



# North

The **Methodist Church** 

# Bedfordshire

# Circuit

34/1

# Magazine

Issue No.45

Autumn 2022

**What does the Lord require of you?**

**Do justice, love mercy,**

**walk humbly with your God.**

**Micah 6:8 NIV**



The events listed below may be subject to hybrid arrangements due to the ongoing prevalence of COVID-19.

Please check relevant information prior to planning attendance.

Circuit information...see inside for further details

- Wed 31st August – Circuit Welcome Service for Rev Leslie Noon and to mark Rev Michael Giles becoming NBM Circuit Superintendent.

For diary dates, see page 35

# Circuit Mission Statement

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

and be  
DISCIPLES OF JESUS

working for  
GOD'S KINGDOM

- God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength
- one another, as Jesus loved His followers
- all others, even enemies, as God does
  
- becoming like Christ
- behaving like Christ
- bringing others to meet and follow Christ
  
- that God's will be done
- in the Church, and on Earth
- for all, as it is in Heaven...



## Can't get to church?

If you are unable to get to worship in person any Sunday, for whatever reason, a reminder that the service at Priory is still available via Zoom each week. Some friends from across the Circuit have already discovered this and all are welcome.

The link is available via the church office:-

Tel: 01234 353523 Email: [office@priorychurch.org.uk](mailto:office@priorychurch.org.uk)

The service is also recorded and placed on our website, [www.priorychurch.org.uk](http://www.priorychurch.org.uk) usually by Sunday evening, so you can "attend" at any time.



The retiring offering from the Circuit Farewell Service for Rev Andrew Hollins on Sunday 24th July amounted to a little under £490, of which almost £385 was Gift-aided. This was supplemented by a retiring offering taken at Trinity Methodist Church, Biggleswade (where the service was shared via a Zoom livestream) of almost £74. These amounts will be sent to the Methodist Church Fund for World Mission *'Samaritan Journey'* appeal for the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka.

# North Bedfordshire

## Methodist Circuit

Charity number 1129523



### A NEW BEGINNING

**Circuit Bible Verse:** Micah 6:8 'What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.'

From the Rev Michael Giles - Superintendent

Dear friends,

Welcome to a new Connexional Year with a new logo, Circuit Bible verse, prayer, Superintendent, Presbyter Rev Leslie Noon and a new Deputy Superintendent Rev Silas Wood. The start of the Connexional Year is an opportunity for a new beginning, and we have a great team including Presbyters Rev Lorna Valentine and Rev Chris Sandy together with the Circuit lay staff, Stewards and the local church communities: **the Circuit is all of us.**

It has been observed that COVID-19 and the Ukraine War are major disruptor events which have brought huge change in a very short time. As a Circuit we need to continue to grapple with the challenges and opportunities that we shall face together in the next few years. For some churches it will be carrying on as usual, because they are growing or stable and have a more certain future. For other churches the challenges maybe more immediate, and we need to support and encourage one another through this time of change. A letter on Christian leadership observed that the role of leadership (Circuit, Presbyters, Church Stewards) is not primarily to keep the customers (the church community) happy but to '**Keep them attentive to God**', which may in the end result in them being more at peace with themselves.

**Constantly we face the question: What is our loving God saying to our Circuit and local churches?** To answer that, we need to create space or elbow room in our busy diaries of meetings to have a 'Meeting' with God through prayer and worship.

Our discipleship is illustrated by Micah chapter 6 verse 8, which is about whole-life and what it means to be a follower of Christ both within and beyond the Church.

**Justice:** be fair and just in all your actions, at work, school, in the neighbourhood, church, family life, when you buy products and considering the impact of your lifestyle on the climate. The demand for Justice by itself alone can be seen to be too hard and unrelenting, so it should be tempered by our love of mercy or perhaps '**loving-kindness**' as a broader description.

**Love Mercy:** gentle, kind, peaceable and forgiving faith and church communities.

**Walk humbly:** it's a reminder that we the Church depend on God far more than God needs us. Too often we have relied on ourselves and become powerless and ineffective. May we create space for the Holy Spirit to transform and renew our worship, fellowship and witness. Rev Martin Luther King said: ***"Love yourself, if that means rational, healthy, moral self-interest, yes you are commanded to do that. That is the length of life. But in humbly walking with our God, never forget the first and greatest commandment: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' That is the height of life. And when you do this you live the complete life"***.

A New Beginning is an opportunity for a fresh start with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as we safari (Swahili word for journey) through this next year.

Blessings

*Michael*



## **New Logo, Bible Verse and Prayer** **For the 2022-2023 Connexional Year**

**Circuit Bible Verse:** Micah 6:8 ‘What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.’ It is a verse that is about whole-life and what it means to be disciples of Christ both within and beyond the Church.

**Circuit Prayer:** As your Church in this place, help us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you, O God. Amen.

In thinking ahead to how we move forward as a Circuit from September 2022, the transition team thought it might be helpful to have a new logo, Bible verse and prayer we can all share in as a Circuit. Our ideas are above.

The logo draws on the creative energies of some of the staff team and uses the outline of the Circuit with Christ at the centre. It reminds us that we are the Circuit and the Circuit is us. Our ministry then is shared as well as worked out locally, and we all have something to offer both in our local context and to the wider Circuit.

The Bible verse we have selected reminds us of the whole-life nature of discipleship and what it means to be disciples of Christ both within and beyond the Church.

We felt we wanted a Circuit prayer that was short and memorable and we liked the idea of keeping it linked to the Bible verse.

Moving forward we may find that we want to have a new Bible verse and prayer for each Connexional year, and we are open to ideas about that. We are also open to other creative input on our ideas for this year. Please contact Rev Lorna Valentine if you want to share more.

[lorna.valentine@methodist.org.uk](mailto:lorna.valentine@methodist.org.uk)

01462 813284



## Strategy Working Group (SWG)

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

as at 01.09.2022 based on current information.

Teams are referred to as A-B, ministers as 1-5.

Church	PPR from 2022	Team from 2022	Notes	Membership Estimated as at 1.8.22
Henlow	1	B	(i) + (ii)	18
Langford	1	B		26
Shefford	1	B		53
Upper Caldecote	1	B		16
Ampthill	2	B	(i) + (iii)	41
Clophill	2	B		17
Flitwick	2	B		39
Haynes	2	B		10
Lidlington LEP	2	B		27
Kempston East	*3*	B/A	(iv)	100
Kempston West	*3*	B/A		36
Stewartby LEP	*3*	B/A		10 + 1 Methodist
Willington	*3*	B/A		15
Wootton	*3*	B/A		31
Beeston	4	A	(v)	18
Cardington LEP	4	A		15
Priory	4	A		105
Sandy	4	A		21
Trinity	4	A		69
Clapham	5	A	(v)	43
London Road	5	A		17
Oakley	5	A		35
Park Road	5	A		27
Putnoe Heights	5	A	(v)	68
Sharnbrook	5	A		24



### Legend for previous page

1 = Lorna Valentine

2 = Silas Wood

3 = Michael Giles

4 = Leslie Noon as at 09.2022

5 = Chris Sandy

\* \* =Superintendency

### Notes:

- (i) Ministers 1&2 working together. Plus looking at joint Church Councils in their own church grouping.
- (ii) Lorna will be the District Probationers' Secretary from 09/2022.
- (iii) Silas will be Deputy Superintendent from 09/2022.
- (iv) Superintendency and no change in churches since 09/2020.
- (v) Ministers and Priory / Putnoe churches exploring closer working together.

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.

# The New Circuit Team 2022-23

## **Rev Michael Giles - Superintendent Minister**



Greetings. I'm married with three children and three grandchildren. I have a non-church, Baptist, Anglican and Methodist background. I enjoy hiking, cycling, travelling, films, humour, sport and supporting Spurs. I'm passionate about Mission both global and local, and I have enjoyed three sabbaticals visiting Northumbria, Cyprus, Ghana,

India and Sri Lanka. I'm now in my fourth appointment as I respond to the call of Jesus who said 'Follow me'. After two years of settling in, I am the new Superintendent of the Circuit and look forward to sharing ministry with the staff and churches.

I have primary pastoral responsibility for the Methodist Churches at Kempston East, Kempston West, Willington, Wootton and Stewartby LEP.

## **Rev Silas Wood - Deputy Superintendent**



I came here from the Shropshire & Marches Circuit in 2018, where I had served for eight years. I'm looking forward to the challenges that will arise as the Circuit evolves into a more team-based way of working, not just in the staff team but in the churches too. I enjoy leading worship, and believe that social

justice, equality and inclusion are at the heart of a Christian life. I live with my wife Sue and our dog Izzy. I enjoy photography, reading and cake - not necessarily in that order.

I have primary pastoral responsibility for the Methodist Churches at Amphill, Clophill, Flitwick, Haynes and Lidlington LEP.



## **Rev Leslie Noon**



Hello! I moved to the Circuit in August 2022 after serving as a Minister in Huddersfield and Swansea. Ministry is clearly a good way of getting to live in some wonderful parts of the UK – Bedfordshire included! My ‘thing’ is about taking the Bible seriously but not literally, and using love to interpret how we understand the Bible (rather than using the Bible to define how we understand love). I have a dog called Wookie who is generally in charge – and a husband called Geoff. I believe that chocolate is the answer to all of life’s problems.

I have primary pastoral responsibility for the Methodist Churches at Beeston, Priory (Bedford), Sandy, Trinity (Biggleswade) and Cardington LEP.

## **Rev Chris Sandy**



I moved here from the Southend and Leigh Circuit in Essex in 2021. I was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and am presently studying for my PhD on Cross-cultural leadership in the Methodist Church in Britain. I am very excited to be a part of and to serve in this Circuit, where I expect to see God's faithfulness doing exploits in the life of the Church and the community in general. During my spare time, I like to read, listen to music, or go for a walk, in order to experience the beauty of nature.

I have primary pastoral responsibility for the Methodist Churches at Clapham, London Road (Bedford), Oakley, Park Road (Bedford), Putnoe Heights and Sharnbrook.

## **Rev Lorna Valentine**



I have been in the Circuit since August 2016, and this is my first appointment as a Minister. I have a passion for leading worship and preaching, and enjoy finding ways to be creative in this. I enjoy films, TV and books, and often find myself reflecting on how they connect with faith.

I have primary pastoral responsibility for the Methodist Churches at Henlow, Langford, Shefford and Upper Caldecote.

## **Stephanie Field - Circuit Administrator & Safeguarding Officer**



I have been working for the Circuit since November 2014 in various roles. I live in Bedford with my husband Martin and our children Jake and Kady, not forgetting Naseby our dog. We attend Putnoe Heights Church in Bedford. I am the Chair of the RNLi Biggleswade and District Branch, a Parent Governor at Mark Rutherford School and spend many hours travelling round the country supporting my daughter in Cheerleading (proud parent moment - her team came 4th in the world in 2022).

## **Anne Ainley - Circuit Finance Officer**



I have been the Finance Officer for six years. I've worked in accounts since leaving school, and worked for various charities doing their accounts for the last 18 or so years. Married to Jon, we have two daughters, Sarah and Rebecca. I enjoy gardening, holidays, walking, swimming, hurling (watching not playing) and painting.

### **Jane McVey - Co-ordinating Circuit Steward**



Hello all. I am currently the Co-ordinating Circuit Steward. This enables me to get to know the wider Circuit and contribute to decisions about the future of Methodism in our area. I am a Worship Leader at Oakley Methodist Church and the Church Council

Secretary. I also regularly attend worship at Cardington Church, so regard myself as an honorary member there. I enjoy singing (I sing with Kempston Musical Society) and have also taken up playing bridge since retiring, which I enjoy very much.

### **Alan Davis - Circuit Steward**



I am a Local Preacher and Circuit Steward, and following Suzy Goodson's departure I have taken on the role of Finance Steward. When not preaching, I attend Priory Methodist Church where I have been a member for 17 years, although I was born into

Methodism many years ago, as Mum and Dad were active church members. I enjoy most genres of music but am not too keen on modern stuff, preferring that written during the 30s and 40s, and I have a keen interest in musical theatre. For over 60 years I have sung in various choirs ranging from choral societies to barbershop, requiems to ragtime. The cost of travel insurance now precludes foreign travel, but Cornwall is a fine substitute.

## **Nick Guy - Circuit Steward**



I have been told I was steeped in Methodism. I trust my Christian faith extends beyond that, but I have been a regular attender of Chapel and Church since I was three, growing up in a Methodist family – my father was and my brother and sister both are Local Preachers while my uncle was and one nephew is a Minister – and I have served on the Leadership Team at Priory, where I worship, both as a Church Steward and as Church Council Secretary. Outside Methodism, I volunteer at the Bedford Foodbank warehouse, and I relax (?) with my stamp collection, editing the Bulletin of one of the societies I belong to.

## **Phil Timms - Circuit Steward**



I'm the newest Steward on the team and I worship at Kempston East Methodist Church, where I have been a Church Steward for the last six years, and a Boys' Brigade Officer for 24 years – for the last 15 of which I served as the Company Captain, until August 2022. I am now part of the national management committee responsible for the Boys' Brigade in England. In my professional life I am an Employment Policy and Union Relations Manager for the supermarket chain Tesco, working at the UK headquarters in Welwyn Garden City. I am also a chartered member of the CIPD (the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development). I like all styles of worship, and although I don't play a musical instrument, I sing very loudly and somewhat out of tune! I haven't had a Damascus Road experience – my finding of faith was a more gradual experience, but one I am grateful for and enjoy sharing. If the Boys' Brigade has taught me one thing, it's the importance of helping young people explore their God-given gifts and the love of Jesus - everyone is gifted; we just need to provide the opportunities so that these are discovered.

## Michael Carr - Circuit Steward



I have had the privilege of being a Circuit Steward for ten years and currently manage the manses, trying to make them fit for the future. As a Local Preacher I have been to all our Circuit churches so hopefully I do understand the issues each church faces. We worship at Oakley.

I am a passionate gardener, Leeds United supporter (somebody has to be) and member of Ouse Valley Singers.



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## Introducing our new Presbyter, Rev Leslie Noon

*by Wookie*

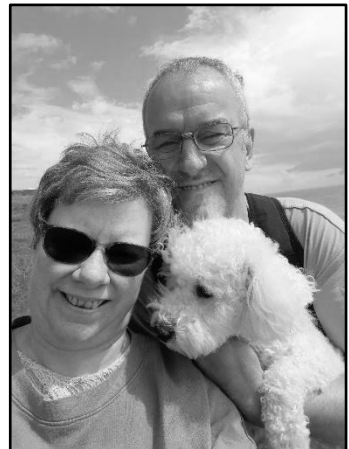
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Hello my new hooman friends!

My name is Wookie and I'm looking forward to moving from Swansea to the North Dogfordshire Circuit, and to living in Doggleswade. I'm bringing with me my hoomans, Leslie and Geoff.

Over lockdown I started writing a paragraph in the weekly letters to all the hoomans in my churches in Swansea, updating them on my latest antics or offering some doggy wisdom. In fact, I became quite famous, although I haven't written a book, as was suggested!

So I thought perhaps that I ought to be the one to introduce myself and my hoomans to you. I'm Wookie the Cavachon and I'm



six years old. I like snuggling on the bed, playing with my ball and treats! I also like rolling in fox poo (but we won't mention that!). I became well known in Swansea University where my hooman has been an Associate Chaplain, especially on De-Stress Days when I was very popular with the students.

So what about my hoomans? They tell me that they are older than six (!). Leslie has been in the ministry for 16 years, serving first in Huddersfield for seven years and then in Swansea for nine years. Geoff over this time has worked from home as a statistician for MTA (Manufacturing Technologies Association) which is based in London.

Leslie likes chocolate, reading and chocolate. She enjoys her work as a Minister, seeking to bring some fun into church life as well as taking the Bible seriously but not literally. Geoff enjoys trains, cricket, trains (and yes, chocolate as well). They both enjoy taking me for walks, especially when there is a bacon and egg sandwich to be had on the way (of course, I always get bacon as well!)

We are all looking forward to getting to know you more, and are so grateful for all the preparations that are being done to welcome us. If anyone knows of any good local dog walks, dog-friendly restaurants or cafés, please would you let my hooman know. Also, if anyone would be able, on odd occasions, to look after me, I would be very grateful. I promise to be good! For example, on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September, Leslie has to go to Synod, but Geoff is in America for his work. And I really don't want to be left on my own all day!

See you soon. Lots of woofs!

*Wookie*

# ***A Pastoral Letter***

by Rev Lorna Valentine

Sabbatical: sing a new song

One of the disciplines and privileges of being a Methodist Minister is to participate in a sabbatical every seven years or thereabouts. I have found that speaking about it always comes with mixed feelings. I am fully aware that there are many lay folk in our churches who would welcome such a time in their own lives. Also, I find stepping away incredibly difficult. So, it has been good to see as part of preparing, that we are encouraged to think about how we use the sabbatical time as a gift, both for those taking it and for those with whom we share ministry.

I hope there are some specific ways in which I will be able to share that gift with the churches and Circuit, because I am going to be doing songwriting for my sabbatical. So, warm up those vocal cords ready for when I return!



There is a great tradition of songwriting throughout the Bible. Miriam, sister of Moses, leads the singing after the people have come safely out of Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea. The Psalms are full of poetry and song and have inspired many hymn- and songwriters over the years. And of course, how can we forget the way in which Mary sings

with great boldness and courage after receiving the news that she is going to give birth to the Son of God.

I personally have always found music and song an important way of connecting with God. It is such a privilege for me to join in singing with the congregations across the Circuit, and I even get to play the piano at times too, which I enjoy. I am constantly amazed by the way in which different songs and hymns seem to speak in different ways and at different times through the words and music they offer. I have particularly noticed how, even if I feel burdened and weighed down when I come to worship, singing can help to change that and lift my spirits. It has certainly kept me going at difficult times.

I have some learning to do though – I am finally going to get to grips with the software that will enable me to share the songs that I write. I am going to start by creating the music for some songs I already have in the bag, but I'm really hoping for inspiration too: to find out how I can sing a new song and share that with you. To help with that, I'm booked in to two days of workshops that will hopefully give me lots of hints and tips about what I might do and how. I'm excited, but I'm nervous too. What if the inspiration doesn't come? What if I'm not actually any good at this? How will I know when I've got a new song that I can actually share?

I think we can all have some of those doubts when it comes to exploring something new. All I can do though, is all any of us can do: trust in God and step forward in faith. Hopefully, when I am back, I can share the fruit of what I have learned and had time to work on. I hope you will all be happy to sing a new song with me!

Every blessing, *Lorna*



# PARK ROAD METHODIST CHURCH, BEDFORD

## o o o o REVISITED o o o o

*When I was contacted by a member of the Circuit Magazine team asking if I was willing to write about our church, he kindly attached a copy of my previous effort, which was way back in 2017. At the time we had just started a new venture with a monthly “Soup and a Sandwich Lunch,” which I’m pleased to say has been a very popular addition to our community outreach and has been well supported with us regularly entertaining between 12 and 18 hungry diners.*

*Like most churches, the pandemic hit us hard, as the loss of the church and community Christian fellowship, that we had pretty much taken for granted, was suddenly denied us. To endeavour to maintain a sense of belonging, a weekly “Bulletin” was produced, which was more than just a newsletter and included the lectionary Bible reading, prayers and a hymn as well as the normal newsletter content. This was sent electronically to those who were able to receive it and hand delivered to those who could not. When we were allowed to return to church, the restrictions on singing really went against the grain, Methodism being “born in song”.*

*We are a largely elderly congregation and many did not have access to computers, therefore the world of “Zoom” was not practicable for Park Road.*

*Regrettably two of our regular hirers found alternative premises following the pandemic, which means that we have lost a substantial income.*

*We recommenced regular worship last September and our community activities in early October. Church attendance was slow at first, but I'm pleased to say that we are now back to pre-pandemic levels, having lost a few members through moves, illness, etc., but several new faces have become regular welcome additions to our church family.*

*Way back last autumn one member and her husband offered to*



*organise a plant sale, to take place outside the front of the church during the spring. So on a lovely sunny day early in May, we held our plant sale, with the addition of a table full of books and jigsaw puzzles,*

*and teas and coffees being sold from the entrance vestibule (see photo). Being outside we experienced a lot of passing trade as well as support from our own members and from other churches in the Circuit.*

*It was a wonderful day of fellowship, and the financial reward when all the takings were added up signified that it had been a huge success.*

*Our community outreach continues to be a big part of who we are, and a sector of our mission is to reach out to the elderly, lonely, isolated and marginalised members of our society.*

*Various midweek meetings include the ever-popular Monday open Coffee Mornings, the Silver Lining Group, meeting fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons, Wesley Guild each Thursday and the “Soup and a Sandwich” lunches, which all help us to fulfil this aspect of our mission.*

*What of the future? We thank the Lord that new people have started coming to Park Road on Sunday mornings and we pray that it may continue. Some have already expressed a willingness to get more involved in the life of the church.*

*With a small congregation we have limited resources, but we try to use these sensitively and sensibly, seeking a balance between our own needs and the needs of others.*

*It is not given to many of us to preach openly, but we can show the love of God in the way we lead our lives and the way we interact with all those that we come into contact with!*

*Dave Baker*

# SHARNBROOK METHODIST CHURCH

## - - - REVISITED - - -

*A lot has happened since I last wrote about the Methodist church in Sharnbrook in 2017 – mainly of course the impact of COVID.*

*As with all our churches, we closed our doors for worship, and with the foresight prompted by our ageing and therefore vulnerable congregation we devised a way of worshipping together on a Sunday morning from our own homes. We used a real time email service which was prepared by the preacher and sent out in parts, so that we all worshipped together. After the service we opened the email space for conversation. This way of worshipping served us well from 22nd March 2020 until 14th September 2021, and we are thankful for the preachers who wrote out the whole of their services during this time, including Rev Dr David Chapman (Chair of District) and Rev Andrew Hollins.*

*Since then we have seen everyone return to church, and activities restart. The return of the fortnightly Coffee and Company and weekly Lunch Club are much appreciated.*

*In the summer of 2021 we said goodbye to Rev Gill Baalham and welcomed Rev Chris Sandy. Whilst we miss Gill, AJ and Alison, we are being challenged in new directions by Chris.*

*We have taken on board the Methodist re-envisioning of being a justice-based church, marking Racial Justice Sunday in February and having four worship services in June on a variety of justice issues from water justice, through personal and political responsibilities for justice to justice for children. All*

*have been theology based and have made challenging services. We have also challenged ourselves to become more environmentally responsible and have gained a Bronze Eco Church Award.*

*What do I hope I will be writing in five years? That we are continuing to be a small but committed church, serving our congregation and our community with love and imagination. That we have gained a Silver Eco Award and are net zero carbon; and that we have found an outreach into the village for children, young people and their parents.*

*Marian Blyth*

*Senior Steward*

Note: the outline of the four justice services can be found on the Circuit website under [Worship Resources](#).



### **REV BRIAN WEBB**

We are sad to report the death of Rev Brian Webb, who was Minister of our Oakley, Clapham and Sharnbrook churches some years ago. He also took services at St Mark's, Brickhill in Bedford, and a short tribute in their newsletter contained these words: *'I was always impressed by the depth of his thinking and his thoughtful and sincere theology in which he was very much ahead of his time.'*

A member at Sharnbrook writes: *'Brian was a lovely man - never my Minister - but a good supporter of his former churches and a friend to many in the congregations where he used to serve.'*

The Service of Thanksgiving for his life took place in July.

# BHM: Celebrating Black History Month

(usually each October)

[www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk)

by Rev Michael Giles

**Introduction:** In all of my three Circuit appointments I have been blessed to share faith with folk from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, both first and second generation. In Saffron Walden the church was able to support and learn from



over 40 refugees from the civil war in Sierra Leone. In St Albans the church congregation had 22 different nationalities with many from the Caribbean and Sri Lanka. In Finchley and East Finchley, the main countries represented were African and South East Asia. I saw it as a Global Church worshipping locally. For my last two sabbaticals I have been to Ghana in 2009 and then Kerala in India and Sri Lanka in 2016, which was a privilege as I learnt so much about their vibrant faith. It was natural that 'Celebrating Black History Month' would become an important focus at my churches.

## CELEBRATING BHM

This was a major part of worship each October in my London church appointment from 2007 to 2020, and at East Finchley we had displays, speakers, choirs, food, theological insight and services. These were to celebrate through Black History the contributions not only to Church life but also to the wider culture.

Most recently at Kempston East in October 2021 we held our first

**‘Global Diversity Service’** (as we called it locally at Kempston East) with shared styles of worship and various world food dishes for lunch afterwards.

### **THE WINDRUSH FOUNDATION - [www.windrushfoundation.com](http://www.windrushfoundation.com)**

This remembers the movement of people in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, particularly from the Caribbean, who came to live, work and settle in this country. It looks at the challenges that they faced and current generations still face today. Anyone can join and participate in the events held throughout the year.

### **FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS - Mary Seacole**

Celebrating Black History Month is helped by the **focus on individuals** who have made major contributions to our national life. I was a volunteer hospital Chaplain at the Whittington NHS Hospital, and a ward was named after **Mary Seacole**. Mary was born in Kingston on the Caribbean island of Jamaica in 1805. Her father was a Scottish soldier stationed on the island – at that time, Jamaica was part of the British Empire – and her mother was a Jamaican nurse and healer. From a very young age she developed an interest in **medicine and nursing**. Mary also began to travel, and as a teenager she took two trips to England, where she spent three years in total. In 1836, Mary married an Englishman called **Edwin Seacole** in her home town of Kingston, but sadly, Edwin died just a few years later, in 1844. In 1850, her medical skills were very much needed, when many people in Kingston fell victim to a deadly disease called **cholera**. In 1853, Mary went to the city of Cruces in **Panama**, where her brother ran a hotel and store. There, Mary continued her work in

medicine – treating people suffering from cholera and tropical diseases such as yellow fever.

**Mary Seacole and the Crimean War** On hearing news of British soldiers going off to Russia to fight in the bloody battles of the **Crimean War**, she wanted to help. And so ... off she went to the War Office in **London** requesting to join **Florence Nightingale** and her team of nurses treating wounded and sick soldiers in the Crimea! Sadly, Mary was turned down, along with several other nurses. But was that enough to stop Mary? No way! Together with her friend **Thomas Day**, in 1866 she set off to Crimea in a ship stocked with medical supplies. She arrived to a terrible state. Many of the soldiers were cold, dirty and hungry, and those that were sick and wounded weren't being cared for. Mary decided something had to be done and so, with her loyal friend Thomas, she opened a "**British Hotel**" near to the battlefields. To be clear, this wasn't the kind of 'hotel' you'd expect to stay in on your holidays, gang – it was basically a hut made of metal sheets, where soldiers could rest and buy hot food, drinks and equipment. Mary used the money spent there to help treat and care for sick and wounded soldiers. A lot of nurses did invaluable work looking after the soldiers in the Crimean War, but Mary went a step further, and did something incredibly brave – she rode on horseback into the battlefields, even when under fire, to nurse wounded men from both sides of the war. Mary so was caring, in fact, she became known amongst the soldiers as "**Mother Seacole**".



**What did Mary do after the war?** After the Crimean War ended in 1856, Mary returned to London with very little money and in poor



health. But her hard work didn't go unrecognised – many of the soldiers wrote to the newspapers about all she had done for them, and **80,000 people attended a charity gala in 1857** to raise money for her. She also received a number of medals for her bravery from governments in different countries. **She died in 1881** in Kensal Green, London and was almost completely forgotten for around 100 years. It wasn't until the 1970s in fact, that people started to read about the amazing Mary Seacole and wanted to know more about her.

As a mixed-race woman living in the 19th century, what Mary Seacole achieved in her lifetime was truly remarkable. **She broke social rules and prejudices** to travel the world, run businesses and help those in need – even in the most dangerous places. Best known for her work as a nurse in the Crimean War, Mary Seacole will forever be remembered as an **incredible woman and inspiring role model**.

Though Black History Month originated in the United States to recognise and celebrate the African diaspora and African American history, it is also recognised and celebrated in Canada and the United Kingdom. And this awakening is now also a part of some African countries and parts of Europe and Asia, especially where the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has made an impact.

For more information go to

<https://www.marieclaire.com/politics/a34515361/black-lives-matter-international/>

The theme for this year's BHM is 'Black Health and Wellness'.

Maybe your church could explore hosting a 'Black History Service,' 'Global Diversity Service' or similar event. Both myself and Rev Chris Sandy would be happy to advise.

*Rev Michael Giles*

# Reflections on 12 years in North Bedfordshire

*by Rev Andrew Hollins*

I came to Bedfordshire in 2010, to be Superintendent Minister of the Biggleswade Circuit – which I knew would be uniting with the Bedford (North) and Bedford South and Ampthill Circuits to form the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit. Twelve years on, it is time to bid farewell.

One of the things which people have been saying to me is, “Twelve years is a long time to be in one appointment in the Methodist Church”. Others have said, “I remember when Ministers moved every three years or so.” As is often said, “Change is inevitable in life.” The same is true in Church life and ministry. I may have been in this Circuit for twelve years, but what I’m involved in now is nothing like what it was in 2010.

In line with what is sometimes considered the typical structure for a sermon, I offer these reflections in three parts – each part beginning with the letter **P**.

My first reflection is on **PEOPLE**, who are at the heart of the life of the Church because they are at the centre of God’s love and care. It is people whom God calls, through Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be his agents of mission in the world. As the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, said, “Mission is finding out what God is doing, and joining in.” The mission is always first and foremost God’s, not ours, and yet it is a wonderful privilege to be called and gifted by God to share in his work.

So, I give thanks for the people of the North Bedfordshire Circuit in all of their variety and giftedness. Thank you to those who have served, and continue to serve, in various ways within the life of our

churches. As I look back over the past twelve years, I remember many people who have gone ahead of us, through the gates of death, to their eternal inheritance in glory. I give thanks for them, and for our unity within the Communion of saints (saints being, simply, those whom God has sanctified, i.e. God's holy people).

Thank you, also, to the people of our Circuit who share in God's work beyond the church walls. I believe that 'church' is not confined to what happens in our buildings, as important a resource for mission as our church premises are.

That brings me on to my second **P**, which is **PLACES**. When the North Bedfordshire Circuit came into existence there were thirty-two churches listed on the Preaching Plan – not including places such as Bedford Hospital and Anjulita Court MHA, both of which it has been my privilege to be involved in.

During the past twelve years, worship has ceased at six chapels – Moggerhanger, Marston (Bedford Road), Bedford Southend, Marston Shelton, Wilstead and Cranfield. These closures are not signs of failure, but rather of the changing times through which we are living. For each of these places – as for each place of worship within the Circuit – we look back on faithful witness and give thanks for deep commitment, all of which lays the foundation for the future mission and ministry.

Our faith is grounded ultimately in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and we are called to apply that to our daily living and discipleship as Christians. I am acutely aware of just how hard this can be when it comes to our precious places of worship, but I have always tried to encourage churches to see their mission against the background of Jesus' teaching in John 12:24.

And so, my third and final **P** is **PREACHING**. What I really want

to give thanks for isn't just preaching, but the wonderful privilege it has been to lead God's **people** in various **places** in worship in a wide variety of styles over the past twelve years. Much of that has involved preaching in what many of us would consider to be the traditional Methodist mould.

We use the word *preaching* to translate the Greek word *kerygma* from the Bible. *Kerygma*, like so many words in the ancient languages in which our Bible was written, is much richer in meaning than our English equivalent suggests.

One of the most accepted translations of *kerygma* is *proclamation*.

Proclamation isn't limited to **preaching** by specifically authorised **people** (Local Preachers or ordained Ministers) from pulpits in those **places** which we call churches or chapels. Proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ is something which every Christian is called to do, and for which God's Holy Spirit has gifted every Christian. There are as many ways to proclaim the Christian message as there are Christians. What is/are your way(s) of proclaiming the gospel?

So, as I move on to pastures (another **P** word!) new, I thank you for the opportunity and privilege of sharing God's work with you in north Bedfordshire. I will continue to pray for you, as God's **people** in the various **places** of this Circuit, as you continue to **preach**/proclaim the good news of Jesus by "finding out what God is doing, and joining in".

Please pray for me as I move on to work with God's **people** in the various **places** of the Stamford Methodist Circuit, **preaching** the word of God and proclaiming the good news of Jesus.

God bless,

*Andrew*

## The Passion Play

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May, Roz and I joined the queue for the Lufthansa flight to Munich. We were part of a group of nearly 40, (a significant number of whom had links to the North Bedfordshire Circuit) on our way to Oberammergau for the world-famous Passion Play, which normally takes place every ten years, but due to the pandemic, 2020's season had been put back by two years.

At Munich airport we were met by McCabe's local guide (Susan) who accompanied us to our hotel in Austria for a five-night stay. On Saturday we took the optional tour to Berchtesgaden, home of the infamous 'Eagle's Nest', Hitler's mountain-top retreat. We then spent the afternoon by and on the beautiful Lake Königsee. Monday saw us in Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart, home to *The Sound of Music*. At the cathedral, we were seated in the choir stalls for an organ recital, and then given a 'behind the scenes tour' of parts of the building. Tuesday saw us exploring a small part of the Jakobsweg – one of the starting points for pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain.

On Wednesday we were transferred to Oberammergau, where we were met by McCabe's local guide. Being one of the two days of the week when the Passion Play is not performed, we had the opportunity to explore the town in relative peace.

On Thursday morning our party were invited (with a few other tour groups) to meet the Director of the Passion Play. This gave us a fascinating insight into some of the challenges of producing this epic presentation, and its evolution over the years. After lunch we joined the queues to get into the theatre. About 5.00pm there was a three-hour break (for us to go to our hotel for dinner) before returning to the theatre for the second half of the experience. The presentation ended about 10.30pm.

Friday was time to return home and reflect on the sights and sounds of the previous week, plus be reminded of the significant events which took place in Jesus' life, which are still impacting people around the globe today.

As I reflect on The Passion Play, three words could summarise some of my thoughts: Covenant. Community. Christianity.

**Covenant** : The promise the folks of Oberammergau made back in 1632, around the cross in the local church, where they “vowed to perform the Passion Play every ten years; and from this time on not a single person more died” [of the plague]<sup>1</sup>. For a number of seasons the play was performed in the local graveyard, where they were vividly reminded of one of the reasons why they were involved in this project.

**Community** : A significant proportion of the population of Oberammergau are involved in one way or another with the

production. A person has to meet the residency rule<sup>2</sup>, before being considered for involvement in the production. McCabe's guide told us how following each season, a significant number of new cars are purchased; and how the locals depend on the revenue the season generates. Following each season, our guide told us, there is a significant community project. In the coming year, the village will have a new sewerage works!

**Christianity** : The depiction of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, continues to draw folks to the Passion Play. A number in our party were quite moved, as the well-known story line, (along with various tableaux scenes from our Old Testament) was acted out very vividly before our eyes, with a cast of hundreds, plus live music and animals!

The season continues to October, by when somewhere in the region of 500,000 will have seen this year's presentation. Then the village can attempt to return to its normal routine for the years when the Passion Play is not being performed.

<sup>1</sup> *Quoted in Dr Peter Walker's 'Immersed in the Passion' – supplied by McCabe before we travelled.*

<sup>2</sup> *Either born in the village, married to a local for 10 years or lived there for 20 years.*

*Brian Addington*

## NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT – OUR CHURCHES

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



# BELIEF Events 2022



## Mini Science & Faith Course using Zoom

Saturday 24th September

**Rev Dr Dave Gregory (Science & Faith for children)**

**Wonder, Play and Connections – Science and Faith Across the Generations**

- - - - -

Saturday 1st October

**Dr Martin Hodson (Biodiversity)**

**Biodiversity Loss: A Christian Concern?**

- - - - -

Saturday 8th October

**Rev Canon Dr Tim Bull (Artificial Intelligence)**

**Questions that AI Raises for Believers?**

- - - - -

Each event will start at 10.30am and will run for two one-hour sessions separated by a break, finishing at 1.00pm.

Order your free tickets individually for each week on Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/335254885387>

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## Rev Dr Simon Woodman speaking on the Gospel of Matthew

Wednesday 26th October 2022 7.00pm to 9.00pm using Zoom

Order your free ticket on Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/simon-woodman-on-matthew-tickets-381674477637>

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All events are hosted by

St Andrew's Church Centre, Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF

For more information, please visit our website

[www.beliefbeds.org](http://www.beliefbeds.org)

email [BELIEF@StAndrewsBedford.org](mailto:BELIEF@StAndrewsBedford.org)

BELIEF is registered as a charity, number 1123911



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

"Messy Harvest" on Saturday 8th October from 11.00am to 1.00pm

- **Oakley**

Messy Church for All takes place after school from 3.30pm – 5.30pm (all ages welcome – all children to be accompanied) as follows:-

Tuesday 20th September

Tuesday 18th October

Tuesday 15th November

Tuesday 13th December

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

Contact Jan Follett or Michael Carr for more details.

- **Willington**

Usually 3rd Wednesday of the month, 3.15pm – 5.30pm

# Circuit Diary Dates

FOR DETAILS OF OTHER EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT PLEASE  
SEE THE CIRCUIT WEBSITE [www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk](http://www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk)

*The events listed below may be subject to hybrid arrangements  
due to the ongoing prevalence of COVID-19.*

*Please check relevant information prior to planning attendance.*

## AUGUST

Wed 31st 7.30pm Circuit Welcome Service for Rev Leslie Noon and  
to mark Rev Michael Giles becoming Superintendent  
for the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit at **Trinity**

## SEPTEMBER

Mon 12th 10.45am MWiB meeting at **Amphill Methodist Church**

Wed 14th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting at **Kempston East** (in person)

Sat 17th 10.00am Autumn Representative session of Synod  
to be held at The Barnabas Centre, St James Church,  
Church Lane, Thorley, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 4BE

## OCTOBER

Mon 31st 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' meeting  
at **Kempston East**

**Churches** should send their dates for the next Plan (with details of preachers they have booked) to **their Minister** by **Sunday 26th September**

**Preachers** should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 26th September**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 2nd October** please

The **Circuit Office** remains closed.

The Circuit Administrator (Stephanie Field) and Finance Officer (Anne Ainley) are both working from home. They can be contacted using the Circuit mobile phone - 07522 928936.

Please email or scan information wherever possible. If mail has to be posted, please send Anne's to her home address, and Stephanie's c/o the Superintendent Minister. (Addresses are in the Circuit Directory).

Circuit Administrator email address –

*northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com*

Circuit Finance Officer email address –

*northbedsfinance@gmail.com*

*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.*

*A limited number of this special edition of the magazine have been printed due to the relaunch of the Circuit. The Circuit will look at future distribution methods for further issues and welcomes any helpful feedback*

*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](http://www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk)  
Circuit Charity Registration No. 1129523