	LA	PICKARD	R GREY	LA	SELMES hc	TERRETT	LA	PICKARD
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR hc	PICKARD	R GREY	SKIPP	ZACHAR us	ZACHAR hc aa	LA	G HANCOCKS	LA	ZACHAR acm	CAN- TAMAKLOE	M HARRIS	US @ Newington	ZACHAR hc
SPITAL STREET	10.30	PICKARD	CHAN hc	G GRAY	CHAN	LA	CHAN hc	ROWE	LA	CHAN	OATES	CHAN hc	LA	CHAN	HUDSON- BEDDOWS
STOKE	18.30	NO SERVICE	STUNELL	LA	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	STUNELL	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	STUNELL	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
THE BRENT	10.30	ROWE	TERRETT hc	LA	PICKARD	TERRETT hc	DOWNS	LA	TERRETT hc	G GRAY	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	TERRETT hc	S SMITH	DOWNS	CHAN
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	SELMES	SELMES hc	LA	SELMES	CHAN	SELMES hc	ROBB	SELMES	WILLING	SELMES	WATTON	SELMES hc	PICKARD	SELMES Healing
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	WILDING	WATTON	WEST	OATES hc	SHEPHERD	OATES hc	LA	SHEPHERD	PICKARD	WILDING	KICHEN SIDE	OATES hc	SHEPHERD	WEST
UNION STREET	10.30						AT BEARSTED				AT TON ROAD			AT LARKFIELD	
ONLINE SERVICES	10.30	PICKARD	OATES	HEXTABLE	THIRD AVE	ZACHAR	PICKARD	ARCHIVE	HEXTABLE	THIRD AVE	PICKARD	OATES	HEXTABLE	THIRD AVE	ZACHAR

aa All-age / acm Annual Church Meeting / bc Breakfast Church / cc Café Church
hc Holy Communion / jbs Joint Benefice Service / ps Preaching Series / us United Service

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 22 March 2026. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.

