

North

The **Methodist Church** 

Bedfordshire

Circuit

34/1

Magazine

Issue No.55

Spring 2025



Wild birds make nests by the water.

Psalm 104:12a ICB

Circuit information...see inside for further details.

Lent course information and details of
Good Friday events can be found on page 29

For diary dates, see page 30

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Circuit Ministers

Superintendent

Rev Michael Giles *michaelgiles2017@gmail.com* 01234 930882
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Kempston East, Kempston West,
(Rest day – Saturday) Stewartby LEP 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, Henlow, Langford, Sandy, Shefford,
(Rest day – Saturday) Trinity (Biggleswade) and Upper Caldecote

Rev Chris Sandy *christopher.sandy@methodist.org.uk* 01234 860484
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: London Road (Bedford), Park Road (Bedford),
(Rest day – Friday) Priory (Bedford) and Putnoe Heights (Bedford)

Rev Paulette Tedd *paulette.tedd@outlook.com* 07591 139940
Primary Pastoral Responsibilities: Cardington LEP, Clapham, Oakley LEP,
(Probationer Study day – Wednesday) Sharnbrook and Willington
Rest day – Saturday)

Circuit Stewards

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A Pastoral Letter

by Rev Michael Giles

Dear Friends,

EASTER PEOPLE in the North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit

It is never easy writing a Pastoral letter three months in advance not knowing what local, national and world events may take place. The Circuit and local churches will continue to face challenges and opportunities for Mission. Trying to plan or navigate the next few years is as unpredictable as attempting to guess the results of Tottenham Hotspur's football matches. One thing I am sure of, we shall need to continually adapt our Church life to the environment we live, work and minister in. Currently some of the Circuit churches are looking at new models of ministry, especially with the challenge of finding enough lay leaders or Presbyters available in Stationing.

But we must remind ourselves that we are EASTER PEOPLE, and in that context, LENT and Easter arrive at the right time for reflection and hope.

Holy Space

LENT and Easter offer us 'holy space' in which to explore Bible stories that touch at the heart of human experience. We all need to have an MOT on our lives and faith from time to time. LENT is an opportunity to re-tune our souls to God and do some 'spring cleaning' in our lives.

HOLY WEEK is the preparation for the events of Good Friday and the Resurrection Hope. It reminds us that Easter is more than a long weekend, hot cross buns and chocolate Easter eggs, although enjoyable in themselves.

An amazing story

The Church has an amazing story to share with the community of Bedfordshire. Throughout the Easter story, Jesus and His disciples faced many issues which we may relate to, these include the nature of friendship, betrayal, courage, fear and hope.

Here is a brief summary of the story: *'Jesus had this wandering ministry for about three years which had brought healing and God's love to many people. Yet the religious authorities felt threatened and were looking for a way to get rid of Him. Judas, one of His closest disciples, betrayed Him to the authorities who came in the middle of the night to arrest Him. He was interrogated, then falsely accused in court before sentence was passed. The speed of events was breathtaking and the story ends with Jesus dying on a cross on what the Church calls 'Good (God' s) Friday'.* But there's more.....

Turning a full stop into a question mark

Three days later, two women friends went to His tomb and found it was empty, then various sightings of Jesus alive took place. One particular disciple, Thomas, would not believe unless he saw Jesus Himself. This took place and Thomas responded: 'My Lord and my God'. **The Church is a place to bring doubts and questions, but also to discover faith. So often folk walk past the church without asking any questions, but just maybe the full stop will turn into a question mark.**

Easter People of Bedfordshire

The Church of Jesus Christ does have Good Friday moments when life is challenging, but always in the background Christ Jesus is Risen, our Resurrection Hope. The Church is God's Easter People celebrating the joy, peace and freedom of following the living Jesus.

'Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed, Hallelujah'.

Jesus is the Hope of the world.

Rev Michael Giles

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.

SANDY METHODIST CHURCH

o o o o REVISITED o o o o

by Jenny Endersby

Sandy's mission statement is: "*We are a caring community of Christians sharing God's love with each other and our neighbours*". We are a small church and the usual congregation is between 10 and 20 people. One of the benefits of being small is that church lunches are easier to organise and Jane Germany has for many years expertly served up fabulous roast dinners for us after our services.

I was mulling over how important communal meals are in the Bible, from the Old Testament Temple feasts to Jesus' first miracle, eating with Zacchaeus, the Last Supper and the early Church's sharing of meals for example, and I shared my thinking with others at Sandy. As a result, the church leadership decided to try something new, by playing to our strengths, and with Rev Leslie Noon's help we developed our **Feast Your Faith** services where our worship is wrapped around a beautifully home-cooked meal. Our aim is to have prayers, hymns and a talk around a two-course meal, with loving fellowship and sharing with others being the underlying theme of the worship service. Our first *Feast Your Faith* was held in January 2023, and as I write, we will be meeting this weekend for the seventh time.

In the few services we have held, a "liturgy" has already developed with an introduction of prayers and hymns including an adapted Kum ba Yah, a topic to discuss over the main course, then a talk and hymn followed by pudding, and finishing with more prayer, a final hymn and a toast to Jesus. We have had occasional guests, including those who don't normally attend a church, and the feedback has been very positive and constructive.

With the formation of the Eastern Section of the Circuit this last year, we have embraced the challenge of enabling Leslie to be in several of her churches on the same Sunday by meeting at different times. A poll around the congregation found that most were willing to move the service time, especially if it involved food!

So in June 2024 we held our first **Tea@3** service, borrowing the idea from Upper Caldecote. Trying to make it different in style from *Feast Your Faith* we had the talk concurrent with the eating and this was unsuccessful! Crunching on crisps, cakes and sandwiches means you don't catch what was said and you can't politely ask a speaker to repeat themselves! We've also found that most people don't want sandwiches in the middle of Sunday afternoon. So we are learning and adjusting and at our **Cakes, Carols and Candlelight** service in December we served up tea and cakes in the rear hall before the service and then moved into the church proper to sing and hear the lessons.

We have also built on the breakfasts that have long been a tradition in our church on Easter morning and held our first **Breakfast Service** in November 2024. Juggling between being not too early for people to get to church and yet not too late for breakfast, it was quite difficult to work out the best time to suit everyone. So we offered bacon butties from 9.00am to 9.30am when a short service started, and then the opportunity to have more food afterwards, and people came for different bits as it suited them.

Change is not often easy to embrace and starting new ventures always requires effort, but in our breakfast service, Leslie took us to the root of the word companion - arising out of the Latin words *com* (with, together) and *panis* (bread). And afterwards as I saw my daughter of nineteen happily chatting away to a relatively new member in his wheelchair, I reflected that there are very few places where they would meet on an equal footing, sharing fellowship and being companions together.

STEWARTBY UNITED CHURCH

o o o o REVISITED o o o o

by Elaine Sullivan

It was five years ago when I was last asked to write an article on Stewartby United Church, at a time when we had, along with other churches, been told to close our doors. What strange times those were indeed, and yet now it seems a distant memory, and slightly unreal!

And yet, along with so many others, we learnt to adapt and change how we worked. And it felt as though God was there alongside us, encouraging us to move on and to find different ways of communicating. A challenge indeed, and a steep learning curve for most of us. And yet it was the same message that we had – that God loves us and He is there with us in times of joy and in times of struggle. That, through His saving grace, we can all be forgiven our sins, with the promise of eternal life.

We are still a small congregation, and having ‘lost’ many of our active church members, who relocated to places a long way off, we sometimes find it challenging to complete all that needs doing. But we have been blessed by many who, although they do not attend church, have been willing to help us out. We have been blessed too by support from other Christians, and particularly by our two Ministers who encourage and support us, and make themselves available when we seek help and advice.

We continue to hold services regularly, although now only twice a month in the afternoon. One of these is, when Ministers are available, a communion service. If no Minister is available, we are blessed with leaders from the Circuit or St Mary’s, Wootton. The other Sunday is our

t@3, which is now over 10 years old. We also have joint services with Lidlington Church on the 5th Sunday of the month, so wonderful to share services with them, and especially to have live musicians instead of CDs.

We continue to keep in contact with the local community through our church website, noticeboards, and local Facebook pages. We have held some joint prayer meetings for the local community with Christians who live in Stewartby but do not necessarily worship with us. We have recently been able to resume our contact with Broadmead Lower School, to lead assemblies, have children visiting the church and in being able to help on a voluntary basis in the classroom. We also have regular contact with the groups who hire our church hall, with church members helping out at Sunflowers, a babies and toddlers group who meet weekly. The Gadsden Band held their annual carol concert in the church hall before Christmas, and it was a real pleasure to see so many people from the village attending.

One of our many blessings is the arrival of the Mar Thoma Church, who have been holding services in Stewartby United Church on a Saturday morning for over a year now. For the past year they have met regularly once a month. They started a Sunday School in the summer and are now going to have services twice a month, one on a Saturday, the other on a Sunday morning. A year and a half ago I had never heard of Mar Thoma, and I certainly had no idea that it was a Christian Church. Sometimes one can only marvel at how God arranges things!

Please pray for us, that we keep reaching out into our local community and that we seek to do God's will as individuals and as His body, the Church.

We thank God for the past, praise Him for the present and trust Him for the future.

KEMPSTON EAST METHODIST CHURCH

Celebrating the Diversity of the local Church

On Sunday, 17th November 2024, the service at Kempston East focussed on celebrating the diversity of the local congregation. There was a congregation of over 100 adults and young people representing at least 11 countries. The purpose of the special Sunday focus was to celebrate the diverse nature of the congregation at Kempston East through worship and sharing a meal together, both community activities. We have members from Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Jamaica, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, India, Russia and Italy.

The worship included hymns and songs from different countries and a hymn and Bible reading in Punjabi led by church members. Hymns included: *We are marching in the light of God* (South Africa), *Let us build a house* (USA), *Jesu, Jesu* (Ghana) and *Be thou my vision* (Ireland). We also had a church member recently returned from India, sharing about the growth of the Church there. During the service we dedicated the JMA (Junior Mission for All) collectors and supporters, and the annual Samaritan's Purse Shoebox appeal.

The sermon had three points, **Global, Local and Personal**, based on Matthew 28:16-20 and the commission of Jesus to make disciples. Globally the church as we know is growing in places as diverse as Cuba, China and throughout Africa. Locally in the UK, JMA supports a project in Yarm Methodist Church offering free lunches. At Kempston East we offer a lunch club, Tibbs Dementia support, Boys Brigade and Winter Welcome. Personally we were reminded of our own commitment to worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

On the slides presentation alongside several images of the world church were these two football chants from Ghana and Nigeria.

Ghana

*Ghana Ghana ooo, Say Yeaaaaaaaa yeeeeaaaaaaaaa yeaaaaaaaa..!
Hallelujah...hallelujah...hallelujah!*

Nigeria

*Thank you Jesus, Thank you my Lord,
thank you for letting Nigeria win the game!*

The 'Bring and share' lunch included a variety of delicious food from different cultures and countries. The whole event was a great success and will almost certainly be repeated later this year. Perhaps other Circuit Churches could also hold similar services and events?

Global, Local and Personal.

Rev Michael Giles



>>> NEWS FROM CHURCHES <<<

UPPER CALDECOTE METHODIST CHURCH

Some 40 years ago Upper Caldecote started holding a weekly Coffee Morning in the hall. It was an 'open' coffee morning but attended by mainly church members and friends. It is believed it may have been started to help fund a forthcoming Flower Festival later in the year. Recollections are a bit foggy due to the passage of time!

Over the years attendance has changed: sadly past members have died or moved away to be closer to family or into facilities able to better serve their changing needs. All part of the journey of life. The Coffee Morning resumed after COVID, but attendance patterns had changed and as with so many other gatherings, folk needed time to rebuild their confidence to venture out. Sadly, some never regained

it. Numbers slowly reduced and the hosts' rota was falling on a smaller number of folk.

We, like many other churches offered to host a 'Warm Space' during the winter months, and despite a number of volunteers recruited at our Candlelight Carol Service, we had no takers for the 'Warm Space', which was very disappointing and with no real explanation.

In summer 2023, discussion surrounded the future of the weekly Coffee Morning: should we move to a monthly timetable? At a meeting of 'interested folk' from church, friends and the 'Warm Space' volunteers, there was enthusiasm for a monthly event to support a local or national charity (local branch) each month. And so, from within the group the name 'ChariTea & Coffee' was born. We seek a small team to host each month who are able to call on others to help, bake or sell raffle tickets. We deliver a handbill to all houses in the village to advertise events for the next six months. We have been pleasantly surprised by the response from within the community, the surrounding villages and other local churches, with 60 plus visitors most months. We also open the worship area for additional seating to introduce visitors to the church and hall. It has worked very successfully, and in the first year to September 2024 a total of £5,744 was raised. Some of the charities we have supported to date are: Macmillan, Headway, East Anglian Air Ambulance, RNLI, Primrose Ward, Bedford Hospital, Keech Cottage Hospice, Royal British Legion to name a few. The hall running costs, catering consumables and printing costs are covered by two events each year which 'support the events programme' with many cakes etc baked for each event. We have been pleased to welcome many people onto the premises and offer a hand of friendship at these and other social events. ChariTea & Coffee Mornings are held on the first Saturday of the month from 10.30am - noon in the Methodist Church hall, Upper Caldecote, SG18 9BL.

Jon Payne

>>> NEWS FROM CHURCHES <<<

PUTNOE HEIGHTS METHODIST CHURCH

Putnoe Heights Church Autumn Appeal

For many years at Putnoe Heights we have chosen a charity to benefit from an Autumn Appeal. This is traditionally launched at Harvest Festival at the beginning of October and runs until Advent. It consists of little more than a letter to our members giving details of the chosen charity and an invitation to make a donation. It is remarkable how this simple approach brings results. Just "Ask and it will be given unto you". We alternate between a local charity and a global one: last year we supported *Karibuni Children* and received support and encouragement from some Bedfordshire Karibuni trustees and also from a young man who had benefited from Karibuni who was able to visit us on a Sunday morning and tell his personal story. This year our charity has been the local *Bedford Hospital Charity & Friends* who are actively working towards improving children's cancer services.

In addition to the personal donations, we were able to add small amounts from Coffee Mornings, sale of greetings cards, our "borrow a book" stall and some sundry donations from church groups. This year, any Christmas concerts that we hosted (Bedford Community Concert Orchestra, Bedford Town Band etc.) were involved with their own fundraising.

Our final total amounted to £1120, an excellent effort from a congregation averaging 30 people on a Sunday. Dr Robert Oakley, Vice-Chairman of the charity, worshipped with us on Sunday 12th January and was presented with the cheque. In his thanks he was able to give us an account of their current appeal for £80,000 to provide two specially adapted rooms for children being treated for cancer who would otherwise have to be taken to Addenbrookes or Great Ormond Street. The charity will also fund a children's cancer specialist for one year who is currently being trained before the opening of the children's cancer suite.

Sue Allen

Looking back on Christmas

It seems a long time ago now, but here are a few images from some of the Christmas services in the Eastern Section.



A 'Spoof' Christmas from Langford, with hats and masks showing Christmas trees, puddings, turkey, elves, Brussels sprouts and more!



A quiet 'blue' Christmas service at Sandy



At Trinity's Carol Service, strips of cloth were laid in the manger, to symbolically make a welcoming place for the Christ-child



Henlow on Christmas Day – recalling childhood nativity plays and reflecting on some of the nativity characters. We had a laugh!

Circuit Matters

Dear Friends

On 18th April 1930, the BBC news bulletin at 8.45pm was somewhat different from what we're used to today. Anyone tuning in to listen on their wireless radio (television broadcasts started six years later), was simply greeted with the words...

"There is no news."

That was it. Nothing else was said.

Piano music was played for the rest of the 15-minute segment.

Circuit Matters in this edition of the magazine is much like that odd event some 95 years ago, as currently there is nothing to report that hasn't previously been covered.

So, please sit back, relax, and imagine a gentle piece of piano music playing for a short while and then continue to read the rest of this magazine.



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	Glynn Rowlands
2011	Paul Cooper	1996	John Sackett
2021	Anne Foley	1983	Ros Salisbury
1997	Graham Follett	2010	Geoff Talbot
2010	Chris Fox	2009	Perilyn 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		

PREACHER ON NOTE

Carmen Rowe

WORSHIP LEADERS

GCMC Amptill

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)
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

Putnoe Heights

Sue Allen (T)

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



We all know, I'm sure, that Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The start of 40 days leading up to Easter. Well, actually, if you look at a calendar you will see that the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday is 46 days, but in the Western Church, Sundays have not been counted, hence a period of 40 days.

40 is a significant number in the Bible. It tends to generally mean 'a lot'. It represents the 40 days that we are told Jesus spent in the desert after He was baptised and the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

So, Ash Wednesday begins our observance of Lent, but when, I wonder, did you last attend an Ash Wednesday service? In our Methodist tradition, such services may not be as common as in other traditions – but there is something special, I believe, about these kinds of ancient services. For Ash Wednesday services allow us to reflect on our journey through life, and perhaps where we are spiritually in our relationship with God.

Traditionally an Ash Wednesday service will include the imposition of ashes. Tradition has it, that palm crosses from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burnt in order to make the ashes, and they are worn as a sign of repentance and humility. Symbolically, the wearing of ashes goes back to the Hebrew Scriptures – our Old Testament, when the wearing of ashes and sackcloth showed sorrow and penitence.

It is always good to have a special space and time as we seek to draw closer to God, and to know that we stand in a long line of Christians who, over the centuries, have sought to do the same.

Look out for Ash Wednesday services happening in our Circuit or near you, and if you can, make a special effort to attend.

Rev Leslie Noon

Circuit Library



The Circuit Library now has over 800 books to its name. Most are listed on the Goodreads page “North Beds Methodist Circuit Library” with a few locally specific items in addition. Jenny Endersby can bring requested books to Circuit Meetings, but another borrowing option is to pop in and see her to browse and maybe enjoy a cup of tea between 2.00pm and 3.00pm on a Monday afternoon – call Jenny before you go on 01767 220 623 just to confirm she’s there (and to get the address).

For more details (and if you have any books to donate) please contact
Jenny Endersby - jenny.endersby2@gmail.com



From the archives... by Jeanette Letch
~~~ Primitive Methodism in Bedford ~~~

The following piece describes the early days of the founding of the Bedford Circuit, and I thought I would share it with you. It is not taken from our Archives but from the *My Primitive Methodists* website. Richard Newman Wycherley lived from 1872–1948, and was stationed in Bedford from 1896–1901, and 1911–1924.

Transcription of article in the Christian Messenger by R.N.Wycherley

The first Primitive Methodist missionary came to Bedford in the year 1834. He was sent by the Nottingham Circuit, who desired, if possible, to establish a cause in this important and far-famed town. The experiment, however, turned out to be a dismal failure, for the agent himself proved quite unworthy of the confidence which had been reposed in him. Not content with having blighted the prospects of the

mission almost at its inception, he returned to the town some years later, and did his utmost to create strife in the church which had been gathered.

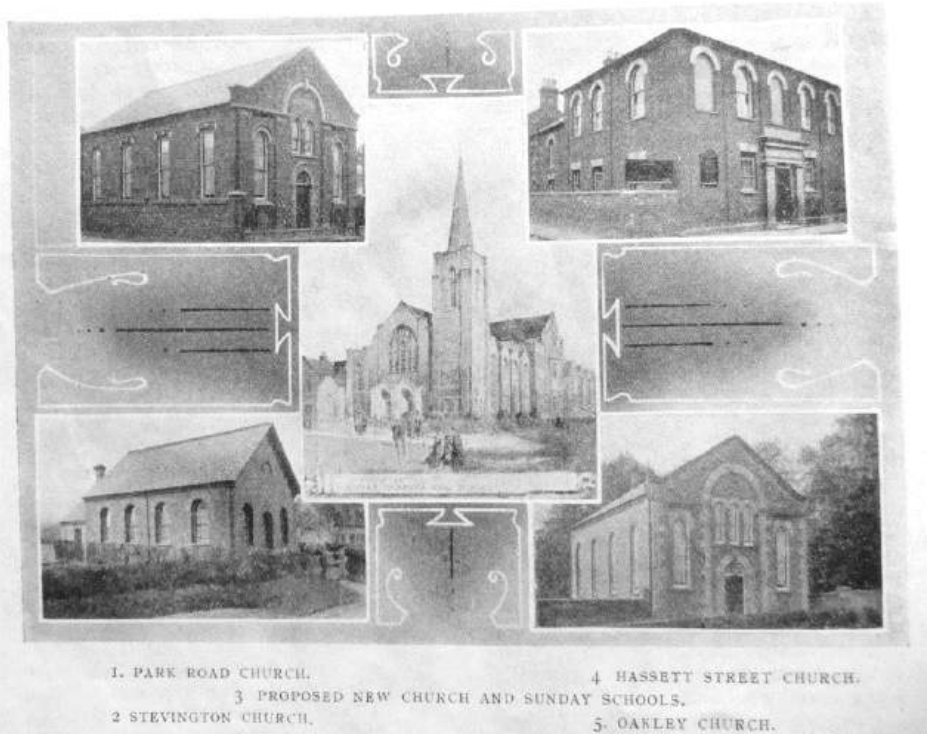
To Jeremiah Dodsworth belongs the credit, under God, of placing Primitive Methodism on a sound basis in Bedford. As the missionary of the Hull Circuit, he took the place of the discredited Clements in 1841, and at once applied himself to the work with characteristic self-abandonment. He soon gathered the scattered members together again and enthused them with new energy and hope. Hassett Street Chapel, which had been built in the year 1838, was renovated and made more attractive, while both congregations and membership grew in a gratifying way. One report of these years says: "*Bedford mission continues its onward, its upward course - a subject this that demands our most sincere and fervent thanks to God. In this mission a base and strenuous effort has been made to malign the Connexion and to ruin the interests of Zion; but God, even our God, has been at the right hand of our esteemed friends, and hence they have not been greatly moved*".

From Bedford itself Dodsworth extended his labours to nearly all the villages that lay within reach of the town. Stevington, Colmworth, Elstow, Oakley, Pavenham and other places were successfully missioned and promising causes established. As the years went by, Millbrook, Clophill, Kempston, Houghton Conquest, Maulden, Marston, Bletsoe, Wootton, Clapham and other rural centres were added to the list, until Bedford Circuit covered an area of forty miles and boasted of twenty preaching stations. It was in the year 1857 that the mission received its franchise and took its place in the list of independent Circuits.

The original Bedford Circuit underwent division in the year 1897, when Hassett Street Church became the head of Bedford First, William Durance as Superintendent Minister, and Cauldwell Street Church became the head of Bedford Second, with R. Newman Wycherley in charge.

The First Circuit, at the time, comprised six churches, two of which, however, have since been sold. At the present time, in addition to the

parent society at Hassett Street, there are flourishing causes at Park Road, Oakley, and Stevington. Park Road Society came into existence about the year 1887, when the then Superintendent, Jacob Pilling, bought the site and erected the chapel. For years, however, the few members which made up the band of pioneers were heavily burdened with the debt which remained on the property. Today the property is debtless, and the church is engaged in raising money for the erection of much-needed school accommodation. The most gratifying feature of these years of strenuous labours, however, was the re-awakened interest in the spiritual life of the society. Many young people joined in fellowship, a Y.P.S.C.E. (Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour) came into existence, and immediately proved an immense acquisition. And the church has never looked back. Today it enjoys good congregations, a robust membership, and sustains with praiseworthy zeal many useful organizations. Certainly, the prospects of Park Road are exceedingly bright.





Mercy Ships is a Christian international health charity. Our hospital ships, the Global Mercy and Africa Mercy are equipped to bring free, life-changing surgeries to women, men and children across sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2024 alone, Mercy Ships volunteer crew delivered more than 3,600 surgical procedures, more than 9,000 dental procedures and provided more than 42,550 hours of training for over 250 professional healthcare workers from sub-Saharan Africa both on and off the vessels.

Fudia's story

When we first met Fudia, aged 10, she rarely smiled. She was born with a disease that made her legs bow outwards, causing immense pain.

Sadly, Fudia had lost both her parents by the time she was seven years old, but her uncle, who cared for her after her parents died, took her to many local hospitals in Sierra Leone.

But no surgeon was qualified to give her the surgery she needed. The doctors told them, "Only Mercy Ships can help her".



Safe surgery is out of reach for 9 out of 10 people in sub-Saharan Africa. People like Fudia are robbed of years of healthy life, for conditions that are easily treatable.

Dr Belen Carsi, Mercy Ships volunteer orthopaedic paediatric surgeon, was one of two surgeons to operate on Fudia. She explained that this was the most severe orthopaedic case she had seen in years. Fudia's

condition was caused by Blount’s disease – a complex disorder that causes the lower leg to angle inwards.

“Fudia’s legs were so deformed that her ability to walk was really limited,” explained Dr Carsi. If left untreated, “she would have stopped walking altogether”.



Thankfully for Fudia, she received surgery just in time.

After her free surgery, Fudia gained 14 centimetres in height. She’s growing taller and stronger every day. Her eyes are radiant, shining above a bright smile that speaks of her new life after many years of waiting.

Her uncle told us, “I am overjoyed for all that has happened for Fudia”.

Now back at home, Fudia can proudly walk to school on her straight legs.

For many people in low-income countries, surgery is simply not an option, either because it doesn’t exist or it is inaccessible.

If you and 10 friends club together and give £43 each, you could fund a life-changing orthopaedic surgery for a child like Fudia.



To find out more about Mercy Ships and consider making a donation, visit [***mercyships.org.uk***](https://www.mercyships.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number: 1053055 (England & Wales), SC039743 (Scotland)

Children and Families Outreach

My name is Sophie Tucker and in August of 2024 I was employed as the full-time *Children & Families Worker* at St Peter & St Paul's, the Parish church of Flitwick, Bedfordshire. One of my aims as the C&F was to encourage whole family discipleship. Aware that we only spend such a small proportion of a child's week teaching them about Jesus, we can't possibly support their faith as well as their parents, if they are given the right tools. And so **Nosh** was born.

Nosh is a service held in a local lower school, based around the dinner table, aimed at discipling families together and giving parents the skills to grow their family's faith from home.

We start each service with ten minutes of action songs during which time the parents can make themselves a drink, select some nibbles and settle at a table. We then ask everyone to come to the front to say the Grace together before starting on our food.

On the table are three numbered questions that the families can discuss with each 'course', so with their nibbles they will discuss question one, which might be something like '*If you could choose a superpower, what would it be?*'

We then have our interactive story. This first year we are looking at different meals Jesus went to and what that tells us about His character, so one of our stories was Simon's meal where Mary washes Jesus' feet. The second question the families discuss over their second course of sandwiches and crisps reflected on whether they find it easy to forgive someone when they do something bad.

The 'not a talk' talk is next. In this session we played 'Simon says', and when someone did the wrong thing, they got a sticker. We rigged the game so that everyone got a sticker, and someone got lots of stickers. We then said that only the children with no stickers

on could have a sweet. We looked at the story again to see what Jesus would have done and He would have still given everyone a sweet, even the person with lots of stickers!

Our third course is cake and biscuits, and with that course we asked 'Have you ever had to say sorry? How did it feel?' We then encouraged each member of the family to write or draw on a piece of paper something they wanted to say sorry about... and then we shredded them.

We finished by saying thank you to Jesus because he uses His superpower of forgiveness to forgive our sins. One more song to finish and then doggy bags to go home with.

In the doggy bags are another three envelopes. Each envelope contains the elements of the service with three questions, so the families can recreate *Nosh* at home each Saturday until the next month's *Nosh*. The doggy bag questions do not relate to the service they have just attended, but cover standalone aspects of worship and faith. For example, the first doggy bag envelope explored why we say the Grace, with week one focusing on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, week two the love of God, and week three the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

It is still early, so it is hard to tell what effect these services are having on our families, but the children are eager to get through the door each week and the parents leave with smiles on their faces, so I think the service is welcomed. I also saw, during a coffee visit with one of the mums, that the envelopes were on their dinner table and the right number had been opened. 😊

I hope this report gets your creativity stirring.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me:
children@flitwickchurch.org

Sophie Tucker

PROFILE OF A VISITING PREACHER

by Simon Cooper

I qualified as a Methodist Local Preacher in 1995, and over the last 30 years have preached in the North Beds and St Neots & Huntingdon Circuits. I am currently a member of a Baptist church in St Neots and pride myself on my ecumenical roots, preaching in Baptist, URC and Methodist churches! My wife Jenny and I are both involved in Christian Performing Arts in St Neots, an interdenominational group of Christians who love to portray the Gospel through drama, dance and music. Twice we have been involved in directing and choreographing the St Neots Passion Play, a large outdoor event in which the Easter story was retold through scenes in the Market Square, Riverside Park and St Anselm's Gardens. We hope and pray that at some time we might be able to put on a third performance, but we haven't really recovered since the event planned for 2020 had to be cancelled after months of rehearsals due to the pandemic.

Jenny and I run a small events company which has both a commercial and a Christian side to it. The company was set up in 2008 and commercially, we have performed custom written Murder Mysteries based in historic properties such as Shuttleworth House and Wimpole Hall. Most of our working time is currently taken with planning and managing Escape Rooms, having run the 'Jailbreak' Escape Room based at St Neots Museum each year for the last six years. We are also privileged to do work for a number of cruise lines: last October we ran drama workshops on board a 26-night Fred Olsen cruise to Canada and back which was a wonderful time (when we escaped from the mid-Atlantic hurricanes!). The Christian dimension to our company's work has involved performing 'outreach' weekends for churches; typically, this has involved the performance of a Murder Mystery event on the Saturday night, followed by a service on Sunday in which I preach on 'The Greatest Murder Mystery of all time' ... slightly corny, but a great way of introducing people to the Mystery and Majesty of Christ!

When not doing these things or helping out with activities in my home church, I spend much time with family. Jenny and I have a son who is an ordained Anglican Priest and who has just started a church plant in Warrington and our daughter is very involved as a Worship Leader in her church in Nottingham....and our four grandchildren are our delight and joy!



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 Circuit.

LONDON ROAD (Bedford)

London Road held a Messy Nativity service on the afternoon of Sunday 15th December. Everyone enjoyed following - and acting out - the story of the birth of Jesus and joining in joyful worship songs in celebration. As always there were plenty of craft activities in the hall and the chance to take home what had been made. We look forward to our next Messy Church which we expect to take place on a Saturday afternoon in the spring.

John Caves

OAKLEY

Messy Church for All takes place after school from around 3.15pm – 5.30pm at Oakley Methodist Church (all ages welcome – all children to be accompanied).

Dates are as follows:-

Tuesday 11th February, 11th March and 20th May.

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

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.



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 – 15th March, 19th April, 17th May and 21st June.

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

Watch our Facebook page for the Messy 'THEME'.

All families welcome for Christian-based Activities, Fellowship & Fun

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

Dates are as follows:-

Thursdays – 13th February, 20th March, 10th April and 15th May.

Both from 3.15pm - 5.30pm.

Please check with Pat on 01234 838667.



The Messy Church® name and logo are registered trade marks of Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), a charity (233280) and company limited by guarantee (301324), registered in England and Wales



FROM THE EDITOR ...

We have recently had a meeting with two Ministers and a Circuit Steward to discuss the future of the Circuit Magazine.

The crucial question we addressed was whether I really wanted to give up completely, or whether I would be prepared to carry on with a reduced workload. I agreed to try the latter, and we came up with the following plan:

- We will produce three issues a year, coming out after each of the Circuit Meetings, in April, July and October. It means we will lose the Winter issue.
- We will omit the following:
 - Lists of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.
 - Messy Church events.
 - Christmas and Lent / Holy Week / Easter services / events.
 - Diary.
- We will aim to have shorter articles.
- We (the magazine team) will continue to bundle up the magazines, but in most cases will deliver them to Willington, where they can be picked up by

the Ministers and distributed. Now that the Plan does not go out with the magazines, they are no longer so time-sensitive.

- Magazine numbers will be revised each year, rather than for each issue.
- All the articles we normally include were felt to be helpful, so no change there (apart, perhaps, from being shorter).

We agreed to try this format for a year (probably starting with this Summer's issue), and would really welcome feedback, once the new system is up and running.

Cheryl Benfield



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

LENT COURSES

HENLOW	2.00pm	Lent Bible study course on Mondays, starting Monday 10th March.
LONDON ROAD (Bedford)	7.30pm	Lent course following the book "A Beautiful Friendship" by Paul Kerensa and Zoe Young, which is based on the 1942 film "Casablanca". We will be showing the film "Casablanca" on Saturday 1st March at 7.00pm. Course dates are Tuesdays at 7.30pm:- 11th, 18th and 25th March, 1st, and 8th April.
PRIORY (Bedford)	2.00pm	Following the same course as London Road. We will be showing the film "Casablanca" on Thursday 6th March at 2.00pm. Course dates are Thursdays at 2.00pm:- 13th, 20th and 27th March, 3rd, and 10th April.
WILLINGTON	7.30pm	Lent course to be held on Wednesdays:- 12th, 19th & 26th March, 2nd, 9th & 16th April.

18TH APRIL - GOOD FRIDAY EVENTS
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BEESTON	10.30am	[Walk of Witness – see Sandy]
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 (Biggleswade)		Churches Together Walk of Witness to the Market Square [details t.b.c., see church newsletter]
WILLINGTON	7.00pm	Good Friday Meditation

Circuit Diary Dates

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

AND THE CIRCUIT FACEBOOK PAGE
www.Facebook.com/NorthBedfordshireMethodistCircuit

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

Thurs 20th 7.30pm Circuit Meeting at **Putnoe Heights**

MARCH

Wed 19th 10.00am
(all day) Presbyteral District Synod
Castle Methodist Church, Maidenburgh Street,
Colchester, Essex, CO1 1TT

APRIL

Mon 28th 7.30pm Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting
(tbc)

MAY

Sat 10th 10.00am
- 1.00pm Representative District Synod
in the **South Essex Circuit**

Ministers in other appointments

Rev Chrissie Howe		c/o District Office
Rev Terry Wright	<i>terry.wright144@mod.gov.uk</i>	07581 009784
(Forces Chaplain at Chicksands)		

Ecumenical, Authorised & Associate Ministers

Rev Martin Truscott	<i>martintruscott@gmail.com</i>	07989 965172
URC (Minister - Cardington)		
Rev Catherine Wilson	<i>vicar@bromhambenefice.org</i>	01234 825665
Anglican (Vicar at St Mary's Church, Oakley)		
Rev Petra Yates	<i>curate@bromhambenefice.org</i>	07504 118405
Anglican (Curate at St Mary's Church, Oakley)		

Supernumerary Ministers

Rev Richard Barrett	<i>regbarrett2@btinternet.com</i>	01767 312723
Rev David Bown	<i>davidbown47@hotmail.co.uk</i>	01234 589194
Rev Julie Bradshaw	<i>julieiw2@gmail.com</i>	01234 405530
Rev Douglas Ford		
Rev Jim Gorringe	<i>jimgorringe@icloud.com</i>	01234 216352
Rev Cassandra Howes	<i>cassandra.howes@gmail.com</i>	01234 793177
Rev Alan Kirk	<i>alankirk58@hotmail.com</i>	01234 317699
Deacon Vera Pearson		01234 270737
Rev David Winwood	<i>revwin.64@gmail.com</i>	01234 359930

Circuit Finance Officer

Damilola Obajemu	<i>northbedsfinance@gmail.com</i>	07798 808988
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Circuit Property Secretary

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Circuit PAT Tester

Martin Field	<i>northbedspatesting@gmail.com</i>	07522 928936
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Circuit Meeting Minute Taker

Anne Cooper

Circuit Safeguarding Officer

Stephanie Field	<i>northbedssafeguarding@gmail.com</i>	07522 928936
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Circuit Manager

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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 30th March**

Preachers should enter their availability on Chrestos by **Sunday 30th March**

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team no later than **Sunday 6th April** 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) : Fixed working hours are now Fridays 8.00am – 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 28th February** at 7.30pm

EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 31)

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