

North The Methodist Church Bedfordshire Circuit

34/1

Magazine

Issue No.51

Spring 2024

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

Jeremiah 17:7-8a NIV

Circuit information...see inside for further details.

Sunday 14th July

Farewell Service for Rev Lorna Valentine

Sunday 1st September

Welcome Service for Rev Paulette Tedd

For diary dates, see page 34

Chair of the District

Rev Dr David M Chapman *david.chapman@behdistrict.org.uk* Office 01279 657195
[District Office email *beh34office@gmail.com*]

Circuit Ministers

Superintendent

Rev Michael Giles *michaelgiles2017@gmail.com* 01234 930882

Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Kempston East, Kempston West, Stewartby LEP,
(Rest day – Saturday) Willington and Wootton

Deputy Superintendent

Rev Silas Wood *swood11@me.com* 01525 571392

Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Greensand Community Methodist Church
(Rest day – Friday) (comprising Ampthill, Clophill, Flitwick),
Haynes and Lidlington LEP

Rev Leslie Jane Noon *leslienorthbedsmethodist@gmail.com* 01767 304635

Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Beeston, Cardington LEP, Priory (Bedford),
(Rest day – Saturday) Sandy and Trinity (Biggleswade)

Rev Chris Sandy *christopher.sandy@methodist.org.uk* 01234 860464

Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Clapham, London Road (Bedford), Oakley LEP,
(Rest day – Friday) Park Road (Bedford), Putnoe Heights (Bedford) and Sharnbrook

Rev Lorna Valentine *lorna.valentine@methodist.org.uk* 01462 813284

Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Henlow, Langford, Shefford
(Rest day – Tuesday) and Upper Caldecote

Circuit Stewards

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Jane McVey *janecmcvey@aol.com* 07866 802179

Michael Carr *mcarr49@hotmail.com* 01234 824504

Nick Guy *nick.guy1@btinternet.com* 07980 985125

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Phil Timms *philiptimmskempston@yahoo.co.uk* 07732 771690

The power of storytelling

Dear Friends

On my first Sabbatical in 2001 I began by going to a 'Storytelling Course' held at Lee Abbey Christian Conference Centre in North Devon and led by Rev Simon Airey (an old school friend).

Each evening from 8.00pm to 9.00pm Simon would tell stories around the fireside in the Octagonal Lounge with a packed audience. Key phrases:

- In telling a story, picture it like a series of 'freeze-frame snapshots', a bit like postcards.
- Only tell stories that you really know.
- 'The shortest route between truth and the human heart is a story'.
- 'Storytelling bypasses the intellectual crash barriers by speaking to the heart without answering the obstacle questions'.
- 'Truths hidden in the folds of the story'.
- 'A good story is one which is told around a table at which Christ is present'.
- 'Eye to eye, mind to mind, heart to heart'.

A Story for the Church

Simon shared a very telling story. He was at the time on the staff of Bath Abbey as an Associate Minister, and told this true story but applying it to the church, thinking from his Anglican perspective. Simon was at home working in his study and was on the phone to a colleague. He heard the sound of what was like footsteps in the room above. That was strange because no one else was in the house. Then a crack appeared in the ceiling and gradually got larger. What should he do? Try to hold up the falling ceiling or grab what was important out of the room. Simon took his diary and music discs and his dog lying under the desk out of the room. The ceiling then fell down where he had been sitting.

Simon's reflection: Too often we as churches spend too much time holding up the ceiling whilst everything else falls down around us.

Question: What are the important things we would want to take out of the church/keep with us before the church collapses?

My reflection: Have we as the Church tried to do too much and ended up doing nothing properly. What are the essentials? We need to build from a position of strength (even if that is smaller than present) rather than trying to build from a position of weakness. Are there too many initiatives coming out of Head Office?

One of the privileges of pastoral ministry is storytelling, both listening and sharing. I have learnt so much in my visits to both church and non-church folk of all ages. It reminds me that we all have a story to share and learn from. The most important story is about God showing his love for the world through sending Jesus to share our human experience.

What sort of story have you to share as a church community and as an individual? How best can you share that story? What have we learnt from the stories of others?

Blessings

Michael



Israel and Palestine (Gaza and West Bank)

Some thoughts from Rev Michael Giles

Jewish and Church Links: As you are aware, I was a Minister in the Barnet and Queensbury Circuit, North London from 2007 to 2020 and Superintendent from 2015 to 2020. The London Borough of Barnet has the largest Jewish population of any in the UK. During my 13 years we had links with the different Jewish denominations (just like the Church) – United, Progressive, Reformed and Masorti. Some have female Rabbis and others do not, just as the Church has different views.

We shared in our varied and different understandings of worship, Bible and faith. There were a number of conflicts in Israel and Palestine during those years, which caused great angst amongst the Jewish congregations. I came to appreciate the diversity that could enrich the Church's understanding of faith and life. My Finchley church also held an annual service for the Council of Christians and Jews, and we had the privilege of hosting a survivor from the Holocaust. Each year there was a united service held in an Anglican church on the Sunday nearest to Holocaust Memorial Day, usually in January.



EMBRACE
the Middle East

Also during those years the BibleLands Society, well known for its carol sheets, went through a relaunch and rebranding of the

charity. The new Chief Executive, Jeremy Moody, became a friend of mine, and Finchley Methodist Church was used to test the new look Embrace the Middle East (new name). The charity was successfully relaunched and supports projects and communities of all faiths and none, throughout Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Syria.

One year we hosted their keynote speaker: a Christian from Palestine who talked about the charity's work and life in the West Bank.

Observations

Talking and listening to people with views from both sides and those in the middle, there are no easy solutions to complex issues. There are competing and different narratives about the same events and issues, and both need to be heard, even if not agreed with, if a resolution to have a just peace can take place.

Further Resources

The Methodist website has a broad and diverse selection, and I highly recommend it:

www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/israel-palestine/

Contents of the Methodist website:

General History	Politics and Contemporary Situation
Theological Reflection	Personal Accounts
Anti-Semitism/Judeophobia	Cartoon
Novels and Poetry	Websites and News
Films, Documentaries and Podcasts	

A prayer from the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

God of peace and compassion, we pray for all impacted by the escalation in conflict in Israel-Palestine.

For all who are mourning, for all who are fearful, today, and for what may lie ahead.

For all traumatised and re-traumatised by what they have experienced.

Enable us to stand in solidarity with people of peace.

May your Spirit bring peace and healing to your troubled world. Amen.

Please feel free to contact Rev Michael Giles about any issues related to this article.

Renewing, sustaining and growing the ministry of the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit



Circuit Mission Statement

We will follow the
Holy Spirit who is
calling us to LOVE

- God with all our heart, soul, mind,
and strength
- one another, as Jesus loved His
followers
- all others, even enemies, as God
does

and be
DISCIPLES OF JESUS

- becoming like Christ
- behaving like Christ
- bringing others to meet and
follow Christ

working for
GOD'S KINGDOM

- that God's will be done
- in the Church, and on Earth
- for all, as it is in Heaven...



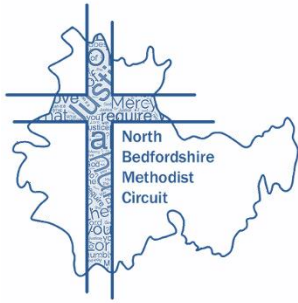
Our Circuit Bible Verse

The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires
of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with
your God. *Micah 6:8 (NLT)*



Our Circuit Prayer

As your church
in this place,
help us to do justice,
love mercy
and walk humbly with you,
O God.
Amen.



Strategy Working Group (SWG)

Please see below the
Primary Pastoral Responsibility (PPR)
 (see details on next page)

as at 01.09.2024 based on current information.
 Teams are referred to as A-B, ministers as 1-5.

Church	Possible PPR from September 2024	Team	Notes	Membership	
				Estimated as at 12.06.2023	Total
Cardington LEP	1	A	(i)	14	125
Willington	1	A		22	
Clapham	1	A		38	
Oakley LEP	1	A		30	
Sharnbrook	1	A		21	
Putnoe Heights	5	A	(ii)	60	185
Priory	5	A		83	
London Road	5	A		17	
Park Road	5	A		25	
Shefford	4	B	(iii)	53	195
Henlow	4	B		19	
Langford	4	B		26	
Upper Caldecote	4	B		15	
Trinity	4	B		47	
Sandy	4	B		18	
Beeston	4	B		17	
Greensand	2	B	(iv)	89	125
Haynes	2	B		12	
Lidlington LEP	2	B		24	
Stewartby LEP	3	A/B	(v)	10	161
Wootton	3	A/B		26	
Kempston East	3	A/B		92	
Kempston West	3	A/B		33	

Note : Greensand = *Greensand Community Methodist Church*
 combines Ampthill, Clophill and Flitwick Methodist Churches

Legend for previous page

- 1 = Paulette Tedd (Probationer)
- 2 = Silas Wood (Deputy Superintendent)
- 3 = Michael Giles (Superintendent)
- 4 = Leslie Noon
- 5 = Chris Sandy

Notes - Brief description of ministry 2024-2026:

- (i) **PROBATIONER APPOINTMENT**
To encourage, develop and build up the rural church ministry.
- (ii) **BEDFORD CHURCHES**
To develop an effective and coherent ministry to Bedford.
- (iii) **EASTERN CHURCHES**
To develop the section with appropriate shared/ multi-church partnerships.
- (iv) **WESTERN SECTION**
To continue to develop multi-church sites. Working with the wider Circuit and particularly Leslie Noon.
- (v) **SUPERINTENDENT SECTION**
To support the wider Circuit staff and churches.

Please note that membership figures (*on the previous page*) do not fully reflect the life and faith of the local church. There are many fellowship groups, café church, toddler groups and other missional activities that take place in the churches from small to large.

UPPER CALDECOTE METHODIST CHURCH

. . . . REVISITED

Friends, we last contributed an article about life in Upper Caldecote in Spring 2019, just pre-COVID. As we emerged from the various 'lockdowns' we, like many other churches, have had to address 'change'. So, what has happened?

Well, some of our regular groups resumed hall hire, but sadly our Scout and Beaver Groups who had been with us for 30+ years failed to return. They were seeking new leaders who, despite much searching, failed to materialise. These packs have now closed. However, the Rainbow Guides returned under new leadership and have a full complement of members. In addition, the local Brownies also met under new leadership and transferred from Northhill to Caldecote – this group had always served Ickwell, Northill and Caldecote. They have both been taking part in some church activities, and we are pleased to welcome them.

In our annual events calendar, we have featured our community lunches, often offering 'Ploughman's Lunch' and homemade desserts in the summer months, and soup and bacon rolls in the winter. The support from the local community and members from other Circuit churches for these events is always appreciated. However, it seems some folk have developed new routines during COVID and seem less adventuresome. Despite all, the fellowship is great as we continue to reach out into the community.

We, like many other churches and halls offered a 'Warm Space' over the winter of 2022/23. Despite assembling a willing band of helpers from the church and wider village community, take-up was poor so, although monitoring this year, we are not offering to open.

Our weekly Coffee Mornings on Saturdays stretch back 35+ years and we started them to raise funds for a specific project. We cannot remember what it was, but it may have been to fund a Flower Festival. Last summer we reviewed whether we should change its format. Was it perceived as a 'Church Coffee Morning' rather than open to the

community? We invited interested church members and ‘Warm Space’ supporters to consider a way ahead. It was decided to hold an event on the first Saturday of the month to support a specific local or national charity, with some volunteer hosts responsible for each event to spread the load. What should we call it? ‘ChariTea & Coffee’ was selected. Each time, we support a different charity or organisation...

September - Macmillan

October - “Above & Beyond” – a local cancer support group

November - Royal British Legion

December - Keech Cottage

January - Church funds

February - East Anglian Air Ambulance

To date all have been well supported by the community with the hall abuzz with folk. It’s great and was a good initiative with many offers of help from those wanting to be involved.

The future - As part of the new Eastern Section of the Circuit which will form in September 2024 under the pastoral care of Rev Leslie Noon, we are starting to explore some of the administrative and Plan-making issues. We hope we will still be able to retain our monthly pattern of worship. It will involve some change and we must be responsive to that. It is likely we will form two Mission Groups –

Shefford, Henlow and Langford (SHeL) and

Trinity, Upper Caldecote, Beeston and Sandy, (TUBS)

– where would we be without acronyms?! We look forward to working more closely with these churches and supporting one another’s events - after all they are ‘old friends’ as members of the former Biggleswade Circuit. It will also let us make a small contribution towards climate targets, being much closer together and reducing collective travel. So, we continue with our mission to work and witness in our local community, and we welcome the local village school who visit for their special services led by our Minister. I pray that we may have the strength to do so into the future.

Jon Payne

OAKLEY METHODIST CHURCH

- - - REVISITED - - -

I thought at first that there wouldn't be much to write about, but then after re-reading the previous article, I realised that as usual things have moved on quite a bit.

Since the last update, we have lost our long-term tenants, the Oakley Pre-School. This has now moved to a modern purpose-built building in the field behind the church, and is now known as the Oakley Kindergarten. We have managed to find a new tenant for the main schoolroom, which has partially offset the loss of income, and are still looking for new uses for the premises. Whilst we miss the playgroup, it has been good to regain access to the front entrance of the church during the week, and we have a good relationship with our new tenant.

Before COVID there was a Coffee Morning held fortnightly in various people's houses in the village. COVID put an end to this, but has allowed us to offer an alternative: Coffee Stop. Each Thursday morning we open the church and welcome in people for refreshments and a chat. Profits go to the Karibuni Trust, and we have raised several thousand pounds from this. We have many villagers dropping in, and offer a safe, cosy place for people to meet up and chat. The home-made cakes and sausage rolls are also a major attraction. Whilst many of the attendees are from our LEP, we also get non-churchgoers, who now feel part of the community. This has led to our LEP being strengthened, and members feeling they belong to both churches. We had a well-attended joint Harvest Festival followed by a Harvest Lunch last year, all friends together.

One of the things we have had to get used to is the lack of availability of our Minister. Being a Minister for six churches leaves little time for anything other than attending Church Council meetings and monthly services. Times have changed so much since we had one Minister for three churches; now we have to be far more independent and self-governing. It has also led us to look both to the other churches in our Mission Group and to our LEP for support and assistance. We also have a joint Mission Group service each quarter, and share two services each quarter with Sharnbrook in order to reduce the workload on the Minister.

Since we started working together as a Mission Group we have built many friendships across the churches. We have benefitted so much

from sharing our knowledge and resources, and would not be able to function as well as we do without such support. Going forward, as we change the allocation of Ministers to churches, we hope to be able to retain and build on the relationships we already have. I would recommend that all our churches try to work with each other. It really does make for a stronger healthier church.

Jeanette Letch



>>> NEWS FROM CHURCHES <<<

Howard Memorial Church, Cardington

As a joint venture with St Mary's Church, Cardington, several members walked the streets of the village to deliver Christmas cards to every house. Included in the card was an invitation to the Joint Christmas Celebration (held annually with St Mary's, and worshipping in alternate churches each year).

The Christmas Celebration - this year at St Mary's - was one with a difference, where the Christmas story was presented very powerfully on screen.

On Saturday, 23rd December we again held a joint 'Christmas Carol Sing' at The Bedford Cheese Company in Cardington.

We are a very small fellowship at Cardington, but have two thriving Friday Clubs, one for school years Reception - Year 4 and one for school years 5 - 11. However, a Christmas joint club event happened on Friday 15th December, when parents were also invited to join in the festivities. There was food, fun and games, a home-made craft stall run by Marion, and a stall of handmade jewellery (which had all been made by two of the club members). It was wonderful to see all ages, ranging from 5 years to over 80 years celebrating Christmas together.

During January we had a 'Warm Space Coffee Morning' with scones and biscuits enjoyed with coffee and tea.

Jan Oliver (Secretary)

Howard Memorial Church, Cardington



Wootton New Life Methodist Church

MNDA Fundraiser
Saturday 27th April 2024 from
2pm

In memory of Thea Lee

2pm onwards- Tombola, Craft stalls, Nearly New stall
Cakes, Refreshments
Hot food served from 5pm
6pm-9pm Board Game Evening

Wootton New Life Methodist Church- MK43 9DE

**Contact Carey for further information:
CareyWNLChurch@outlook.com**

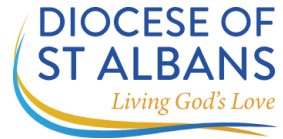
 mndassociation  @mndassoc

www.mndassociation.org

Francis Crick House, 6 Summerhouse Road, Northampton, NN3 6BJ
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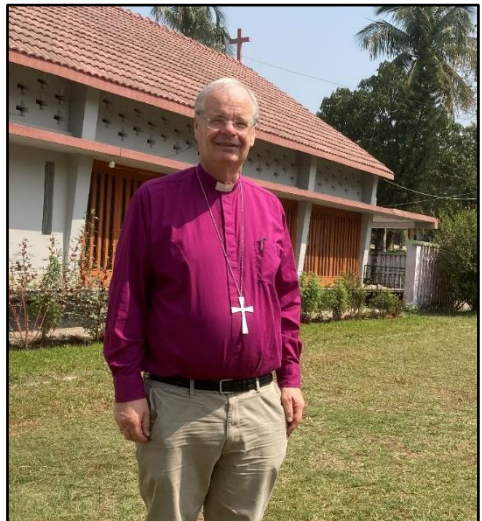


Visiting Preacher
Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, OBE
Bishop of Bedford



I have good Nonconformist roots! A plethora of Methodist Local Preachers and a cousin as forbears, a wife who grew up a Methodist, along with a Baptist mother and Congregational father who settled on the parish church when they moved into their first home. The die was cast!

I have been Bishop of Bedford for 11 years. A curacy in Abingdon which majored on work with young people; nine years as Team Vicar and Team Rector on a very tough estate in Sheffield where I also welcomed theological students for part of their training; six years at All Saints parish church Rotherham, and then nine years as Archdeacon of Leicester, preceded the move to Bedfordshire.



At the heart of my ministry has been a commitment to justice and transforming of community. I believe that a healthy and growing church will be one that is generous and courageous in its love to the people it serves. Over the years I have had significant leadership roles in a major housing association, through chairing both New Deal for Employment (for which I got my OBE) and New Deal for Communities. In Leicester I became increasingly involved with interfaith work, including co-chairing the Interfaith Network UK.

Currently I chair the Church of England's work with disabled people and those who are deaf. A recent major grant from the Church is opening up exciting prospects of change.

As Bishop of Bedford, I hold oversight of the Anglican churches in Bedfordshire (about 150) within the wider Diocese of St Albans, under the leadership of Bishop Alan Smith. I have chaired our work with our 138 Church of England schools ever since I arrived.

More recently I became chair of *One YMCA* that works across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire; I chair the Luton Roma Trust working with probably the most oppressed community in Europe, and am a university governor. However, at the heart of the vocation I have now followed for nearly 40 years since ordination, is working with local congregations and their communities. This includes the joy of occasionally leading worship at the Howard Memorial Church.

I am married to Professor Dame Helen Atkinson who is Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the School of Aerospace, Transport and Manufacturing at Cranfield University. We have two married daughters, a son, and one delightful granddaughter.



Social Action Mission Stream

If you have any questions about what we do, please contact Marian Blyth by email at marian.blyth@btinternet.com

Circuit Matters

by Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

Dear Friends

The Circuit Leadership Team is delighted to announce that the Circuit has been matched with a Probationer Minister for this year. Her name is Paulette Tedd and she is currently in the Milton Keynes Circuit.

Paulette will be appointed as Minister for Oakley LEP, Sharnbrook, Clapham, Willington and Cardington LEP from 1st September 2024.

Paulette has sent this short statement about herself for our information:

"I am looking forward to starting the next stage of my calling as a Probationer in the North Bedfordshire Circuit. I have a keen interest in social justice and inclusivity, and look forward to what this may bring, by God's grace.

Before answering the call for formation for ministry, I worked in the not-for-profit sector as an adviser and qualified as a local authority solicitor. God is always calling us on, and I explored this as a Local Preacher. This exploration and further calling were affirmed by my local church, and I applied for ministry in lockdown, September 2020. I began studying a three-year course part-time in September 2021, at The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, and my ministerial experience so far has been in the Vale of Aylesbury Circuit in the Northampton District.

I love to learn, and enjoy singing and photography. I am married to Jonathan and have a son who lives in London."

There will be a Welcome Service for Paulette on Sunday 1st September at 3.00pm (venue to be confirmed) which you are all warmly invited to attend.

Jane McVey

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward



Churches not listed below may have services which were not known about at the time of publishing this magazine.

14TH FEBRUARY – ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES		
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ANJULITA COURT (and Ladyslaude Court)	11.15am	Eucharist with ashing for residents, their families and friends
PRIORY	2.00pm	Ash Wednesday Service led by Rev Leslie Jane Noon
PUTNOE HEIGHTS		[Join with Priory]

LENT EVENTS

ANJULITA COURT (and Ladyslaude Court)

for residents, their families and friends

Wed 20th March 2.00pm Passiontide – music, prayers and reflections

WILLINGTON

Lent course based on the film

Wednesdays 7.30pm “The Greatest Showman”, during Lent
(21st, 28th February, 6th, 13th & 20th March)

HOLY WEEK EVENTS

ANJULITA COURT (and Ladyslaude Court)

for residents, their families and friends

Sun 24th March 2.30pm Palm Sunday Eucharist
with blessing of the palms

Mon 25th March 2.30pm Poetry and prayer for Holy Week

Wed 27th March 11.15am Reflective service with hymns for Holy Week

28TH MARCH - MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICES

ANJULITA COURT 11.15am Eucharist
(and Ladyslaude Court) for residents, their families and friends

29TH MARCH - GOOD FRIDAY EVENTS

ANJULITA COURT 11.15am Devotions
(and Ladyslaude Court) for residents, their families and friends

BEDFORD 12.00pm Bedford Town Centre Good Friday Witness
CHURCHES in Harpur Square (see also page 20)

BEESTON 10.30am [Walk of Witness – see Sandy]

CLAPHAM 9.30am United Walk of Witness, starting at
Clapham Methodist Church followed by
11.00am United Service at Clapham Methodist Church

SANDY 10.30am Churches Together Walk of Witness, starting at
Sandy Methodist Church followed by a short
service at St Swithun’s Parish Church

TRINITY Churches Together Walk of Witness
(Biggleswade) to the Market Square
[*details t.b.c., see church newsletter*]

WILLINGTON 7.00pm Good Friday Meditation

31ST MARCH - EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

ANJULITA COURT 11.15am Festal Eucharist
(and Ladyslaude Court) for residents, their families and friends

See the Circuit Plan for details of other services on
Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT – OUR CHURCHES

GCMC Ampthill	----- Dunstable Street, corner Chandos Road, Ampthill	MK45 2JS
Anjulita Court	----- Bramley Way, Bedford (access from Tyne Crescent)	MK41 7GD
Beeston	----- The Baulk, Beeston, Sandy	SG19 1NR
Cardington	----- Cople Road, Cardington	MK44 3SH
Clapham	----- 27 High Street, Clapham, Bedford	MK41 6EQ
GCMC Clophill	----- High Street, opposite The Causeway, Clophill, Bedford	MK45 4BE
GCMC Flitwick	----- Chapel Road, Flitwick	MK45 1EA
Haynes	----- Silver End Road, Haynes	MK45 3PS
Henlow	----- High Street, Henlow	SG16 6BS
Kempston East	----- Bedford Road, Kempston	MK42 8DA
Kempston West	----- High Street, Kempston	MK42 7AL
Langford	----- High Street, Langford	SG18 9RU
Lidlington	----- Church Street, Lidlington	MK43 0RJ
London Road, Bedford	--- London Road, corner Barford Avenue, Bedford	MK42 0NT
Oakley	----- High Street, corner Chapel Pound, Oakley	MK43 7RQ
Park Road, Bedford	-Park Road West, corner Beaconsfield Street, Bedford	MK41 7SB
Priory, Bedford	----- Newnham Avenue, Bedford	MK41 9QJ
Putnoe Heights, Bedford	--Putnoe Heights, opposite Arrow Leys, Bedford	MK41 8EB
Sandy	----- St Neots Road, opposite Engayne Avenue, Sandy	SG19 1BP
Sharnbrook	----- Park Lane, Sharnbrook	MK44 1LS
Shefford	----- Ampthill Road, Shefford	SG17 5BD
Stewartby	----- Park Crescent, Stewartby	MK43 9NL
Trinity, Biggleswade	-- Shortmead Street (near Trinity Close), Biggleswade	SG18 0AP
Upper Caldecote	-Biggleswade Road, corner Ashby Drive, Upper Caldecote	SG18 9BL
Willington	----- Station Road, corner Chapel Lane, Willington	MK44 3QH
Wootton	----- Cause End Road, Wootton	MK43 9DE

PREACHERS TAKING APPOINTMENTS

1992	Brian Addington	2008	Liz Little
1992	Roz Addington	2021	Meredith Major
2000	Brenda Ballantine	1993	Ebo Ofori-Quaah
1992	Helen Boshier	2008	Claire Peck
2009	Angela Brydon	2003	Sue Plant
2018	Paul Burgin	1975	Chris Robinson
1976	Michael Carr	2008	Glynne Rowlands
2011	Paul Cooper	1996	John Sackett
2021	Anne Foley	1983	Ros Salisbury
1997	Graham Follett	2010	Geoff Talbot
2010	Chris Fox	2009	Perllyn Thomas
2011	Hazel Hitch	1970	Janet Watts
1973	Keith Lilley	2021	Angie Woodcraft
1990	Pat Lilley		

PREACHERS UNABLE TO TAKE APPOINTMENTS

1969	David Bushman	1965	Vivian Martyn
1991	Alan Davis	1978	Jim Ragless
1966	Chris Izzard	1954	Daphne Stiles
1978	Keith Jordan	1969	Silvia Thomas
1961	Pat Larman	1957	Archie Whitby

WORSHIP LEADERS

GCMC Ampthill

Patsy Aston
Margaret Byass

Beeston

Sonia Butler
Mary Millar

GCMC Clophill

Anne Cooper
Victoria Higgins

GCMC Flitwick

Maryan Pateman

Kempston East

Rosemary Simms
Stuart Simms
Terry Stevens (T)

Geoff Talbot
Barbara Tipping

Langford

Jenny Broadbridge

London Road (Bedford)

John Caves
Andrew Constant

Oakley

Noel Evans
Jeanette Letch
Jane McVey

Priory (Bedford)

Lynne Gound
Marian Knights
Carmen Rowe

Sandy

Jenny Endersby

Sharnbrook

Marian Blyth

Shefford

Beckie Gray (T)
Mairi Perks

Stewartby

Elaine Sullivan

Trinity (Biggleswade)

Tricia Mapletoft

Willington

Pat Davies
Keith Tompkins

(T) = In training

The Good Friday Witness

John's Gospel chapter 17 verse 23 records the prayer of Jesus '*that they may be one that the world would believe*'. It is in this spirit that **Hope in Bedfordshire** organises this annual witness to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. This witness has now been running for around 20 years and it attracts up to a thousand believers from a wide range of churches from Bedford and surrounding villages. It is held in Harpur Square in the town centre, and the Borough Council are very encouraging in their support for this event. Whilst it has changed over the years, the format is now such that it is a time of worship, prayer, readings, reflection and preaching. The participants are chosen from a range of churches to try and reflect our unity in Christ. Local dignitaries such as the Mayor, High Sheriff of Bedfordshire etc. are asked to come and read the lessons.

It is now a fully accepted part of many churches' calendars, and it is seen as important, not only to meditate on the death of Christ but also to bear witness to what He achieved on the Cross to a much wider audience, namely those that are going about their everyday business in the town centre.

It is always with great joy that each year we see so many believers join together for this witness, but also to see churches sharing the cost of this event, either financially or by providing helpers (e.g. first aid helpers, stewards). However we could always have more!!

We are looking forward to this year's event on
29th March at 12.00 noon in Harpur Square Bedford.

Plans are already in place and people are working hard to ensure that all goes smoothly.

We hope to see you there.

Stephen Elphick

Chair – Hope in Bedfordshire

Curtain Call

The music has finished, the people have gone,
The lights have all dimmed and the action is done.
The theatre is empty. The stalls are quite clean.
The doors are all locked, but the stage can still dream
Of the characters walking across her bare boards
To bring a smile, a tear or to tug the heart cords.

In the same way the Cross is silent and bare
Standing stark and alone in the still, silent air.
But to those who believe it brings hope, joy and peace,
A symbol of bondage that has found new release.
It may well look finished: like a bare empty hall,
But God's in the wings, just awaiting your call.

Hidden Treasures – Methodist Conference update by David Germany

The theme of “Hidden Treasures” was introduced by the President of Conference, Rev Gill Newton and the Vice-President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett at last year’s Conference.

“I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.” *Isaiah 45:3 NRSVUE*

I had the privilege of attending the Methodist Conference in Birmingham in June 2023. This is the governing body of the Methodist Church who debate the issues of today, like climate change, and modify or adopt new policies to address such issues. For example, we



agreed that all Methodist churches should aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. I was there as a lay representative of our District of Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire. It was my first time at Conference, and I was particularly struck by how much time was set aside for worship amongst the business. Every morning started with an act of worship, and every session was interspersed with the singing of hymns from *Singing the Faith*, including some that I had never heard. I must say the sound was incredible. And after every difficult decision was made, either the President or Vice-President would lead us in prayer.



Every day included Bible study led by an eminent theologian. One theologian used this picture (or one like it) as the backdrop for his message. I am afraid I didn’t take a note of what the Bible passage was that he was talking about, but as he spoke and I looked at the image I kept thinking of my father and his beloved muck heap.

You see, when we gather in the harvest, there is a lot of rubbish – leaves, stalks and roots, even unwanted fruit that is damaged or rejected for not meeting our quality standards. And my father would rake all this up and put it on his compost heap. Then over winter he would be out in the cold tending his smelly muck heap by turning it over every few days. Why? Because he knew that, hidden within that decaying, smelly, heap was hidden treasure, goodness that come spring he could spread around the roots of his fruit bushes and dig into the soil to help the new seeds grow.

During the Conference we heard numerous accounts of hidden treasures working within humanity's muck heap of social outcasts.

For example: the work of the Vice-President of Conference, who founded Adavu, a project which supports survivors of human trafficking and is involved in the development of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. I met a Minister who acts as a street pastor in Watford, patrolling the streets at night ministering to the homeless, those the worse for wear through drink and drug addicts. We received reports about the Warm Spaces initiative introduced last winter to help the poor during the economic crisis by opening doors of Methodist churches in towns and cities with somewhere warm to sit and chat. We heard about Christians working in refugee centres, helping those displaced by wars or famine, or seeking political asylum to find a home and adapt to living in our society. We received reports of the increasing numbers of people in our society dependent on the work of foodbanks and how churches are acting as centres for the distribution of food donated by shops and members of the public. All examples of God's hidden treasure for those who feel part of society's "muck heap".

Many of these examples were presented as part of a Conference report entitled *Walking with Micah*, which calls Methodists to get alongside the vulnerable and listen to their stories. One of the observations within the report is that through the care and support victims have received, many have turned to God themselves and been called to continue the work they themselves have benefitted from. Indeed these are some of the hidden treasures coming from dark places for, as past victims themselves, new victims feel more comfortable talking about their problems with these volunteers and are more open to receiving advice. As one volunteer who has gone on to become a deacon themselves said, "You can only truly understand those on the "muck heap" of life if you have been there yourself." (or at least as I remember them saying it!).

Another example I heard of at Conference that is particularly appropriate to mention today was a talk by Rabbi Nava Hefetz who was effectively predicting the events we have seen unfolding recently in Gaza. But at Conference she was describing the work she and a group of multifaith leaders were doing each harvest time in Gaza by creating a human wall to protect the Palestinian farmers from what she described as “Israeli delinquents” who would otherwise attack the farmers and burn their crops.

God’s “hidden treasure”, “love” is all around us, but alas we all too often take it for granted or like those on the road to Emmaus, fail to recognise it, at least initially. Consider the stars – they are there all the time, but we can only really see them against the backdrop of the dark night sky. Indeed there are small acts of love going on all the time, but it is only really when we are struggling ourselves that we truly appreciate them.



For example: During the COVID lockdowns we all appreciated the work of the NHS, saying thank you by clapping outside in the streets. But the NHS is always doing amazing acts of kindness, as many of you know, if you have recently had personal experience of it.

We can take this “stars” metaphor still further, for it is human nature to protect ourselves by building homes, closing the curtains, locking the doors and turning on security lights, but in doing so we can no longer see the stars in the night sky, and God’s treasures become hidden once more.

So tonight take a moment to open the curtains or look outside the back door, look at the stars and pray for those on life’s “muck heap”, that they will find the hidden treasure of God’s love. Pray for people like Rabbi Nava who put their lives on the line for others. And consider whether you could be a hidden treasure. Is there someone you know who needs God’s love, and could you be the one to bring it to them?

David Germany (Sandy)

Starting Out as a Local Preacher in a New Circuit

I became a Local Preacher five years ago, and was formerly in the North Herts Circuit. However, fairly recently my wife Rachel and I moved to Biggleswade, and I am now starting out as a Local Preacher in this Circuit. I am somewhat familiar with the area. Part of my early childhood was spent living in Keysoe, right in the very north of the county, and just about within this Circuit, although it does not have a Methodist church. That said, I seem to recall hearing once that it has the distinction of John Bunyan having preached there, so it does have a history of Nonconformity.

I have also been to university in the county, at the part of University of Bedfordshire that is in Luton (although obviously that is not in the Circuit), so I do feel some connection with the area as a whole.

As for my connection with Methodism, that is lifelong. My dad's family were Methodists and I was christened at the then Methodist chapel in Barsby, Leicestershire, although it is now a house, one of the many which have had to be sold over the years. I became a Christian in my late teens and some years later felt the call to be a Local Preacher.

My experience of Methodism within the Circuit however, has so far been as a regular worshipper at the Methodist church in Biggleswade, and having preached once at Shefford and once at Upper Caldecote. By the time of publication, God willing, I will have preached at Shefford again during the season of Advent, during no doubt, a time of chaos and stress and much going on, and yet with some hope. Rather like how we tend to look at the season of Advent.

Throughout I have received a warm welcome that adds to the good reputation that our denomination has, and I hope that in return I am of good service to the rest of you as we aim to live and preach the Gospel in this area.

Paul Burgin

Organ Donation – Breathing New Life into our Historic (church) Organs

Vital organs don't have to be limited to kidneys, livers and other bodily parts, but can mean the once beating hearts of our buildings – the historic pipe organ. Often, following the closure of a church, these remain within the building, or are sold for recycling either to another local church or one some considerable distance away in Europe where we have seen a resurgence in the interest and re-use of these cultural assets.

The ability to continue to appreciate the wondrous sounds they produce is often not possible once a church ceases to meet. Many dedicated organists continue to care for and maintain them until a new use for the building is found, but sometimes and with great sadness this is simply not possible. We hope that the new owners of the buildings care for them as we do, but unfortunately there is no guarantee. A BBC documentary painfully explains the situation faced by many historic organs: *Organ Stops: Saving the King of Instruments*. Whilst this makes for depressing viewing, we see hope in the fact that there is an emergence of a small but dedicated band of rescuers that are looking to help find them new homes.

One such group is *Pipe Up for Pipe Organs*, which has recently helped the good people at **Cranfield Methodist Church** relocate their organ to a shopping centre in Croydon when their church closed. Martin Renshaw of *Pipe Up for Pipe Organs* contacted the church after viewing the organ on the list of available instruments held by the *Institute of British Organ Builders*. After a considerable amount of effort by Alistair Riach and Richard Ward of the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit, the historic organ was relocated, with Martin organising its dismantling, removal and reassembly (working closely with the London Mozart Players [LMP]). The instrument now looks good following a clean-up and a fresh coat of natural lacquer.

The instrument is now available to play, under a similar scheme to that which you will be aware of that involves piano playing at railway stations. In the photographs on the Methodist website (see next page) you can see Martin playing with the LMP cellist. Visible in the photographs is a banner encouraging people to play it. To find out more about your organ,



or to make enquiries about organ relocation from non-listed buildings, contact *Pipe Up for Pipe Organs* or the Methodist Church's Organ Advisory Service – it doesn't even have to be a pipe organ!

There is much debate over what to do with these instruments when the building closes. Should we be taking an enlightened view? Is it

better for a much-loved organ whose useful life in our building has come to an end to be relocated somewhere abroad where it will be used for Christian worship? Or do we leave it in situ? Of course for those that are housed in listed buildings there will be legal restrictions on removing it from the building, and where it is an Historic Organ (as listed by the British Institute of Organ Studies) some notification of church closure should be forwarded to them to update their records.

It's acknowledged that it is not an easy decision for an overburdened folk locally who are dealing with a range of issues when a church closes. Perhaps relocation to a far-off land is better than leaving it at the mercy of vandals or unscrupulous developers who will simply throw it in a skip; perhaps relocating to a secular place is considered to be unworthy of such a fine instrument? But we shouldn't discount this, as "who knows whether a pipeline of aspiring organists here might, occasionally, pull in someone whose first experience of an organ was in – say – a shopping centre in Croydon!"

For further information please contact the Connexional Conservation Officer at conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk

BBC iPlayer www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001gmv3

Material taken from : www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/looking-for-inspiration/organ-donation-breathing-new-life-into-our-historic-organs/

Methodist Church Organ Advisory Service contact Malcolm Starr : malcolmstarr@hotmail.com or telephone on 01400 281 291

The Methodist Modern Art Collection

The following is copied from the latest edition of the Methodist Archivist's Newsletter.

Why does the Methodist Church have a Modern Art Collection?

It's because two Methodist individuals in the 1960s (John Morel Gibbs and Rev Douglas Wollen) purchased contemporary works of art by young artists with a Christian theme that could open up faith conversations. This core collection of works was given to the Methodist Church in Britain with the view that it should tour and benefit churches throughout the Connexion.

The collection has grown modestly since then, with many artworks that have been donated, and a smaller number that have been purchased or commissioned with money given specifically for that purpose: their acquisition has not been a charge on general Methodist Church funds.

It is now looked after by a Management Committee (appointed by the Methodist Conference) who pursue the original aim of enabling people within and outside of the church to connect with faith through the medium of art. The artworks in the collection are varied in style & content and are used to engage in conversations with young people and in interfaith dialogue, and they are regularly used in worship.

What is in the collection?

There are over 50 works of art including some by well-known artists such as Graham Sutherland, Elizabeth Frink, William Roberts and Patrick Heron.

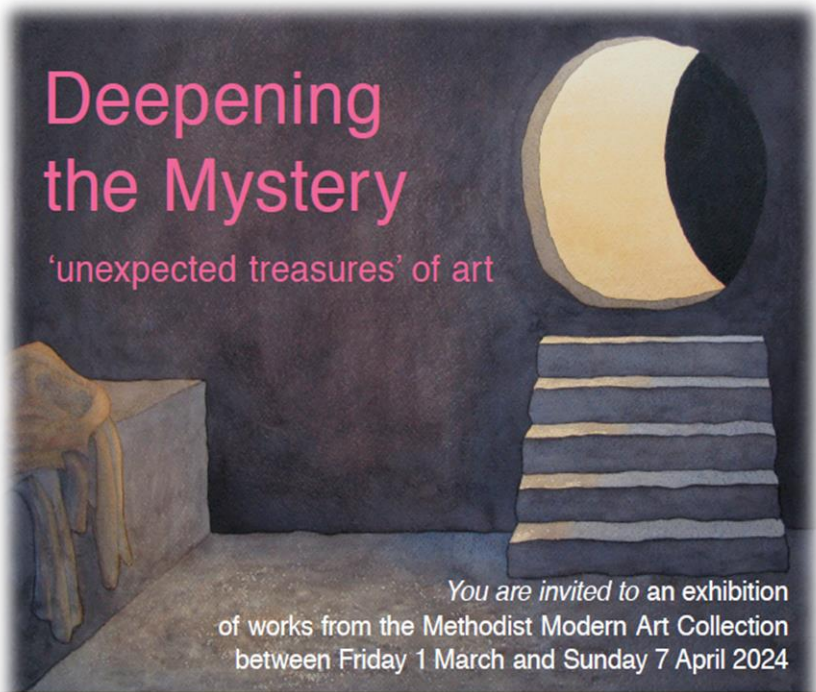
Most of the pictures depict scenes from the life and teaching of Christ; some artists were or are believing Christians, others not. Works are still being acquired to ensure that the ideas and concerns of today's artists are represented in the collection. The founders of the collection were pioneering in collecting women artists and artists from around the world from the beginning – a particular strength of the collection.

Where and when can I see the collection?

The collection can be seen at several different places in and around Britain each year, although not all the paintings, sculptures & stained glass are exhibited each time. The collection is not always to be found in Methodist churches; it has been exhibited in cathedrals, schools and art galleries – and was recently at 3Generate 2023, where a painting was made into an 'immersive' projected experience for the young people in attendance.

Deepening the Mystery

'unexpected treasures' of art



*You are invited to an exhibition
of works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
between Friday 1 March and Sunday 7 April 2024*

Focolare Centre for Unity

69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JG

The Methodist Modern Art Collection

*'... one of the art world's unexpected treasures, including some of the most
powerful and arresting religious art of the 20th and 21st centuries.'*

Tim Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of the Design Museum, London,
and former Artistic Director of the Royal Academy

The Collection includes exhibits by key figures of 20th and 21st century British art (such as Graham Sutherland, Elisabeth Frink), as well as works by international artists. The exhibition will include a programme of workshops and lectures for all ages.

For more information, see Facebook: Art 2024 at WGC
or contact art2024@focolare.org.uk

'The Empty Tomb' by Richard Bavin. Image from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

*I would recommend a visit as this is only about an hour's drive from Bedford,
and there is always much to see and think about.*

Jeanette Letch



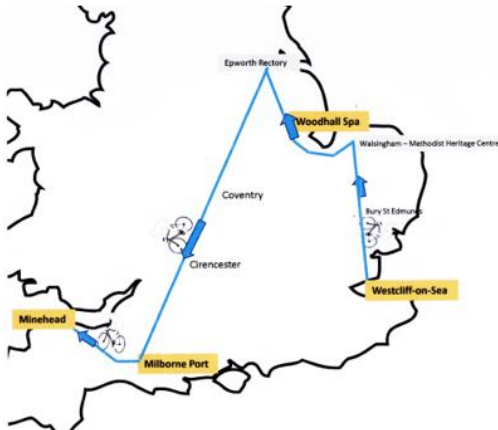
In 2024, the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Homes (LWPHomes), formerly LPMA Homes, will celebrate 75 years since the opening of the first Home in Westcliff-on-Sea in 1949. Robert Davie of Bury St Edmunds has decided to help them celebrate this milestone by cycling to each of the four Homes. He will begin at Westcliff (Beds, Essex and Herts District) and end in Minehead, travelling via Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire and Milborne Port near Sherborne in Dorset. It is likely to take around six weeks. He will start at Westcliff on 16th April 2024 and pass through Bury St Edmunds on his way to the newly opened Methodist Heritage Centre at Wighton in Norfolk, and then on to Epworth.

We very much hope that we can count on the support of people in the Beds, Essex and Herts District to publicise the ride as widely as possible. The poster opposite shows roughly the route he will be following. He is keen to call in at Coffee Mornings and places of Methodist interest on the way, so if you know of anywhere he might be welcome, please let Cheryl's sister, Jenny, know - jbenfield851@btinternet.com

Jenny Benfield

LWPHomes is a Registered Charity No: 201112378

Why cycle 550 miles?



In Celebration of 75 Years of Christian Care!

LWPHomes (formerly LPMA Homes) has been supporting Leaders of Worship and Preachers in need for 75 years – the first Home was opened at Westcliff-on-Sea in 1949. Our celebrations for this special anniversary include a 550+ mile cycle ride to visit each of the LWPHomes, starting at Westcliff on Tuesday April 16, 2024.

Our cyclist, Robert Davie, is asking for your support to make people aware of the care given to our residents in LWPHomes.

To read more, and to donate if you wish, please go to [JustGiving](#) and search Robert Davie, LWPH or scan the QR code below.





Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), which is registered as a charity, number 233280 www.brf.org.uk

Messy Church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being Church which is particularly suited to families, but welcoming to all.

It usually consists of all-age craft activities, worship and a meal for all the family. There is no fixed charge, but donations are welcome to cover costs. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Please check church websites or Facebook pages for details regarding Messy Church events around the Circuit.

LONDON ROAD (Bedford)

We had another good Messy Church, this time on a Sunday with the rest of our congregation, to celebrate Jesus' birthday. Children and adults dressed up and took part in the Nativity story drama after completing lots of craft activities and a Christmas quiz. All children took home a Nativity sticker book and sweet treat. We shall be having another Messy Church session coming up in Spring, hopefully led by Impact, so keep your eyes peeled.

Hannah Mason

OAKLEY

Messy Church for All takes place after school from 3.30pm – 5.30pm at Oakley Methodist Church (all ages welcome – all children to be accompanied).

Sessions include a two-course meal for all at approximately 5.00pm.

Dates are as follows:-

Tuesdays 13th February, 19th March, 21st May and 18th June.

If possible, please do let us know that you can come by calling 01234 824504 or sending an email to mcarr49@hotmail.com

Contact Jan Follett 07740 863 215 or Michael Carr for more details.



There are also sessions for pre-school age children every Thursday in term-time only from 10.00am – 11.45am at St Mary's Church in Oakley.

Sessions include a drink and fruit snack.

TRINITY (Biggleswade)

Messy Church happens on the third Saturday of the month.

Families are invited to join in crafts, activities, Christian stories and enjoy a meal together.

Dates are as follows:-

Saturdays 17th February, 16th March, 20th April, 18th May, 15th June, 20th July.

Sessions are from 10.30am – 12.30pm with lunch included.

Watch our Facebook page for the ‘theme of the month’.

It is very helpful to know if you are coming!

Please indicate on the Facebook page or send an email to bmapletoft@hotmail.com



WILLINGTON

This year we are changing to a Thursday for Messy Church, usually the third Thursday of the month.

However, in February we will have a Messy Pancake Party instead, on Shrove Tuesday, 13th February from 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Dates are as follows:-

21st March, 18th April, 16th May, 20th June, 18th July.

All from 3.15pm - 5.30pm.

Please check with Pat on 01234 838667.

Circuit Diary Dates

FOR DETAILS OF OTHER EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT PLEASE
SEE THE CIRCUIT WEBSITE www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk

*The events listed below may be subject to hybrid arrangements.
Please check relevant information prior to attendance.*

Circuit Men's Luncheon Fellowship is held
on the second Wednesday of each month (October to May inclusive)
at **Priory, Bedford** from 12.15pm until around 2.30pm.
Please tell Mike Elliott (mike.elliott@zapboing.com) if you are interested
and he will send you any updated information and reminders.

FEBRUARY

Wed 21st 7.30pm Circuit Leadership Team Meeting
(venue to be confirmed)

MARCH

Mon 11th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting at **Putnoe Heights**
Wed 13th t.b.c. Presbyteral Session of Synod at
**Trinity Methodist Church, Rainsford Road,
Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2XB**

APRIL

Sat 20th 10.00am District Synod at **Christchurch,
Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF**
Thurs 25th 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
(venue to be confirmed)

JUNE

Wed 26th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting (venue to be confirmed)

JULY

Sun 14th 3.00pm Farewell Service for
Rev Lorna Valentine at **Shefford**

SEPTEMBER

Sun 1st 3.00pm Welcome Service for Rev Paulette Tedd
(venue to be confirmed)
Sun 14th 10.00am District Synod in the North Bedfordshire Circuit at
Stratton School, Biggleswade

Ministers in other appointments

Rev Chrissie Howe *howec@methodistchurch.org.uk* 07799 902568
(Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board)

Rev Terry Wright *terry.wright144@mod.gov.uk* 07581 009784
(Forces Chaplain at Chicksands)

Ecumenical, Authorised & Associate Ministers

Rev Sarah Burrow *sarah.burrow@mha.org.uk* 01234 273642
Anglican (Anjulita Court and Ladyslaude Court MHA Chaplain)

Rev Martin Truscott *martintruscott@gmail.com* 07989 965172
URC (Minister - Cardington)

Rev Catherine Wilson *vicar@bromhambenefice.org* 01234 825665
Anglican (Vicar at St Mary's Church, Oakley)

Rev Petra Yates *curate@bromhambenefice.org* 07504 118405
Anglican (Curate at St Mary's Church, Oakley)

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Rev David Bown *davidbown47@hotmail.co.uk* 01234 589194

Rev Julie Bradshaw *julieiw2@gmail.com* 01234 405530

Rev Bill Davies *wjdavies35@outlook.com* 01234 210918

Rev Douglas Ford

Rev Jim Gorringe *jimgorringe@icloud.com* 01234 216352

Rev Cassandra Howes *cassandra.howes@gmail.com* 01234 793177

Rev Alan Kirk *alankirk58@hotmail.com* 01234 317699

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Churches should send their dates for the next Plan (with details of preachers they have booked) to **their Minister** by **Sunday 31st March**

Preachers should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 31st March**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 31st March** please

The Circuit Manager (Stephanie Field) is mostly home based, and can be contacted either by email northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com or mobile 07522 928936. She does not work on Fridays.

The Circuit Finance Officer (Damilola Obajemu) works on Mondays 9.00am-2.00pm, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.00am-4.00pm, and she can be contacted either by email northbedsfinance@gmail.com or mobile 07798 808988.

Both are happy to meet people at the Circuit Office if required.

Circuit Office c/o Willington Methodist Church,
Station Road, corner Chapel Lane, Willington MK44 3QH

Magazine editorial information

A meeting to discuss the content of the next issue will be held using Zoom on **Friday 1st March** at 7.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 35)

Communication: We are trying to communicate the Circuit News by the most effective methods we have available, which include email, Circuit and church websites and a limited number of printed copies.

IMPORTANT: If you are reading a paper copy of this magazine, then please pass to another person or recycle once you have finished with it. Thank you.

Contact details can be found via the Circuit Directory or via the Circuit Office on 07522 928936

see also The Circuit website at www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk
Circuit Charity Registration No. 1129523